

17th Sunday in the Ordinary Time (C)
God Listens and Answers our Prayers

Genesis 18:20-32; Psalm 138:1-2,2-3,6-7,7-8; Colossians 2:12-14; Luke 11:1-13

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Let us ask God's grace to bless us with a child-like trusting disposition as we acclaim the words of the responsorial psalm this week:

"Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me" (Ps 138:3a).

It is a profound acclamation to keep as Pilgrims of Hope.

This weekend, our Lord Jesus reminds and assures us that when we pray to our Father in heaven, he hears and answers our prayers. "And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened" (Luke 11:9-10).

There are passages spread throughout the four gospels echo this similar assurance: "...whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you" (Jn 16:23); "... I tell you, all that you asked for in prayer, believe that you will receive it and it shall be yours" (Mk 11:24); ... "As bad as you are, you know how to give good things to your children. How much more, then, will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him" (Mt.7,11); "...if two of you agree on earth about for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my Heavenly Father" (Mt 18,19).

Our Lord Jesus is never tired of repeating with certainty that our Father in heaven hears and answers our prayers. The responsorial psalm expresses this very well: "Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me" (Ps 138:3).

Although there may be times when we ask for something in prayer without obtaining it, and sometimes the things we ask for are quite ordinary and, in our view, essential, yet we have not received what we asked for. For instance, a student praying for good grades, a person praying for a job, or a family praying for a loved one's health. How then are we to understand these words of Jesus?

The difficulty is real, but something is profoundly significant to notice in all the statements of Jesus in the Gospels concerning the efficacy of prayer. If Jesus is emphatic about the sure results of prayer, he is, on the other hand, silent on one point: that of time. He never says that we shall obtain whatever we ask for at once, and time is exceptionally significant.

The song "In His Time" beautifully stresses this element: God makes all things beautiful in his time. It's the perfect time when all the elements align for our best interest according to God's will. Those with a long-standing habit of prayer can testify to a fact drawn from experience: the prayer of petition tends to change in content over time. This transformation, undoubtedly, is a sign of God's work in our lives. Because "we do not know how to pray as we ought," we ask for many things that would not be suitable to us at the beginning of our dialogue with God (cf. Rom 8:26). Many of us may have experienced the fact that it took a while for our prayer to be answered, and perhaps it took some time for us to recognize that God had already responded to our prayer in different ways.

Our Lord Jesus says, "As bad as you are, you know how to give good things to your children. How much more, then, will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him" (Mt.7,11). This reassures us that God knows what's best for us! His silence doesn't mean he is not hearing us or doing anything. He allows a lapse of time to let our hearts desire what he wants for us, to let our hearts long only for the Highest Good. This divine timing is a testament to God's wisdom and love. Why settle for less? Remember the words of Jesus, "Seek ye first the Kingdom, and everything will follow.

It becomes, therefore, significant that a certain lapse of time is necessary. The time it takes for our heart, under the gentle motion of the Holy Spirit, to gradually come around to desire or long only for what God

wants to give us. It is a time when our heart may finally learn: Lord, whatever is best for my soul, your will be done, or let your Holy Will be the desire of my heart.

Let us pray that our hope in God's providence will grow through the intercession of St. Therese of the Child Jesus, especially for those who struggle to make sense of and find tangible manifestations of Jesus' reassuring words. And for those who are burdened, waiting, or questioning God's providence, may know that God often blesses us with His PRESENCE, more than what we asked for. He enters and walks with us in our pains and struggles, strengthening us. Indeed, he comes to us in a special and personal way through the Holy Eucharist, his perpetual tangible presence that our faith community celebrates.

As Pilgrims of Hope, let us fervently ask God's grace to bless us with a child-like trusting disposition as we acclaim the words of the psalm this week:

"Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me" (Ps 138:3a).

Fr. Manny Hewe, Pastor