

## Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 27, 2025

In the way of praying, we all pray asking God to give us different things. We may be asking God to give us healing. We may be asking God to send employment our way. We might be asking God to give us protection from fire or good test results, or for peace in our family, or consolation in time of grief and loss. We might be asking God to help us in a situation of material need. But also, non-material needs. We ask for wisdom. We ask God to give us courage, patience; we ask God to give us forgiveness, and so many other things.

Perhaps this dynamic deepens and develops a little bit when we find ourselves asking God to give others things more than we ask for ourselves. *“Lord, bring peace to those nations that are at war. Give protection and safety to persecuted Christians. Help those who are alone, or in hospitals or nursing homes, those who are homebound, those who are suffering. We pray that God will grant to others what they need.”*

But then the dynamic of prayer also deepens when we realize prayer is not just about getting something, but that we go to prayer with the intention of giving something to God. We pray in order to give God praise or to give adoration, to give God glory, to give God thanks. We offer to God in our prayer, our devotion, our actions, offering of love. We offer obedience. We offer our works, our joys, our sufferings each day. We offer with our whole heart and sometimes we pray, and we do not ask for a single thing, but simply go to offer to God our heart, to present ourselves to God as a gift. A gift in response to what God has already given to us in an expression of our love to Him and in our gratitude.

The Lord God has a desire for us in prayer that is deeper even than that of forgiving. At the end of today's Gospel, Jesus says, *“If you*

*then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"* So, you say, well, you can say, I am not asking to get the Holy Spirit. But the gift of the Holy Spirit is orientated toward something that is right up on par with God's desire for us and that is union. God is the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit works within us to draw us into deeper and deeper union with God. Closeness to God, conformity to the Lord Jesus in thoughts, in word and deed. The Lord draws us into prayer, not just to give us something or to receive something from us, He draws us into prayer to bind us to Himself, to conform our minds and our hearts to Him, to His mind, to His heart, to His will.

So, the more we pray, the less the getting and the giving matters and the more and more what matters is our conformity to Him. Our desire for God's will for our life and the whole world – the lives of all people. So, we can ask the question, why pray in an abstract kind of way and sort of get an abstract answer but it also has to come home to us in a vision, where we ask the question of ourselves, why do we pray, why do I pray? Why am I praying right now when I go and sit in the chapel or when I am out walking and praying. Why am I praying? Am I stuck on just asking God for things? I am always asking if I can get this or that. You know, it's not a bad thing, but my idea is that Lord wants something more.

If I find that when I am always praying asking God for something, might I begin to turn toward offering God something in my heart even more than I ask to receive something? And even beyond those dynamics of asking for and offering, in the hungry reality of my prayer, I realize that God really desires for me union through prayer. The conformity of my will to His.

Some years ago in a homily, I mentioned that the purpose of prayer is not to change God's mind so that He will give us what we need or want, usually 'want.' But rather that our hearts would be changed through prayer in order to be able to accept joyfully and gratefully whatever it is that God wills for us. How much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit? How much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? We want the gift of the Holy Spirit. We want the transformation of our hearts according to the heart of Christ. We want greater and greater conformity to the Lord Jesus, greater and greater conformity to the will of God.

Today in the celebration of Baptism, the majority of you who are here were baptized remember that when we were baptized in our Masses, we receive this gift of the Holy Spirit and it is the beginning of transformation according to the image of Christ. And as we momentarily move into baptism of Silas, we pray for that outpouring of the Holy Spirit on him. Recognizing that what God is doing in him, bringing him new life, drawing him to Himself, God is also doing in each one of us. He wants to do to each one of us. Very much through our prayers each day.

May we have the grace to pray, not just for the things that we need, and not just even to offer ourselves to God but to also to recognize that the Lord is goodness and love is really drawing us into union with Himself.