

17th Ordinary Sunday
July 28, 2019
“Conversations”

Gen 18:20-32
Col 2: 12-14
Lk 11:1-13

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

We can learn a lot about the relationships of other people by observing how they talk to one another. Enemies will probably avoid speaking to each other if it is at all possible. A person with authority will be addressed with respect – And, hopefully, those in authority will respect those over whom they exercise a leadership role.

We are somewhat guarded when we speak to someone we have just met – and for good reason. We are humble but forthright when speaking to someone to whom we are making a request. And we are relaxed and completely open when we converse with a good friend. Certainly, any lack of respect in any conversation harms the communication no matter to whom we are speaking.

However, the most important part of any conversation is that the parties listen to one another. Whenever we fail to listen, we subvert the conversation and, actually, do harm to the relationship!

Prayer is communication with God. What most people don't understand about prayer is that it is, essentially, a conversation between ourselves and God. We must be respectful – But we must also be forthright and honest – We should be direct and humble from the depths of our soul – And, above all, we must listen! Not to listen is to dishonor God. It is to fail in our openness to how God is responding to what we have to say or request.

In the passage from the Book of Genesis, Abraham is having a conversation with God. Abraham had come to know God well, over his 90-plus years of relationship with God. Abraham knew of the terrible erotic sins of Sodom and Gomorrah. He was worried that his innocent nephew, Lot, and Lot's family would be killed in the impending destruction.

Unfortunately, there were not even 10 innocent people in the towns. However, God's messengers warned Lot – and he was able to escape with his family! In this story, we learn that evil does not go unpunished – but also of God's provident care and mercy.

In the Gospel of St. Luke, Jesus teaches us how we should pray by giving us what has come to be called “The Lord’s Prayer”. We address God as “Father”, because He created us and loves us. We acknowledge that everything about God is holy – and must be honored, respected, and revered. We acknowledge that His kingdom – His all-encompassing reign – and His will, must always be first in our minds and hearts.

Only then do we ask for our very human needs. We admit that we have sinned and need forgiveness – but that we cannot be forgiven ourselves, if we refuse to forgive those who have done harm to us. Finally, we ask for steadfastness up to and including the end of our life here – and to be delivered from the power of satan and the evil he espouses!

What is remarkable is that Jesus does not end his message with the “Lord’s Prayer”. He goes on to tell us that persistence in prayer is what pays off. He reminds us that God is truly our divine, loving Father – And because He loves us, God will always answer our prayer in some way.

This is why Jesus tells us that God will give us the Holy Spirit – the most important gift of all – if we ask. The Holy Spirit is God’s indwelling presence and love in our hearts and souls. The Holy Spirit reveals God’s will and plan for us. We have only to be open and listen. When God withholds what we specifically ask, it is always for some reason that is in His plan. The Holy Spirit can help us see, understand, and accept whatever God sees fit to withhold!

Brothers and Sisters, authentic prayer is always a conversation. It should be a conversation between children and their loving Father. With Jesus, it should be a talk between ourselves and a very wise brother – or like a talk between best of friends. The more we listen to God, the more will we be able to see ourselves as who we are and what God is asking of us in every situation. The more we converse with Jesus, the better will we be able to walk with him as authentic disciples – as well as his brothers and sisters.

So let us pray that we will always be able to pray as Jesus has taught us!

Amen.

July 28, 2019

Msgr. Russell G. Terra