

SEVENTEENTH C JULY 27, 2025 Greenwich

We have a wealth of readings today.

In that first reading, Abraham bargains with God---something we have all done. But notice, Abraham is not asking for himself---unless he has real estate investments in Sodom and Gomorrah! Rather, he is scripture's first example of intercessory prayer.

He is standing with the Lord in prayer, while standing by the side of sinful, needy people.

He wants to serve as a channel of mercy and grace to those who do not know God or act as if they don't.

He pleads for them, when they are not capable of asking for themselves.

And Abraham does this at some risk of his own relationship with God.

He is the first in a long line of intercessors:

Moses pleads with God, when the people have turned away and erected the golden calf, the sign of the Canaanite god Baal.

You remember, Moses smashes the stone tablets bearing the Ten Commandments and gives the people a good tongue-lashing;

but when Moses speaks to God, he offers himself in their place, risks even his own life, jeopardizes having his own family and nation, if God would spare them.

Several hundred years later, when the Babylonian empire conquers the kingdom of Judah, Jeremiah pleads with God to save the people from exile, even after they have imprisoned him in a well. And Jeremiah kept pleading for them, even when the Lord finally told him to shut up and knock it off. Israel would have to undergo its purifying punishment. We will hear that story in three weeks. Stay tuned!

Throughout the history of the Church, we have instinctively turned to Mary and the saints, asking them to intercede for us, to call upon their uniquely close relationship with God to help us.

And the great intercessor is Jesus Christ; He pleads for us at the right hand of the Father. He stands by the side of us sinners, lays down his life for us, even when we have turned away from God, especially when we cannot pray for ourselves or come back to God on our own.

Jesus puts his own relationship with the Father on the line.

He asks the Father to spare us, for the sake of the love of the Father and the Son have for each other.

Every time we intercede for others, as we will do shortly, we exercise that same ministry; we willingly let our relationship with God, and with those in need, become a new channel of grace, a new connection between the Lord and those in.

And in the process, that prayer binds us more closely to the Lord, and binds us to those in need. Their tears, and God's tears, become our own; their joy and the Lord's makes our own hearts swell with joy.

If we call Abraham our father in faith, it is because he is our father in faithful prayer, faithful to God and faithful to those who cry out in need. If we ask God to make us more and more in the image of Christ, we are asking to be made more faithful intercessors, bound more closely to those in need, bound more closely to Christ's self-sacrificing love.

Our Gospel is the familiar prayer of petition and intercession, but with Luke's twist.

Usually, we pray Matthew's version, as we will later in this Mass. But here in the Gospel, Luke reminds us why we can trust God to answer our prayer.

Luke says sometimes friends do the right thing if you just nag them enough, and parents do the right thing for their kids, even if otherwise those same parents---and kids---are rotters.

So, you can trust God always to do the right thing, because God is a much more faithful friend; God loves us even more than our parents love us or we love our children. God measures our needs, not our merits.

But sometimes we find trusting God to be difficult.

Let me suggest something. Take out your keys. If you don't have any keys, that's either a sign of real freedom, or you forgot where you put them.

Anyway, look at each of them. What do they open? And in that process, who do they open you to?

The house key allows us to enter into our family and all the relationships and joys and struggles they represent.

The office key opens up us up to the challenges, burdens and satisfaction of our work and career.

The key to the tool shed might represent the chance to work in the garden, to be creative and connect with nature; or it might be a sign of drudgery and the demands of owning property.

The car key, or so often these days the fob, represents mobility, but also the ability to escape. We don't have to walk through places we think dangerous and so we could disconnect ourselves from the fears and needs of others who have to live there.

What do your keys open you to, and what do they protect you from?

Jesus says that our ultimate security lies in God's faithful love for us, for the Father will give us what we most need, what we most want: that God's Kingdom will come;

that God will feed us our Daily Bread, the body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist;

that God will forgive us our sins and give us the grace to forgive those who have done wrong to us.

Those are the doors which Jesus opens. And his key is his intercession for us, at the right hand of the Father, which in turn allows us to utter a prayer of faithful trust.

Because Jesus pleads for us, we can ask, we can seek, we can knock.

And it will be opened to us----the very heart of Christ, pierced for us;

and we shall find: the deepest desires of our hearts, the very love of God, enfolding us in mercy.

And we shall receive: the Holy Spirit of God, drawing us into the very life of the Trinity.

Before you put away your keys, mentally add one another one to the ring---put there the Our Father, your prayer of trust

that God will always be faithful,

and will open to you everything you really need, His Kingdom and His daily bread and His mercy,

and open you also to everyone you really need, each of your sisters and brothers, as their hopes and fears and struggles become your own.

In the coming Kingdom, for which we pray, all of us will stand at the right hand of the Father, interceding for one another, thanking God for each other, fashioning reconciliation with each other.

Let your keys, and the Our Father, remind you daily of that ministry, that mission, and that future.

And the people of God said, Amen.