

Preaching Topic Our Father – October 30th 2011 excerpts taken from the book “The Our Father”, by Fr. Bill McCarthy, MSA

As we listen to today’s gospel we are reminded of coming to the Lord humbly not loud and boisterous but humbly in respect and in Love. As we look at this further we see that this approach also draws us to the heart not to the head and ego but to the heart and tenderness. The Lord in ways is teaching us how to pray with a humble heart. We are reminded to pray as the tax collector did not the Pharisee but with humble confession and gratitude as did the tax collector for we all have sinned and we need God’s mercy and forgiveness.

During the mass we are asked to pray in the words that Our Lord taught us the Our Father. At this time during the mass our hearts should be open to this special prayer which we are told contains the message of the Gospel, and was taught to us by our Loving Lord. The Our Father is a communal prayer for the one who preaches peace and unity did not want us to only pray alone but with others and for others that is why the Our Father does not start with My Father but with our Father. The Lord tells us that where ever two or more are gathered in my name there I am in the midst of them. And again after the ascension, scripture tells us “They all joined together in continuous prayer, with the women including Mary, the mother of Jesus, and His brothers. Their urgency and unity of prayer fashioned a bond of unity among them this unity is what our Lord prayed for when he said “Father keep them as one as you and I are one”.

The Lord’s Prayer contains many great mysteries of our faith. In these few words, there is great spiritual strength, for this summary of divine teaching contains all of our prayers and petitions. And so, the Lord commands us: Pray then like this: Our Father, who art in Heaven. John reminds us that we who believe in His name, he gave the power to become children of God. We profess this belief that we are sons and daughters of God by giving thanks and calling upon God, who is our Father in heaven.

HALLOWED BE THY NAME - we would never have dreamed to call God our Father had it not come from His Divine Son. We should therefore bear in mind and realize that when we call God our Father, we ought also to act like His sons and daughters. If we are therefore pleased to call Him Father, let Him in turn be pleased to call us sons and daughters. We should live like the temples of God that we are so that it can be seen that God lives within us. As John wrote in his letter you are not your own; you were bought with great price. So glorify and bear God in your body. When we say hallowed be thy name we are not trying to make God Holy but rather that His name be made Holy within us. How could God be made Holy by us “He who is the source of all holiness” but rather as Jesus said Be Holy, for I am holy. We are then beseeching Him that we who have been hallowed at baptism may persevere in what we have begun.

YOUR KINGDOM COME YOUR WILL BE DONE - Here we pray that the kingdom promised to us by God will come. This kingdom won for us by Christ’s blood and passion. That we who were slaves of the world will reign from now on under the dominion of Christ. This kingdom we are asking and praying for could be in fact Christ Himself.

After this we pray your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Here we pray not that God would do His will but that we may carry out His will. The will of God cannot be done without His mercy and forgiveness. Even Christ in His human nature showed His weakness at

when He prayed Father, if it is possible; let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not as I will but as you will.

All Christ did, all He taught, was the will of God, Humility in our daily lives, and an unwavering faith. Dying to one's self with pure love for God and a willingness to suffer and sacrifice for another is what it means to do the will of God. Again as mentioned earlier we do none of this without God's help through forgiveness and mercy.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD – This petition is both literal and spiritual. In the spiritual sense the Eucharist is our daily bread for He is the bread of life. “Anyone who eats my body and drinks my blood will live forever” Here we pray that Christ will be given to us every day, with His help we will never be separated from the Father.

In the literal sense everything we have comes to us from the Lord, There is an old saying “Pray as if everything depended on God and work as if everything depended on you.” When we seek first the kingdom of God all else shall be given you. God is a loving Father and watches over us in many ways we never see but he is providing for us.

This however also calls us under the will of the Father to be willing to share of our abundance with those in need as the hands of Jesus. He often takes special care of us that we may help others and we called to do this out of love for Christ and our neighbor.

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us” The petition is astonishing. As we ask only for forgiveness in the way that we forgive those who have hurt us. Here we see that mercy cannot penetrate our hearts unless we have shown mercy to others. This petition in the Our Father is the only one that he develops explicitly in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus keeps coming back to this teaching when he says” be merciful, even as your Father is merciful” A new commandment I give you” that you love one another , even as I have loved you. Only by the Spirit by whom we live can make “ours” the same mind that was in Christ Jesus. Forgiveness is a high point of Christian prayer and dependents on God.

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION - implies a decision of the heart.

Here we ask the Lord not to let us yield to temptation.

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.... No one can serve two masters. “If we live by the Spirit let us also walk by the Spirit. It is through the Spirit that we gain strength. It is good to understand that:

God does not want to impose the good, but wants free beings.... There is certain usefulness to temptation. No one but God knows what our soul has received from Him, not even we ourselves. But temptation reveals it in order to teach us to know ourselves, and in this way we discover our evil inclinations and are obliged to give thanks for the goods that temptation has revealed to us.

But deliver us from evil – Here the Lord understands we will still be part of the world but we are asking for His protection from the evil one. Victory over Satan was won by Jesus. Here we also ask for perseverance against the Evil one and his lures of the worldly things. It is again that we come to the Lord in humility asking for His help.

The Our Father given to us by Jesus is a prayer of the humble heart realizing that we have a God of immense Love who is truly a loving Father who sent His only son not to condemn the world but to redeem this world and bring us back to the Father.

The Our Father because of its familiarity can be often said fast and without thinking or opening our hearts to the Father let us remember that Jesus Himself taught us this great prayer and may we pray it for ourselves and the total world that all may know the love of the Father.