



Homily for  
THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME  
23/24 July, 2016

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**Fr. Dwayne's homily follows....**

“Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.....”

There are so many things that could be said about prayer in the life of a disciple of Jesus. I would like to focus on just two points.

I. The first stems from a definition of prayer many of us were taught years ago and is retained in the current catechism: “Prayer is the lifting up of the heart and mind to God.” (repeat)

Larry King once co-authored a book on prayer in which he featured the responses of many people on prayer. He asked them, “How do you pray?”

One of those featured was a rabbi by the name of Rabbi Hier who suggested that prayer never contains ego. He said, “If you approach God in total arrogance as if you are in charge of the universe, you will never meet God. God only appears and speaks to those willing to surrender themselves. To these, God appears as

friend and confidant.”

Another response came from a priest – Fr. Paul Keenan – who said, “Prayer is a relationship that trusts that God knows better than I do. Therefore, I’ll give you the reigns, God, and ask that you guide me and bring into my life people that I may love.”

These – and so many other people’s observations about prayer – will all reveal to us that we need an attitude of humility before God in prayer. Jesus taught us to say, “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name...” These words, this address, calls us to look to God with profound reverence and respect – not as though we are pawns in a great chess game, or creatures to fear our god with trembling, but rather in the way a child looks up to, and reveres a parent. We look to God with due respect, but also out of love and devotion.

II. And that is an attitude which should happen, not just in private prayer time, but it should spill out into the whole of our life so that as we go through the day we have an awareness of God always being present to us. Wherever we go, whatever we do, God is present to us, always surrounding us. Think of this attitude as a fish in the ocean – always immersed in water. Or us! – always surrounded by air – everywhere we go, the atmosphere is all around us. So we live and move and always exist within God’s presence.

III. The second point I want to focus on is the importance of holding others in prayer.

If we have an awareness of God always present to us, then we will be growing in awareness of the needs of people all around us.

Look at the passion with which the people in today's readings prayed.

Look at how bold Abraham was in his prayer. In his conversation with God, he kept pushing the bar further and further. Not only did he ask for leniency once or twice or three times – but six times! He was pleading on behalf of the innocent people in Sodom and Gomorrah. And he could not have done this if did not himself already have a deep and personal relationship with God. Only if he had an intimate relationship with God, could he have dared to be so bold in prayer for others.

And in the gospel one friend goes to another asking for bread – not for himself, but for others. He is pleading on behalf of them in the middle of the night. And he is able to do so because he already has a basis of friendship with the man.

Our prayer should also be a prayer on behalf of others and their needs. As we look into the world and the lives around us, our personal relationship with God will enable us to hold the aches and pains and hopes and dreams of others in our heart. Not that these needs would weigh us down, but rather that we lift them up to God in prayer.

Think of the needs which surround us: war, violence, terrorism. Those suffering from natural disasters, diseases of every type, families you know in stress, our loved ones who are dying, those who mourn...the list goes on and on. While we

also pray for our own needs, of vast more importance is opening our hearts and praying for, lifting up, the needs of the world.

IV. Here in this Eucharist, we unite ourselves with the prayer of Christ for the world and with the prayers of his sons and daughters, our brothers and sisters, throughout the world. Together, we hallow the Father's name, and pray for his loving presence in all we say and do.

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