

The conversation went something like this:

I need to ask you something.

What's on your mind?

I'm reluctant to say because I don't know how you're going to respond.

And it's something I've asked you several times already.

Yes?

I'm beginning to wonder if you're even listening.

Oh?

I mean you've been very helpful before with other things and this is kind of important.

But I'm getting nothing from you.

Is it because you're busy with other things or is it something else?

Sometimes that's exactly how I feel when I pray.

I get very discouraged and overcome with doubt

There've been times that I fervently prayed for someone or something

But what I prayed for did not happen. It felt like the exact opposite!

In those moments my faith was seriously tested. I know I'm not alone in that.

If you live long enough, at some point your faith will be tested.

Perhaps that's why in his message for this World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly,

Pope Leo said:

*"God sees old age as a time of blessing and grace,
and that the elderly are the first witnesses of hope"*

Wait! Old age - a time of blessing?

You mean all the aches and pains, the weakness and fatigue?

Not to mention illness, grief, loneliness, and heartache!

{Psh!} Enough with the blessings!

The fact is there are blessings and trials at every age.

Perhaps the truest blessing is the realization that grace and hope are always available, especially as things become more difficult.

If, when we pray, we feel as if God is not listening,

grace and hope are there to keep us in the conversation.

When we remain in conversation with God, we are much more likely to know peace, contentment and joy.

Conversations with God appear many times throughout the Bible.

In our first reading we listen in as God and Abraham are having an interesting conversation.

God has decided to let Abraham know what he has in mind for the cities Sodom & Gomorrah.

At the time, Abraham had relatives living in the city of Sodom. So, for Abraham this is personal.

This is not some abstract discussion of justice, mercy and morality.

Abraham is worried about his family.

He is staying in the conversation because he needs to know

that this God will act with mercy and compassion for those he loves.

We need to know the same thing for the same reason.

But sometimes we have our doubts,

doubts about God's care for us or doubts about our worthiness

When that happens, the conversation might go something like this:

Umm, I need to ask you something... again.

But...umm... there is this other issue.

Go on

You know the thing I said I'd never do again?

Yes

Well, it turns out.... Hey, do you remember when you said
that you'd always be with me no matter what?

Yes, I remember.

Are you still good with that?

Yes, I'm good.

{sigh} ... Sometimes I just don't know how to talk to you.

I'm listening...

A little humility in prayer is a good thing.

But God doesn't want us to be afraid or worried about how to pray.

In the Letter to Romans, St Paul says straight up:

*"We don't know how to pray like we should,
but the Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words"*

In the Gospel today, when the disciple asked Jesus to teach them to pray,
he knew they wanted some words to say.
So he gave them a simple prayer like any Rabbi would.

But after Jesus gives them the words to say,
he goes on to teach them HOW to pray,
To begin making his point, Jesus tells a story:

*“Suppose you go to a friend at midnight because you have nothing to serve Aunt Emma who
dropped in unexpectedly for the weekend.
But the friend says:*

*“Schlemiel, I’m in bed, my wife and kids are asleep.
The door is locked. Now go away!”
“Oy! Enough with the knocking and the begging!
You’ll wake the entire neighborhood!
Wait there, I’ll be right down.”*

While the disciples are still trying to figure out what that was all about,
Jesus begins coaching them.

He says keep **asking**, keep **knocking**, keep **looking** and keep **seeking**, then ask and knock again!
The point is- when you pray be persistent. Do not give up!
In other words, stay in the conversation!

Next, Jesus explains the reason **why** we should stay in the conversation and not give up.
With some interesting if not humorous images, Jesus drives home the point that
God is TRUSTWORTHY.

He is more generous and loving than even the best parent
Expect **good** things from God No scorpions, No snakes, Nothing that might be bad for us.

But it’s the last line in this passage from Luke that, for me, is the key to all of it.
Jesus said:

*“How much more will the Father in heaven
give the **Holy Spirit** to those who ask him”*

Ultimately, the answer to **all** our prayers is **the Holy Spirit**.
God Himself dwelling within us, present in everything.
Present in our pain and frustration, with our doubts and fears.
Present in our joys and our losses, in our successes and failures.

No matter what we want or think we need, as human beings,
our deepest desire & greatest need is intimate connection with God.
Jesus came and is here now to make that happen for us.
All we need to do is join the conversation. The Lord's Prayer is a good place to start.

Sometimes I like to imagine The Lord's Prayer as another intimate conversation between friends:

You know I think you're great

I know.

And I want everyone to feel the same way.

Mmmm, ok.

I just wish everybody would do things YOUR way

Really?

I've asked for a lot. But right now, I just need to get thru another day.

You got it.

I guess you figured it out already...the thing I said that I wouldn't do... I did it again

I know

Can you forgive me... again?

I already have

{Sigh}... you know I try to do the same and forgive people, too.

That's a good thing.

One more thing, could you see to it I'm not tested beyond my strength?

I'll be with you

Now, about this thing I've been asking for over and over and over again?

Yes! Keep asking. You're doing great!

But for now, come join me for supper.

Sure! What's on the menu?

...I AM...right here with you...broken and poured out...for you.