

HOMILY OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES
THURSDAY OF THE TWENTY-SEVENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME
SACRED HEART SEMINARY, HALES CORNERS, WISCONSIN
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My Dear Friends in Christ,

Our time together is drawing to a close. Today, October 11th, marks the 56th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and the Memorial of St. John XXIII. The Council marked a new beginning within the living Tradition of the Church's faith, and its document *Sacrosanctum concilium* taught us that the source and summit of all life in the Church is the Eucharist. Here we are as the Church, gathered in prayer and worship of God.

Yesterday, Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray. He taught them what we call "the Lord's Prayer." He wanted to instill in them the idea that as God's children they could take great confidence that the heavenly Father would provide for all their needs. The all-holy God was not distant or aloof, unconcerned about them; rather, He was close to them, as a father is close to his family. Thus, the disciples ought to approach God as a loving Father, with confidence and trust.

Today, the Divine Master continues to instruct his disciples about how to pray. This time he addresses the need for perseverance in prayer. Saint Luke offers a parable, based on the middle eastern culture and customs regarding hospitality. During the heat of summer, it was difficult to travel during the daytime, so many would travel during the cooler evenings. It was not uncommon for a hungry guest to arrive unexpectedly at night time, but because bread was ordinarily baked in the morning, often there was nothing left to eat. Additionally, the Jews kept their doors open except at night when the entire household had gone to bed; a locked door indicated this. To get up in the night would mean to disturb the sleep of the whole family.

Jesus remarks: *I tell you, if he does not get up because of their friendship, he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence.* He says this to contrast the reluctant response of a neighbor who has been harassed in the middle of the night to give bread with the active readiness of the loving Father to provide for His children's real needs. Thus, Jesus continues: *Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and the door shall be opened.* Disciples, filled with confidence in God, can pray boldly, not hesitating to ask, seek, and knock; the threefold progression indicates continuous action and the need for perseverance.

What makes this audacious and unrelenting prayer possible is an attitude of childlike trust in the Father. If even a wicked father gives good gifts to his children, will not the heavenly Father offer his children far greater gifts?

Nevertheless, the *Catechism* acknowledges that our filial trust in God is tested, saying, "Filial trust is tested – it proves itself – in tribulation. The principal difficulty concerns the *prayer of petition*, for oneself or for others in intercession. Some even stop praying because they think their prayer is not heard." (CCC, 2734)

Here there is a temptation toward Pelagianism, which the Holy Father rightly condemns; that is, many adopt the following attitude: "Since God does not answer my prayers immediately

or in the way that I want, either He is not there and does not care. Therefore, I must do everything myself.”

In the first reading, Saint Paul rebukes the Galatians for being foolish; rather than placing their trust in Christ and the Spirit, they are placing trust in the flesh and in the works of the Law. Sometimes, we too adopt the same, stupid attitude of the Galatians.

What God demands of us is faith. Pope Francis knows that we need not merely to have our prayers instantly answered but that we need to build up good habits that will serve us well throughout our life and into eternity. In an Angelus address he said:

“Our daily journey, especially in times of difficulty, in the battle against the evil that is outside and within us, the Lord is not far away. He is by our side. We battle with Him beside us, and our weapon is prayer which makes us feel his presence beside us, his mercy and also his help. But the battle against evil is a long and hard one; it requires patience and endurance ... Indeed, *persevering prayer* is the expression of faith in a God who calls us to fight with him every day and at every moment in order to conquer evil with good.”

We have been gathered for these days of study and prayer; therefore, I conclude with a short prayer of Saint Thomas Aquinas, patron of theologians: “Grant me, O Lord, a mind to know you, a heart to seek you, wisdom to find you, conduct pleasing to you, faithful perseverance in waiting for you, and hope of finally embracing you. Amen.”