

17th SUNDAY OF THE YEAR (C) (2019)

A) INTRODUCTION

- It may seem surprising to us that Jesus spent much of his life in prayer
- As a man he needed to, just as we do
- He needed to remain close to his Father; to check out with him that he was really doing the Father's will
- In Luke's Gospel especially, we see him at prayer at key moments of his life
- He would withdraw from company from time to time, sometimes spending whole nights in prayer

B) "LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY"

- It was the regular custom for a Rabbi to teach his disciples a simple prayer which they might habitually use.
- John had done that for his disciples, and now Jesus' disciples came asking him to do the same for them.
- The prayer he teaches them will remain for all time the characteristic prayer of the disciples of Jesus.
- and it comes to us from Jesus' own experience of prayer
- he invites not just to use his words, but to enter into the very same relationship with God that he had
- to see ourselves as beloved daughters and sons of the Father
- St. Luke's version of the "Our Father" is a shorter, less familiar one than St. Matthew's, but it contains all we need to know about prayer and about how to pray

C) "OUR FATHER"

- The prayer begins by addressing God as Father.
- Jesus used the word Abba, or Dad, as a title of affection and endearment; he encourages us to approach God in the same way.
- We must see ourselves before him like children before their father: needy, sincere and confident.
- And we must see him as a father who delights to supply his children's needs.
- Then the Lord's Prayer suggests a list of priorities.
- The first group of petitions are expressions of adoration, drawing us towards the glory of the Father
- they reflect a yearning for God's plans to be fulfilled.
- The second group of petitions make known to God our own needs and desires: relating to the past, the present and the future
- present needs, the bread of today;
- the forgiveness of past sins;
- the strength to face and to be victorious in future trials.

D) THE PERSISTENT FRIEND

- Immediately following the Lord's Prayer itself comes the parable of the persistent friend, and there are others in the Gospels like it
- they urge us to be persevering in prayer.
- Travellers often journeyed late in the evening to avoid the heat of the midday sun.
- So it was not unusual for a guest to arrive late at night.
- In the east, hospitality is a sacred duty: offering a guest not just a bare minimum of food but a generous abundance.
- Households would only bake bread for the day's needs, and so the host would have to borrow from a neighbour to avoid an embarrassing situation.
- In poorer houses in Palestine there would be only one room where the whole family would be settled around a charcoal fire, which would be kept burning all night.
- The livestock would be brought into the house as well.
- So the friend who wakes up his neighbour would be disturbing not just one person but the entire household.

E) GOD OUR LOVING FATHER

- God is not like the reluctant householder who grudgingly gives his friend what he asks for.
- how much more will God our loving Father give good things to those who ask him!
- So we must ask him, and not to be afraid to keep asking.
- prayer is not for God's benefit, but for our own.
- Praying for things can help us to order our minds, and to enlarge our hearts;
- to prepare ourselves for the very things that God wants to give us.

F) UNANSWERED PRAYER

- What about the prayers we make that go unanswered?
- Isn't that a sign that prayer doesn't really work?
- in response we could say that every prayer is answered, but not always in the way or at the time that we would like.
- Once again we return to the truth that God is a loving Father who will only give us what will be for our ultimate good.
- he may not give us what we specifically ask for, simply because he wants to give us something even better.
- And is it likely that the God who loves us so much will send us away empty-handed?
- Do we trust him enough to believe that he will always answer our prayers in the way that he knows best?