

Homily 17th Sunday Ordinary 2022

Prayer can seem so complicated as we encounter various and different methods of praying. When I was doing a Jesuit Course on Spiritual Accompaniment, we were introduced to Centring Prayer, Imaginative Contemplation, Scriptural Fantasy, The Colloquy, The Examen. We pray The Rosary, Novenas, set prayers. We sit silently, we meditate and use all sorts of techniques to engage with God. However, The Catechism offers us however, a more simple and straightforward definition of prayer: 'Prayer is the raising up of the mind and heart to God.'

In today's Gospel the disciples ask Jesus to teach them HOW to pray. Jesus answers by telling them to pray The Our Father...I doubt however, that he meant us to pray The Our Father in rote fashion. Arguably, Jesus was giving his disciples the blueprint of effective and genuine prayer. What are Jesus' teachings therefore, which help us to understand HOW to pray?

When you pray, whatever method you use, remember God is above all ABBA, our Daddy and wants you to pray as a little child, innocent and trusting. Prayer should always begin with the acknowledgement of the holiness and mystery of God as we go before his presence. The building up of God's Kingdom on earth by our love of God and love of neighbour is of paramount importance in prayer and must be in our hearts, minds and intent every time we pray. Prayer must have as it's aim, the total abandonment to God's Holy Will, the essence and pinnacle of spirituality and holiness and the most difficult state to achieve.

Prayer must acknowledge our absolute dependence on God: for life itself, the very breath we take; the bread/food we share at table; the dignity of our neighbour made in God's image and likeness. Prayer must always be accompanied by a disposition of mercy, compassion and forgiveness of and for our neighbour, modelled on God's Love for us - even if this involves personal Calvary causing us great pain and humiliation. Finally, prayer must be marked by a childlike trust in God that any temptation we face can, with his grace, be overcome.

So, whether you use a Jesuit methodology in prayer, you say a daily Rosary or 9 day/month Novenas or whether your prayer is silent listening at the feet of the Lord just ensure that your prayer:

is an intimate chat with God, your Daddy; acknowledges God as holy and mystery, beyond human understanding; focusses on the building up of God's Kingdom on earth and has as its ultimate aim total trust in God;

prayer should also be characterised by total dependence on God, unconditional mercy for our neighbour and absolute trust that with God at our side no power can tempt us to turn away from God 'Our Daddy'.

With these principles, integral to our prayer, even an intimate wee chat with God on the train home will enable us to 'raise up our hearts and our minds to the divinity' with praise and thanksgiving.