

Sunday July 24, 2022  
17th Sunday in Ordinary Time  
**Parishioner Reflection**

*By: Jim McDonald*

In today's gospel reading from Luke Chapter 11, one of Jesus' disciples asks him to teach them how to pray. Prayer is something that many of us struggle with. Perhaps we cannot find the words, or words that we think will be pleasing or acceptable to God. Perhaps finding the time to pray or the right disposition of mind and heart to pray is difficult with all of life's business and distractions. I suspect that Jesus' response somewhat surprised the disciples in its conciseness and yet it is a powerful prayer that reflects Jesus' love for the Father and God's great commandment in Deuteronomy 6:4.

Not being from a Catholic family, I attended public school at a time when the "Lord's Prayer" was still recited by every class at the beginning of every school day. This practice was soon abolished and I quickly forgot to pray. Many years later, when I was just beginning my university education, I was prompted (by a small voice in my head) to try to remember this prayer. At first, I could not recall all of the words and it took some time and persistence before I could recite the entire prayer. Not having any other way to pray, the "Our Father" became my mainstay so to speak. I did not know the significance of Jesus' words, only that they were Jesus' words and that was enough.

The Our Father is a very short but very powerful prayer and it highlights the "simple" but profound request of the Lord that we acknowledge him as King in our hearts and lives, in love and truth, that he is our loving Father whose love never fails and knows no limits.

We ask that the Father's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And what is God's will? Nothing less than that we love God with all of our hearts, with all of our soul, with all of our minds and with all our strength, and our neighbour as ourselves. And as we learned from Jesus in the parable of the Good Samaritan, our neighbour is anyone and everyone, those whom we meet, who the Lord places in our path or for whom we pray as a community.

We ask Him to give us our daily bread, not just the bread that He knows we need for physical survival, but the heavenly bread that comes down from heaven, the Body and

Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. This is the food that sustains us each day and helps us to become more like Jesus and to love as He loves.

We ask Him to forgive us our sins as we forgive those who trespass against us. Ultimately, we ask for the grace to forgive as Jesus forgives, not once, not seven times, but seventy-times seven times; that is, without limit. This is not possible in and of ourselves. The measure with which we give will be given to us in full measure.

We ask that we not be led into temptation and that God will deliver us from evil. We need His grace to remain faithful to God, to be faithful witnesses and to persevere in difficult times, in a world that shouts “there is no God” and would have us do whatever we want.

These are certainly difficult times in which we live and many people are afraid and in despair. The Lord’s Prayer is a source of hope and trust in God’s mercy, love, consolation and providence. When we do not know how to pray or cannot find the words to pray, we can still our hearts in God’s presence and pray the Our Father in trust and hope. The Lord is faithful and hears our prayer.

I urge everyone (myself included), especially the young as they seek to know and understand who they are and what is God’s purpose for them, to simply pray:

“Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.”

God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit will respond in ways we cannot imagine