

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C

July 25, 2010

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Good morning. I like that little zinger God gave us at the last part of the Gospel. “If you who are wicked know how to do good things to your kids how much more will your Father give the Holy Spirit. All I have to do is say that once here and that would be the end of that. Sometimes when Jesus is talking He wants to make a point He makes these long and strong contrasts if you will about what God is and how we are. If you listen to both the First Reading and the Gospel they both go hand in hand because they both have got to do with what, prayer. Here is Abraham praying in a dialogue with God. I love the dialogue because he says, “Oh who am I to ask you but what if there is only 50, 100 or 45 and he keeps pushing because he already has this intimacy with God. Now here is Jesus in the Gospel and He is praying. So they look at Jesus praying and they say, “Hey Lord teach us how to pray too.” Prayer always, first of all, is about intimacy. It is not about ritual. As I have said a thousand times ritual without love is rape. If you just go through the motions of doing things it means nothing. It has to be this intimacy. It has to be this relationship with Mass, with all of the things we do, with our daily prayer life. It is about intimacy between us and God.

So when we have intimacy the first thing you have to have is honesty. There is no la la pie in the sky. Sometimes we get seminarians who have been around and they think they get this la la religious language. We had one here a couple of years ago and they were sitting at the table with me and I said, “Stop with the la la language.” And he said to me, “Oh if God wills it so and so,” Be real. Abraham when he was talking to God the Father, he didn’t have la la language he was just real. And he debated with Almighty God. Can you imagine? One hundred percent intimacy, one hundred percent truth because humility is truth. Humility is truth. It is not la la. It is just this is who I am. You are God, I am not. It is coming before God like that. Jesus teaches us, and today we hear from Luke’s Gospel, if you go to Matthew’s Gospel we have the Our Father that we say today. But He teaches us how to pray. It is interesting because you know we say this prayer all of the time but I believe most people have no idea what they are saying or what it means. So we want to break down the prayer and take the little longer prayer that is in Matthew’s Gospel than in Luke’s.

When Jesus says, “This is how you are to pray,” today He just begins with Father. But in Matthew’s Gospel He starts with, “Our.” Our. Now I believe that if you say this prayer you are going to have to live this prayer. When you say “our” you have got to let it echo through your being – what does that mean? It means everybody in the world is our brother and sister. There is no my Father before God. It isn’t me and you Jesus. Look how great we are and all you poor people over there. That means God is open to everybody. A group of us this past week went up to Canada. There are people from all over the world there. This God of the universe is for everybody. He is not just for me and my little clique of people and I know something that you don’t. We do not believe in Gnosticism. This God, when I say “our” that means everybody. That means all of the people that have died; all of the people who are living; the people who I like; the people who hate me; the people who love me; my family, my friends, my enemies. He belongs to all of us. So the very first word out of my mouth when I say “our” is that God you are my Dad but then everybody else is my brother and sister. So do I treat people like my brother and sister? When I say “our” that is what I am saying.

Theresa of Avila when she would start saying the Our Father, she could never get past the Father. She would go into hours of ecstasy; to begin to realize what it means for God to be our Father, that intimacy. The word Father is much more intimate than that. It means Abba, Daddy. It means the prayer that you and I say should be the first syllables out of a baby's mouth. Abba, Dada, Papa -that intimacy. So when you pray. How do you pray? Do you get into a very formal mode about this is how I am to pray and I am coming before you Oh God of the Universe? Or are you coming to God and say, "Dad. Daddy. Papa." Is there and intimacy between you and your Dad? He looks at you as He does in the Baptism of Jesus and says, "You are My beloved daughter" or "You are My beloved son." Beloved son; beloved daughter; beloved father. So when you pray is it an intimacy there? Or is it a ritual? Do you just say your prayers or do you enter into the intimacy with your Dad?

Then it talks about how God is in heaven. When I was at Prep, I said, "Gentlemen, what if Jesus Christ came and appeared here, right here, and He stood before you?" One of the kids said, "Oh Father I would say, 'Come on Jesus, let's have some beer and potato chips.'" I said, "Come here." Whack! "No you wouldn't. You would fall on your face." Though God wants intimacy He also is separate from us. There is this distance. There is this creation that God comes before us and we get to say you are my Dad. But then there is this thing that, "I am in awe of You. You are in heaven, I am on earth. You and I are not the same." So this great awe of God. That is where we get fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Not the fear of the Lord where I am afraid, but am fear of the Lord where I am humbled. You are God. Wow! You do such great things for me. Wow! You are so good. You are so glorious. You are in heaven.

Then it talks about hallowing the name of God. How do we hallow? What does it mean? Does anybody know? Hallowed be Thy name – I don't know. I say it every day Father. I really have no idea what it means. It means that the way we live is the way we make God's name holy. God is holy by definition. He is other. But when you and I live for God's glory we hallow the name of God by the way we live. So do I live in such a way when I am work, when I am with my family that hallows the name of God? That makes God's name holy? People look at Jesus and they saw the intimacy He had with the Father and they say, "Hey, teach us to do the same thing." So when we are praying, when we are living, people should see our lives in such a way that they want to imitate it. They want to be like it because we are hallowing the name of God.

