

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – 07/27/2025

Homily:

Today we celebrate the Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. And on this day, our Lord and Savior wishes us to attain the joy of the heavenly kingdom, and so He taught us to pray for it, promising to give it to us if we do so. Ask, He said, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.

Today, we should consider most seriously and attentively what these words of the Lord may mean for us, for they advise that not the lazy and incompetent but those who ask, seek, and knock will receive, find, and have the door opened to them. We must therefore ask for entry into the kingdom by prayer, seek it by upright living, and knock at its door by perseverance.

In today's readings, we are presented with two powerful moments of intercession and prayer. In the first reading from Genesis (18:20-32), we encounter the familiar story of Abraham negotiating with God for the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah. In the Gospel from Luke (11:1-13), we hear Jesus teaching His disciples how to pray, offering the Lord's Prayer, and assuring them of God's generosity in answering prayers. Both readings speak to the nature of prayer, particularly the power of intercession and the generosity of God.

In Genesis 18:20-32, Abraham intercedes for the people of Sodom, asking God to spare the city if there are righteous people within it. Abraham's negotiation with God is remarkable — he begins by asking if God would spare the city for fifty righteous people, and then, in an act of boldness and humility, he continues to lower the number, down to ten. God agrees to spare the city for the sake of the righteous, even though, as the story unfolds, only Lot and his family are found to be righteous. This dialogue reveals much about the nature of prayer and intercession.

Saint Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa Theologica*, writes that one of the primary purposes of prayer is to participate in God's providence. When we pray, especially when we intercede for others, we are not changing God's will but aligning our hearts with His plan. In Abraham's case, his intercession demonstrates that God desires us to be involved in His saving work.

While God knows all things and His will is perfect, He still welcomes our prayers and uses them to fulfill His plan. Abraham's persistence in asking for the city to be spared shows us the power of persistent prayer. The Fathers of the Church, such as St. Augustine, echoed this understanding, teaching that God's providence allows our prayers to be part of the unfolding of His plan, even as He remains ruler over all things.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus offers us the Lord's Prayer as the model for Christian prayer. When His disciples ask, "Lord, teach us to pray," Jesus provides them with the words we still pray today, "Our Father, who art in heaven..." This prayer contains the elements of both **praise and petition**, and it teaches us not only to address God as our Father but to trust that He is a loving Father who hears our needs and desires to give us what is good.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states and teaches us in Part Four that, 2607. When Jesus prays he is already teaching us how to pray. His prayer to his Father is the theological path (the path of faith, hope, and charity) of our prayer to God. But the Gospel also gives us Jesus' explicit teaching on prayer. Like a wise teacher he takes hold of us where we are and leads us progressively toward the Father.

2629. Prayer of Petition: By prayer of petition, we express awareness of our relationship with God. The first movement of the prayer of petition is asking forgiveness, like the tax collector in the parable: God, be merciful to me, a sinner. Christian petition is centered on the desire and search for the kingdom to come, in keeping with the teaching of Christ."

2639. “Praise is the form of prayer which recognizes most immediately that God is God. It praises God for his own sake and gives him glory, quite beyond what he does, but simply because He is. Praise embraces the other forms of prayer (Blessing and Adoration, Thanksgiving and Intercession) and carries them toward him who is the source and the goal: the “one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist.”

2640. St Luke in the Gospel often expresses wonder and praise at the marvels of Christ and in the Acts of the Apostles stresses the actions of the Holy Spirit: the community of Jerusalem and the invalid healed by Peter and John.”

Saint Thomas Aquinas, in his commentary on the Lord’s Prayer, explains that Jesus taught us this prayer to guide us in our relationship with God. The prayer embraces both spiritual and material needs, and in doing so, it teaches us that prayer is not merely about our wants, but about aligning our desires with God’s will. The “Our Father” reminds us of God’s transcendence and immanence — He is both in heaven and intimately involved in our lives. Aquinas emphasizes that the petition “Give us this day our daily bread” reflects our dependence on God for both our physical and spiritual sustenance. This balance of humility and confidence in God’s generosity is central to our Christian prayer life.

In the final part of today's Gospel, Jesus reassures us that God is a generous Father who delights in giving good gifts to His children. He says, "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" Jesus emphasizes that, just as earthly parents desire to give good things to their children, God, our Father, desires even more to give us what is truly good. This is a call to confidence in prayer.

The Fathers of the Church, especially St. Augustine and St. John Chrysostom, taught that we must approach God with great trust, knowing that He loves us as His children. However, this does not mean that we will always receive what we ask for in the way we expect. Instead, we can be certain that God will give us what is best for us, even if it is not exactly what we requested. Prayer, then, is not about forcing God's hand, but about opening ourselves to His divine wisdom.

Returning to the Catechism in verse 2737. "Do not be troubled if you do not immediately receive from God what you ask him; for he desires to do something even greater for you, while you cling to him in prayer. God wills that our desire should be exercised in prayer, that we may be able to receive what he is prepared to give."

As we reflect on today's readings, we are invited to engage in prayer with both boldness and trust. Like Abraham, we are encouraged to intercede for others, persistently asking God for what is good and just, even if we do not understand why things happen the way they do. Like the disciples in the Gospel, we are taught to pray with confidence, knowing that our Father will give us what we need — especially the gift of the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to live as faithful children of God.

To finish! Today, let us approach God with the same persistence that Abraham showed, and the same trust that Jesus encourages us to have in the generosity of God. May we remember that, even in our most desperate moments, God is always listening, always willing to bless us with His presence and His grace. As we pray today, let us do so with the faith that God, our loving Father, will always provide for us, and that through prayer, we are drawn into a deeper and intimate relationship with Him.