

10 Pentecost
 July 28, 2013
 Saint Luke 11:1-13

He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say:

*Father, hallowed be your name.
 Your kingdom come.
 Give us each day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our sins,
 for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.
 And do not bring us to the time of trial."*

And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.' And he answers from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

1. Introduction: Teaching Confirmands Prayer

One joy of teaching Confirmation is teaching Confirmands how to pray. Whether or not they use this spiritual discipline at times other than taking tests I don't know.

You should see the look on their faces when I announce we're all going to take turns praying aloud the closing prayer. Priceless. Sheer fear! Silent screams fill the room. Faces turn beet red. Eyes stare at their \$200 Air Jordans. Confirmands haven't been this scared since the day they went up to Weber for middle school orientation. In the dawning of adolescence, Confirmands don't want to do anything in front of their peers unless they have complete confidence they won't mess up, fail or be ridiculed. Praying out loud frightens them.

I think we, adults, are a lot like adolescents. Adults are uncomfortable doing things we haven't mastered. If I were taking up golf, I'd never go play with our son Bryan, Godson and nephew Kristopher or my brother-in-law, Kevin. They're all excellent, low-handicap golfers, and I wouldn't want to embarrass either them or myself by swinging and missing a teed-up ball.

Fear of embarrassment keeps many adult Christians from praying *ex corde*, from the heart, aloud with either a prayer partner or with a group. We're afraid because no one ever trained us to pray. I feel obligated to teach Confirmands how to pray. This morning the Word of God will teach you because maybe you have glossophobia – the fear of speaking in public – or prosuechophobia – the fear of praying (aloud).

In today's Gospel, the disciples ask the Lord, "**Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.**" In response, the Lord gives them a model prayer – an abbreviated version of what we know and name today as "the Lord's Prayer." This model prayer teaches us the fundamentals of how to pray.

2. The Backdrop

The backdrop to prayer is the Lord Himself. He was in "a certain place" praying. A certain place can be *any* place **as long as distractions are limited**. Some distractions come from within and from without. I was listening the "Busted Halo" radio show on the SiriusXM channel 129, 'the Catholic Channel,' a month or so ago.

If you're wondering why I listen to the Catholic Channel, it's because "Busted Halo's" host is Fr. Dave Dwyer. Fr. Dave grew up here in Port, was a member of Fatima Church. I met him when he was in Schreiber High School. He was a close friend of Wendy & Warren Trunz, Pattie Kettles and all the youth active with Campus Life. Fr. Dave graduated Schreiber and went to Syracuse University, where he was a television, radio, and film major. After college he worked for MTV. Subsequently tapped on the shoulder by the Holy Spirit, he joined the Paulist Fathers, studied for the priesthood, and was Ordained. The "Busted Halo" program's mission is to draw lapsed Roman Catholic twenty- and thirty-somethings back into Mother Church.

On the broadcast I listened to, Fr. Dave conducted a one-on-one interview with Cardinal Timothy Dolan. The subject turned to prayer, and Cardinal Dolan talked about how easily he's distracted while praying the daily office. It's 6 o'clock in the Cathedral House behind St. Patrick's. The Cardinal said he's praying, but he can hear other priests starting cocktail hour – the tinkle of ice in glasses. He hears someone turning on the television to watch the news. He smells dinner, and a voice from within says, "Timothy, go faster. Read your breviary and pray faster." I tell you, if NY's Archbishop admits to distractions while praying, you can sure we will all experience distractions.

When you pray, minimize all distractions from without. Turn off all electronics. Find a certain place, a place of peace and tranquility, so you can focus. Jesus prayed undistracted in a certain place to commune with His heavenly Father, our heavenly Father.

I teach Confirmands to close their eyes and use their mind's screen to picture Jesus, to picture Jesus as a person, so their praying will be conversational, like speaking to a friend. But closed eyes and bowed heads are not requirements. You can pray looking at a religious object such as an icon or cross or a stained-glass window. I see some of you are praying right now!

