

# Sunday, July 28, 2019

## 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

#### Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Genesis 18:20-32

Responsorial: Psalm 138:1-3,6-8

2nd Reading: Colossians 2:12-14

Gospel: Luke 11:1-13

### Confidently Approaching Our Heavenly Father, Who Loves Us

*Teach us to pray. (Luke 11:1)*

We human beings are big on “how to,” aren’t we? Search on the Internet, and you will soon learn how to tie a tie, boil an egg, or even train your dragon. The disciples were no different. They had seen Jesus pray. They had heard him praise Mary for sitting quietly at his feet and listening to his teaching. And they wanted to know how to do that too.

So Jesus gave them what we call the “Our Father.” Though it looks like a five-step instruction, it is so much more. This prayer reveals much about who Jesus is because it gives us a glimpse into his own prayer life. It also shows who we are and God’s vision of how we should live. And it explains how Jesus wants us to relate to his Father—with the same mind and heart that he had as he walked the earth.

Who is your Father? He is perfect, holy, and worthy of adoration. But Jesus doesn’t tell you to say, “Holy Father.” Just “Father.” He makes it clear that your Father is not far away, untouchable, enthroned beyond your reach. He is close to you, eager to breathe his life into you. He hears your voice. He listens when you call and promises to answer. He gives you daily bread generously—all that you need for life and holiness.

The Father loves you. Always and without exception. He sees your worst sins, and still he wants to hold you close. He offers forgiveness lavishly, reconciliation unreservedly, intimacy wholeheartedly. He gives you all the tools and grace you need to become as merciful as he is. And he protects you from the evil one so that you can spread that mercy far and wide.

Jesus gave the disciples so much more than a list of tips for effective prayer. He assured them that they could approach God confidently, knowing he will always listen, always forgive, always provide and protect. And he, who is holy, will do no less for you.

*“Father, I want to know you. Help me to grow closer to you and more confident in your love.”*

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* ([www.wau.org](http://www.wau.org)) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

**Sunday, July 28, 2019**

**Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion:**

1. In the first reading, we discover that Abraham had such an intimate relationship with the Lord that he was willing to contend with Him on the fate of the innocent people of Sodom and Gomorrah. It ends with these words between Abraham and the Lord: *"Since I have thus dared to speak to my Lord, what if there are no more than twenty?" The LORD answered, "I will not destroy it, for the sake of the twenty." But he still persisted: "Please, let not my Lord grow angry if I speak up this last time. What if there are at least ten there?" He replied, "For the sake of those ten, I will not destroy it."*
  - What do you believe was the basis for Abraham's intimate relationship with the Lord?
  - Do you believe the Lord is calling all Christians to this kind of intimate relationship with Him? Why or why not?
  - How would you characterize your current relationship with Jesus Christ? With your heavenly Father?
  - How can these relationships be deepened in your life?
2. The responsorial psalm opens with these words of the psalmist: *I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart, for you have heard the words of my mouth; in the presence of the angels I will sing your praise; I will worship at your holy temple and give thanks to your name.* The psalm ends with these words: *The LORD will complete what he has done for me; your kindness, O LORD, endures forever; forsake not the work of your hands.*
  - What are some of reasons the psalmist gives for the opening words of the psalm?
  - The ending words of the psalm echo St. Paul's words in Philippians 1:6, *I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.* In what ways are these two words similar? In what ways are they different?
  - How confident are you that the Lord will complete the work he has begun in you and members of your family?
3. The second reading begins with these words of St. Paul: *Brothers and sisters: You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. And even when you were dead in transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he brought you to life along with him, having forgiven us all our transgressions; obliterating the bond against us, with its legal claims, which was opposed to us, he also removed it from our midst, nailing it to the cross.*
  - In what ways do St. Paul's words describe the teachings of the Church on Baptism?
  - Do you believe that through Baptism and faith in Christ, all your sins were nailed to the cross?
  - How does (or does not) this truth of our faith influence how you live out your day?
4. The Gospel reading contains Luke's version of the *Our Father*, in response to his disciples' request: *Lord, teach us to pray.* Jesus goes on to tell a story of a man giving three loaves of bread to a friend *because of his persistence.* The reading ends with these words: *And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. What father among you would hand his son a snake when he asks for a fish? Or hand him a scorpion when he asks for an egg? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?*
  - How do Luke's version of the *Our Father*, the story of the friend asking for three loaves, and the ending words of the Gospel reading relate to one another?
  - Matthew's version of the *Our Father* we say at mass, contains these words regarding forgiving others: *forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.* Luke's version contains these words: *forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us.* In what ways do both versions stress the importance of forgiving others? Is there anyone you need to forgive? If so, what is causing you to delay in forgiving them?
5. The meditation ends with these words, "The Father loves you. Always and without exception. He sees your worst sins, and still he wants to hold you close. He offers forgiveness lavishly, reconciliation unreservedly, intimacy wholeheartedly. He gives you all the tools and grace you need to become as merciful as he is. And he protects you from the evil one so that you can spread that mercy far and wide. Jesus gave the disciples so much more than a list of tips for effective prayer. He assured them that they could approach God confidently, knowing he will always listen, always forgive, always provide and protect. And he, who is holy, will do no less for you."
  - Are there any obstacles in your life, for example, your image of your heavenly Father and your relationship with him, that can keep you from believing the above words from the meditation?
  - If so, what steps can you take to help overcome them, especially in your times of worship and personal prayer life?

**Take some time now to pray and ask your heavenly Father for the grace and confidence to never hesitate to come to him in with your needs and desires. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.**

***"Father, I want to know you. Help me to grow closer to you and more confident in your love."***

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization ([www.christlife.org](http://www.christlife.org)), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal ([www.nsc-chariscenter.org](http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org)), and a board member of The Love of Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* ([www.wau.org](http://www.wau.org)), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partner]