

**25 July 2010**  
**17th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**The Word**  
**Childlike trust**  
**Lk 11:1-13**

In today's Gospel, the disciples observe Jesus at prayer. It is something they must have seen so many times, and it must have made a profound impression on them. They want to be able to pray like that too. So, when he is finished, one of them approaches him and asks him to teach them how to pray. Jesus teaches them the Our Father.

The disciples must have been amazed that Jesus would tell them to use the familiar term "Father" to address God. Jews never addressed God like that. They didn't dare to. It was considered too intimate, too brazen a way in which to speak to the Almighty.

Jesus uses the Aramaic word "Abba" for "father". The English word simply does not have the same meaning. "Abba" was the word a little child used in speaking to his father. It was an intimate, homely word. The closest we can get to it in English is if we were to say "dad" or "daddy".

By using the word "Abba," Jesus wants to show his disciples the childlike trust they should have in prayer. They should speak to God in the same trusting way a child speaks to a parent, with the same sense of absolute reliance and total dependency.

By using the word "Abba," Jesus also wants his disciples to realise just how close God is to them. God is not a distant, remote, faraway figure, someone they should be afraid of. He is, rather, a loving, tender, affectionate God, someone who is as close to them and as concerned for them as any loving parent.

That is why they can approach God in prayer with absolute and total confidence. And why we can too.

**Reflect**

Over the years, some people have tended to belittle the prayer of petition, maintaining that the only kind of prayer worthy of the name is the prayer of praise. It is difficult to reconcile this attitude with the first and especially the third reading of today's Mass.

In the first reading, we have the rather startling account of Abraham bargaining with the Lord in an effort to save Sodom from destruction. Abraham engages in a marathon begging session with the Lord, and he succeeds in getting the Lord to make ever greater concessions, to save ever greater numbers of people.

In the gospel reading, St Luke gives us his version of the Lord's Prayer. He follows this with the story of someone who knocks on a friend's door in the middle of the night looking for bread for a visitor. Luke then records Jesus' insistence that those who make petitions should persevere in their requests. He tells his disciples to keep on asking and seeking and knocking.

Certainly, in our prayer we should not fail to give praise, adoration and thanksgiving their proper place. But this does not mean that we should neglect the prayer of petition. If our

prayer of petition is the humble, confident request that it should be, it is an acknowledgement of God's power and care for us, and so implies the prayer of praise.

### **Pray**

Think of someone today who needs your prayers. Pray for them.

### **Do**

Say the Our Father once a day in a spirit of praise and trust in God.

Bother the Lord incessantly with prayer.

Think of God as your daddy, your mum.

### **Learn**

\* Prayer is at the heart of the Christian way of life.

\* The Christian trusts in the Lord, even when the Lord does not seem to answer our prayer or answer as we would wish.

\* We don't always know what's good for us - but God does.

### **Say**

"Lord, I know you are close to me and that you love me. Thank you for giving me what I need. Amen."