

**17<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle C; July 24<sup>th</sup> 2022**  
**Genesis 18:20-32; Colossians 2:12-14; Luke 11: 1-13**

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

Today's first reading and the gospel emphasize the fruit and need of intercessory prayers. God was pleased to inform Abraham ahead of the imminent punishment He would bring down to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. But Abraham was concerned about the innocent people in those regions who would be also perished with wicked. We see Abraham taking the freedom and confidence with God to go on asking Him to show favor to the possible innocent people in Sodom and Gomorrah. He started with 50 possible innocent people and finally concluded with possible ten innocent people. Every time, listening to the plea of Abraham sympathetically, God grants him his wish. Unfortunately, it seems there was not even one innocent person there.

Today's gospel passage has got two sections. In the first part Jesus teaches his disciples the best intercessory prayer of all centuries, **'The Our Father.'** The prayer 'Our Father' is the only prayer Jesus taught his disciples and that is the most perfect prayer ever we have. We find the same prayer in Matthew's gospel in an elaborative form. In the '*Our Father*' all the elements of an ideal prayer are present. **First of all, it starts with the acknowledgment of God as our Father and the petitioner gives glory to the name of God; seeks his kingdom and His holy will; only then he/she goes with presenting the personal needs.** Very often, when you and I pray we are so desperate to get what we need and very selfishly we only concentrate *on our needs* and even forget to thank God for the blessings we have already received. *The prayer 'Our Father' is a clear indication that we should never forget to glorify God's name and seek his kingdom and will before we ask Him to answer our prayers.* If we pray honestly '*thy will be done,*' then we should be content with what God gives. Unfortunately when we pray we seek our will to be done and we get upset with God refusing to do our will.

In the prayer of 'Our Father' Jesus reveals a great truth which was unacceptable to the Jewish people. In this prayer Jesus addresses God as **"Our Father."** Jews never addressed God in the name, Our Father. The Jews also considered God as Father in the sense that He is the Creator of the beings in the world. In that case we can say that Michael Angelo is the father of the statue of Moses. But here Jesus asks us to consider God to be our biological Father.

In the second part of the gospel, using two imageries Jesus shows us how generous and caring is the Father and also how persistent we should be in our prayers. In the first story the friend's initial refusal was overcome by the persistence of his friend. **When Jesus says, "And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you"- means that we should never fail to ask, seek and knock.** But does it mean that we are going to get everything we ask for, just because we are persistent? Our experience shows the opposite. Here again we can compare God with good parents on earth. The good parents know what is good and essential for their children, time to time. But at the same time they give the children the freedom to ask for what they feel good. The parents use their wisdom and experience to choose what is good for their children and don't have any hesitation to turn down a particular request of a child which will not be necessary for him/her.

Very often we are discouraged when we see our prayers are not answered the way we wish. Some people even leave their faith in God for not receiving what they asked for. Couple years ago a very elderly woman told me that she was losing her faith, because God didn't answer her prayer for a genuine need. If we really mean when we pray the '**Our Father- Thy Will be done**'- then there is no reason to become upset with God. It is true, very often, when we ask God to open the door for us. But, please remember, though the door is not opened before us, God will open at least a window for us and He knows that it will be enough for us in that situation. And also all prayers are answered by God in His own way. Even at the critical moments the prayers of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross were not answered the way he wished. But Jesus didn't give up his faith in the Heavenly Father. So we should never give up our hope in prayer and should pray daily. And also our intercessory prayers should not be restricted to our needs alone; we need to pray for the universal Church; the people in the whole world who are suffering.