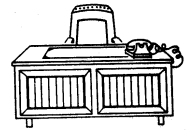


## 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 28, 2019



From the Desk of  
Fr. Romanus

### Sunday Reflection:

This Sunday's readings revolve around the theme of prayer, with emphasis on persistent prayer. Prayer is our means of communicating with God. It is our response to God's compelling invitation to a personal relationship. Prayer nourishes and sustains our relationship with God. Prayer was an integral part of Jesus' life and ministry. Despite the huge crowd and all the teaching and healing to be done, Jesus always found time to pray.

The disciples appreciated the priority their master gave to prayer. They observed that prayer played a major role in his life and preceded important moments in his ministry. They also learned that the disciples of John already knew how to pray. One thing was clear, they wanted to learn how to pray. This desire to pray prompted their request in today's gospel.

The prayer Jesus taught them (The Lord's Prayer) is a fairly simple and direct prayer. Luke's version is shorter than the more familiar version in Matthew's gospel, but has the essential elements. In this prayer, Jesus teaches us to address God as "Abba," a word which literally translates as "Daddy." It conveys the depth of our relationship with God, as well as our dependence on God. By giving us permission to address his Father as our Father, Jesus makes clear that we are his brothers and sisters.

The Lord's Prayer is a prayer that calls for self-reflection, the blessing of God's holy name and the proclamation of God's kingdom. It goes on to implore God's benevolence in providing for his children. We also pray for our daily bread. We pray not just for earthly food, but also for the spiritual nourishment needed to reach our heavenly destination. Equally important is the nourishment of courage and hope to avert cynicism and despair. The prayer addresses the issue of forgiveness and insists that before asking God for forgiveness, we need to ensure we are forgiving those who offend us.

Jesus quickly follows up the Lord's Prayer with elaborate stories on the need for persistence in prayer. He states that if a friend does not get up at midnight to grant his friend's needs because of their friendship, he would get up because of his persistence. Likewise, we have to be persistent in prayer because "anyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and the one who knocks will have the door opened." This was certainly true in relation to Abraham in the first reading. God revealed to Abraham that the three angels he entertained in last Sunday's gospel were heading to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for their grave sins. Abraham was very concerned about his nephew, Lot, and his family who lived among the sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah. His desire to save Lot and his family led to an audaciously shameless intercession on behalf of the two cities. He negotiated down the number of righteous people from fifty to ten before giving up.

Apart from Abraham's remarkable persistence, we also realize that God's patience is extraordinary. God was willing to spare the two cities if he found lesser number of righteous people. Unfortunately, there were not enough righteous people to spare the cities from the destructive blow, except Lot's family. Like Abraham, we need to learn persistence in prayer. Persistence is not the same as irresponsible nagging since God knows what we want even before we ask. Even when prayers appear not answered, we should trust that God knows what is best for us. The essence of persistence in prayer is to manifest our faith and trust in God's ability to meet our needs. Have a great week!

Fr. Romanus