3. How To Pray

So, find yourself a tranquil place and picture speaking to the Lord in the same way you would a friend. Then what do you do?

The Lord's Prayer is a simple prayer. We begin by asking God's name to be hallowed among us by the way we live daily. God's name is our core belief. We believe in a God Whose name begins as Father. The Aramaic word Jesus used is "Abba." Not the Swedish rock group but the Aramaic word meaning, "Daddy." Trusting God is like a loving Daddy is core value motivating us to organize our lives around Him. Hallowed be Your Name, Daddy!

Your government come! This is a demand. Your government come! Daddy, bring Your government of peace, reconciliation and justice. Bring Your government in which everyone has food, shelter, health, education and the opportunity for meaningful work. Bring Your government until there's no violence, no warfare, no Trayvon Martin – George Zimmermann fractures.

The petitions of the Lord's Prayer are **simple**. We pray for **sustenance**, for daily bread, for all we need from day to day. We pray for **loving relationships** worked by practicing forgiveness among family, friends,

neighbors and citizens everywhere marked by forgiveness. And we pray for **safety** – not only for those in my canoe but also for those in my neighbor’s canoe.

Remove distractions, and pray simple, short-and-sweet prayers. Short prayers are faithful prayers when we turn, as Martin Luther says, “**to God with heartfelt longing.**” The Lord illustrates trusting God with heartfelt longing by comparing God to a loving dad. Like a daddy who doesn’t give his children snakes and scorpions, God gives us only good gifts. Nothing bad ever comes from God. Prayer is grounded in God’s goodness and all God’s promises!

Trusting God is, and always will be, a challenge when we our prayers go unanswered. But we persist in prayer as the Lord’s little parable teaches about a neighbor knocking on his neighbor’s door.

This is a real guy story. This is not a June Cleaver parable. I picture the scene this way. Mike DePalma, living at 66 Orchard Farm, comes across the street to the parsonage and rings the bell at 2 in the morning. Jean, awake watching the Hallmark Channel nudges me. “Honey Bunny, there’s someone at the front door.” “Go to sleep, I tell her. It’s the tv.” The bell rings again. “See, I told you. Someone’s at the door.”

The windows in the upstairs front room are open. I yell out the window, “Who’s there, and what do you want?” Mike says, “My brother just arrived from NJ and he’s hungry. Denise and I are making him a late-night breakfast. May I borrow three English muffins?”

“Go away,” I say. It’s 2 in the morning. I was sound asleep. You’re waking up the whole neighborhood. Go down to Dairy Barn, for Pete’s sake!” “Dairy Barn’s defunct,” yells Mike. “May I please have three English muffins?” “Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Okay, okay, I’ll get the muffins.”

Pray in trust *and keep at it* when you don’t get the answer you think you want. Pray in trust even when God is seemingly silent or distant or uncaring. Pray God wants to give only good gifts to His children and give us His Holy Spirit, the Source of Strength beyond ourselves.

Let’s recap:

- Find a certain place free from external distractions and fight off internal distractions;
- Make prayer conversational. The Lord’s not only your Savior but also your BFF – best friend forever;
- Pray short prayers for life’s essentials: sustenance, loving relations, and safety;
- Pray trusting God’s goodness and grace, and persist when your prayers are met with silence;
- Pray for strengthening of faith, for receiving the Holy Spirit; and,
- Finally, as Luther teaches us, “Pray, and let God do the worrying and fretting.”

While shedding His blood for you, Jesus prayed. He prayed Psalm 22, including verse 11, “**Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.**”

He was buried, and three days later He was raised. So, there was help for the Lord at the Cross! God exalted Him through a resurrection and so we have come to believe our help is in the Name of the Lord, the Maker of Heaven and earth, the Lord Who revealed Himself as Jesus the Christ, the Lord Who pours out His Holy Spirit to strengthen us.

Pray on, Church! Pray on! Amen.

