

Sunday 24th July 2022

My dear brothers and sisters, as we reflect on the meaning of prayer, may God answer your prayers with peace of body and mind.



Lord Teach us how to pray!!

Do you pray as well as you wish? I don't mean, "when you pray for something, do you get it?" The answer to our prayers is up to God, and though God always answers our prayers, we know that sometimes the answer is, "No."

I mean, when you pray, do you really feel that, as the old catechism inadequately put it, that you are "Lifting up your mind and heart to God"?

In today's gospel, one of the disciples sees a chance to find the formula. Jesus has been praying. The disciple realises there is something about the prayer of Jesus that seems to make it a deeper communion with God than the disciple thought himself or herself capable of.

So the Disciple approaches Jesus and says, "Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples" A rabbi usually taught his disciples prayers they could use as a way of bringing his teaching into their prayer. And Jesus does it, teaching a prayer that has become the hallmark of his disciples through all ages in all places and among all the different groups that call him Lord.

Having taught the words, though, Jesus goes on to say that they are not really all that important.

Our problem (and this is where the catechism definition was misleading) is that we think that praying is primarily something that we do. It is, of course, something we do, but what we do is not the most important thing. PRAYER IS OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. God is the Chief Actor.

When I focused upon myself and what I do in prayer, I become so caught up in formulas, postures, breathing exercises and such that I forget that the whole reason I pray is to remember who God is, and within that relationship, who I am.

Jesus gives us two important lessons as a commentary upon the disciple's request.

The first is a story about someone awakened in the night by a neighbour who needs bread. At first, the groggy one is unwilling to help. However, eventually he gets up and helps his neighbour, if only to get back to sleep.

What Jesus is telling us is that the important thing about our prayer is not so much how we do it as that we do it. God will hear us.

If sleepyheads like us respond to prayers addressed to us, we can be sure that God will hear us and respond. Therefore, we can and should pray with confidence. The first principle of prayer is that God will always hear us and respond.

Jesus' second point is, perhaps, more important to those of us who worry about praying well or properly. He uses Examples to teach us.

The first example is of a child asking a parent for a fish. In such a case, the child will not receive a snake. The second example is of child asking for an egg. The child need not worry about getting a scorpion. On one level, Jesus is telling us that when we pray we need not worry that God will do evil to us in response to our needs.

My dear brothers and sisters, Jesus is telling us disciples, that we need not worry that God will not understand our prayers. We do not have to use proper formulas, or the right words. God loves us so much that our inadequate prayers suffice. In other words, the disciple's anxiety to learn the right words to use in prayer was misplaced. There are no right words; there are no wrong words. God will not misunderstand us. So, do we need to do anything? Yes, Just Pray!!

As I wish you a peace filled week, May I leave you with my mother's advice to me, "don't forget that, every action you perform is a contribution to some aspect of this world, being conscious of that should keep you inspired"

May God bless and answer all your prayers.

With love and prayers,
Father Nicholas Nwanzi.