

Jesus' Teaching on Prayer (17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

Genesis 18:20-32—Abraham Intercedes for Sodom

1. Sodom and Gomorrah: “their sin is very grave” (18:20; cf. Gen 19:4-5)
2. Abraham: prays for God not to “destroy the righteous” with “the wicked” (18:23)
 - a. Righteous: Lot and his family (cf. Wis 10:6; 2 Pet 2:8)
 - b. Wicked: people of Sodom and Gomorrah
3. Prayer of Abraham:
 - a. Humility: “I am but dust and ashes” (18:27)
 - b. Persistence: “Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak” (18:30, 32)

Psalm 138—Lord, on the Day I Called for Help, You Answered Me

1. Petition: “On the day I called, you did answer me” (v. 3)

Colossians 2:12-14—Dying and Rising with Christ in Baptism

1. Baptism and Faith: equals “burial” with Christ and “resurrection” (2:12)

Luke 11:1-13—Jesus' Teachings on Prayer

1. The Prayer of Jesus:
 - a. Example: “he was praying in a certain place” (11:1)
 - b. Instruction: “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples” (11:1)
2. The Lord's Prayer:
 - a. Shorter Version (cf. seven petitions in Matt 6:9-13)
 - b. Different Versions? (not uncommon; cf. Jewish Prayer of “18 Benedictions”)
 - c. God: sanctification of God's “name”; coming of God's “kingdom”
 - d. Humanity: “daily” bread; forgiveness of “sins”; “lead us not into *peirasmos*”
3. Parable of the Persistent Friend:
 - a. Friendship: “lend me three loaves” to provide hospitality (11:5-6)
 - b. Shamelessness: literally, “shamelessness” (Greek *anaideia*); from the root for “self-respect” or “respect” (Greek *aidōs*) (11:8)
 - c. Translation: cf. “importunity” (RSV); “persistence” (NAB); “boldness” (NIV)
4. Prayer of Petition:
 - a. Ask: “it will be given you”
 - b. Seek: “you will find”
 - c. Knock: “it will be opened to you”
 - d. Analogy: the human father gives “good gifts” to his children (11:11)
 - e. Heavenly Father: will give “the Holy Spirit” (cf. Rabbinic *qal-va-homer*)

The Catechism on “Unanswered” Prayer

Catechism: In the first place, we ought to be astonished by this fact: when we praise God or give him thanks for his benefits in general, we are not particularly concerned whether

or not our prayer is acceptable to him. On the other hand, we demand to see the results of our petitions. *What is the image of God that motivates our prayer: an instrument to be used? or the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? Are we asking God for “what is good for us”?* Our Father knows what we need before we ask him, but he awaits our petition because the dignity of his children lies in their freedom. We must pray, then, with his Spirit of freedom, to be able truly to know what he wants. (CCC 2735-36)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

1. What is the sin of the men of Sodom? Why is it so “grave”? (cf. CCC 2357-59)

2. How does Jesus teach his disciples to pray? How does Jesus’ description of prayer as “shameless” and persistent compare with your own habits of prayer? Where can you grow?

3. What does the *Catechism* say about the problem of “unanswered” prayer (see CCC 2735-36)?

For Further Study

1. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 2357-59 (on Homosexuality) and 2759-2865 (on the Lord’s Prayer).
2. Arthur A. Just, Jr. *Luke*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament III. Downers Grove: IVP, 2003.
3. Pablo Gadenz. *The Gospel of Luke*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018.