

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

CYCLE C

Genesis 18: 20-32
Colossians 2: 12-14
Luke 11: 1-13

OPENING PRAYER

(An unlit candle and an open bible rest on a table in the gathering place. When all have arrived, the leader lights the candle and calls the community to a time of silent prayer.)

Leader: Last week we took up the challenge of finding time in our busy lives to pray. This week Jesus gives us the *everything* prayer that we call the Our Father. He also offers us advice on how to have our prayers answered. How much time for prayer did you take over the course of the last week? *(Members share briefly.)*

(The leader prays the intentions that follow. To each intention members respond, "Lord, hear our prayer.")

Leader: Let us ask God now for a world of faith, hope and love. For our Church, that all its members may serve as your Son serves, let us pray to the Lord.

For our families, that they will all discover the love that you have for us, that they may live in your comforting hands, let us pray to the Lord.

For our world, that all its leaders may learn to listen to each other, to their people and most of all to you, let us pray to the Lord.

For our people who suffer, that they will be healed by the power of your love, let us pray to the Lord.

For our dead, that they are with you now, let us pray to the Lord.

We thank you for hearing us, O God. Give us the patience to wait for your answers in your time and the wisdom to understand the answers. We pray through Christ Our Lord.

All: Amen.

COMMENTARY

Abraham's persistence is a marvel and a model for us! It is not too difficult to picture a child pestering a parent like that, but a grown man pestering God? Abraham was lucky he didn't get blown away with Sodom and Gomorrah! First fifty, then forty-five, then forty, then thirty, then twenty, then ten becomes the cut-off number for sparing the cities. Could even ten innocent people be found?

Abraham can be seen as the model for the example of persistent prayer that Jesus used in the Gospel. "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." Keep asking; keep seeking; keep knocking.

People are easily discouraged in the world today. We are so accustomed to instant gratification – digital cameras, cable and DSL, live television coverage of events everywhere in the world. It makes it difficult to withdraw ourselves into God's time – the eternal! But the promise that we can do so is there. Jesus has taught us how to pray.

Saint Augustine once said, "You may look through all the prayers in scriptures, but you will not find anything that is not contained in the Lord's Prayer." It is a personal prayer to a personal God. It is a prayer of praise and a prayer for forgiveness and about forgiveness. It is a prayer of petition and a prayer of thanksgiving. In the Lord's prayer, we ask for guidance and deliverance.

Recognizing the privileged place of the Our Father, the Church prays the Lord's Prayer in every celebration of the liturgy of the hours and in the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. Always and everywhere the church is praying the Lord's Prayer. Like Abraham, the church persists in prayer.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ When have you been frustrated in prayer?

What is the balance between listening and speaking in your style of prayer?

- ◆ What is your preferred way to pray?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

- ◆ Set aside ten minutes some day this week to pray slowly each phrase of the Lord's Prayer. Pause after each phrase.
- ◆ Some evening this week before going to bed, sit quietly and listen to a recording of religious music.
- ◆ Pray a decade of the rosary some day this week.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(Members gather around the lit candle and join hands.)

Leader: Saint Augustine said that everything we need to pray is in the Lord's Prayer. Let us pray in the words that Jesus taught us. "Our Father,..."

Leader: God, you hear our praise and you hear our petitions.
We ask in your Son's name.

All: Give us the answer that is best for us.

Leader: We seek in your Son's name.

All: Help us to find your grace anew.

Leader: We knock in your Son's name.

All: Open the doors of our hearts to your people.

Leader: Lord, as we travel life's paths, light our way, give us your peace and let us rejoice in your name.

All: Amen.

(Members exchange a sign of peace.)