Hallowed be Thy name, what is the next thing, thy Kingdom come. What you and I are praying for is a couple of things, praying for the world to end, aren't you excited, today. Wouldn't that be great if the world ended today? I mean, isn't that an exciting thing to you or no I don't think that would be a very good thing Father. It would be a great thing if the world ends today. It is the end of pain, the end of hatred, the end of war, the end of suffering, the end of cancer, the end of death. It all ends and heaven begins. When the early Church prayed for the kingdom of heaven, they are praying for the world to end. Is that what you and I pray for? Lord, let today be the last day. I am ready. Are you ready if today was the last day? Do you build the Kingdom of Heaven with your life? Or do you build your own kingdom with your life? Do you build a name for yourself and what people will say about me and what I do? Do we build up our own kingdoms, and our own family and our own money or do we build up the kingdom of heaven by the way we live? May Thy kingdom come. We need to build up the kingdom of heaven. We need to long for heaven. To have that holy longing inside of us.

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done. Again this is pretty simple. I think me, and ninety-eight percent of the world does not mean this. The way we should pray the Lord's Prayer if we meant it, if we are being honest, Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, my will be done, please bless it on earth as it is in heaven. What we really want when we go to pray is, "Hey God these are my needs. These are my wants. This is what I want you to do for me. You do this for me and I will be happy. If you don't do this for me I am going to be mad. Years ago someone came to me and they said, "Father, I am mad at God." "Why are you mad at God?" "Because I have been praying for something for so many months and I haven't got it." And I go, "Oh, so that is what prayer is? Hey God you jump through my hoop or I will be mad at You." So God is your lackey, your slave. He does what you want. Is that what it is? Or is it what Jesus says, "Your will be done." Someone else came to me once and said, "Father, I am having a bad day." I have those every once in awhile myself. And I said, "Did you ever thank God for your bad day?" "I did not!" "Did you say the Lords' Prayer this morning?" "I did." Did you say, "Your will be done?" "I did." "Well this is His will for you. Why aren't you thanking Him for it?" "Well, that isn't what I meant." "I know." Is that what we mean when we go to God and say, "Your will be done?" That I want what You want in my life, period. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That means in my life it is the same thing that is happening in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread. Now what the early Church prayed for when they did this was the Eucharist. It means the daily bread of give me everything I get. You know today we don't get as much when you can go over to Tops and get a loaf of bread. Well that doesn't come from God. Oh yes it does. Everything you and I have comes from God. So we acknowledge that when we are saying that. You are asking for your dependence on God that "God I know I can't even get bread today without You." Another way of saying that is, "Lord, I can't even take my next breath without you giving it to me." Is that what I mean that Lord I am so dependant that I can't even take my next breath so give me my next breath. Give me my daily bread. Or as I have talked about up at Walsh University yesterday is when you pray it is give us this day our daily bread, means at all possible you go to daily Mass. It is not give us this day weekly bread, it is gives us this day our daily bread. So if you are able you go to daily Mass? Is it part of your life? Then people hit me with this –"That is not part of my spirituality." It is time for your spirituality to change. You are asking God everyday to give you Himself in the Bread of the Eucharist.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. When I pray do I mean that? You and I are looking at God and saying, "God, you forgive me the way I forgive others." So again, if you do that nice - good job. You will be forgiven. If you don't forgive, even one person...let us say in your life right now there is one person you have not forgiven, then you cannot be forgiven. In Matthew's Gospel He makes this real clear. After He teaches us the Our Father He says, "If you forgive the sins of others then you will be forgiven. If you do not forgive others then your Father will not forgive you." As C.S. Lewis says, "We must forgive one another or be damned. Do I have a forgiving heart? Because every time I say that prayer I am telling God You forgive me the way I forgive others. That is what you and I pray every time we say it. So God will always answer that request. He will forgive you the way you forgive others. Forgive us as we forgive others.

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation. And that means in James God says, "God does not lead us into temptation, we do that ourselves. We lead ourselves into temptation. So you and I have got to know that when it comes to temptation God is going to be on our side, but we can't go running toward temptation or allowing ourselves to be in a

place of temptation. What does that mean? Basically you are a guy and every time you go on the internet you are tempted to look at porn. And you go and do that. Well then what you have got to do is you have got to get that computer and put it someplace you won't. I use to tell my kids at Behrend if they were tempted about being intimate with each other and they weren't married I would say you never walk into your door with your girlfriend and leave that door closed. Always put something in that door so that door never closes. Once you clothes that door temptation is waiting. One guy, true story, years ago the way he dealt with it is he had a big picture of me and he put it above his bed. That killed temptation in about 2 seconds. He said, "Father, all I had to do was look up and that's done." Thank you.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one. That God will deliver us. Sometimes we go seeking the evil one. But when we do that by the way we live we need to be crying out to God, "God, you have got to save me." That means we have got to be people who are living our prayer. We have got to be praying always. So when you and I are in the midst of temptation; when you and I are in the midst of evil, God help me and He will. You see when we pray this prayer, the Our Father, it is a life changing prayer. That is why for twenty-one years the only penance I've ever given is one Our Father. It is the perfect prayer of Christ and He taught us this prayer. If you and I really pray it, and we mean it, our life will be changed. It must because that is what prayer does. You got it? Get it? Going to live it? Good. May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.

