

SUNDAY REFLECTION 28th JULY 2019
17th Sunday of ORDINARY TIME

GOSPEL: LUKE 11: 1-13

Once Jesus was in a certain place praying and when he had finished one of his disciples said, 'Lord teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.' He said to them, 'Say this when you pray: "Father, may your name be held holy, your kingdom come, give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive each one who is in debt to us. And do not put us to the test."'

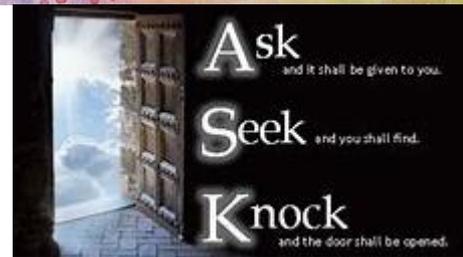
He also said to them, 'Suppose one of you has a friend and goes to him in the middle of the night to say, "My friend, lend me three loaves because a friend of mine on his travels has just arrived at my house and I have nothing to offer him; and the man answers from inside the house, "Do not bother me. The door is bolted now, and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up to give it to you," I tell you, if the man does not get up and give it to him for friendship's sake, persistence will be enough to make him get up and give his friend all he wants.

'So I say to you: Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For the one who asks always receives; the one who searches always finds, the one who knocks will always have the door opened to him. What father among you would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread? Or hand him a snake instead of a fish? Or hand him a scorpion if he asked for an egg? If you then, who are evil, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!'

EMBRACING THE WORLD

In the gospel, the disciples ask Jesus how to pray. This prayer serves as an affirmation of the worldview Jesus teaches; it is a living synopsis of Christian life. God's priorities are to be our priorities. It is not a 'me-and-Jesus' prayer but an example of how prayer ought to affect us and walk this earth as members of God's family. Jesus response is simple: **'God is Holy. Ask for God's reign over all things to become a reality in your life and in your world. Live simply; one day at a time. Stay humble and ask pardon for your wrongdoings. God will give you the Holy Spirit to help you live in this new way.'**

Through prayer and contemplation, opening oneself to the Spirit, will lead us on the way of compassion, and it will lead us to transformation, not just as individuals but as a community.



The prayer that Jesus teaches challenges us to not only use our lips but to be formed into a community of compassion and justice that ensures all of God's children have 'their daily bread'. It reminds us God's reign is a reign of justice, healing, mercy, and love – on earth, not in heaven.

Paul and Luke today offer a blueprint for grounding ourselves to be more attentive to the needs of others. When faced with corruption, atrocity, hypocrisy, and tragedy let us ask with deep sighs for God to come and renew the face of the earth that we may see where we can respond; to align ourselves with God's dream; to add ourselves to God's movement for change and transformation. If we do not know where to start, let us open our eyes and ask the questions of those in power about norms of justice and judgement.

Are our prayers doing any good? Is God really listening? Where is God's radical intervention that will change the face of the world?

Walter Wink, biblical scholar, tells us that God is close to us, within us, involved in creation and that when we pray for peace and justice and liberation, God hears our prayers. But "God's ability to intervene ... is sometimes tragically restricted in ways we cannot pretend to understand. It takes considerable spiritual maturity to live in the tension between these two facts: God has heard our prayer, and the Powers (structures and institutions that exploit, oppress and perpetuate injustice in the world) are blocking God's response."

Walter calls intercession the politics of hope. People who engage in intercessory prayer are instruments of that hope. To pray for others and the world means that we have a vision of the future. It requires us to believe the impossible is possible. It demands that we live in this moment as if the future were already here, we become prophetic – **"The true prophetic message calls us to stretch our arms out wide and embrace the whole world. In holy boldness we cover the earth with the grace and the mercy of God."** (Richard Foster, 1992)

A CALL TO COMPASSION - the 6th anniversary of incarceration on Manus Island and Nauru

This year, on 17th April Sprent Dabwido, the former president of Nauru who brokered a deal with the Australian government to re-open the detention centre, said he felt at least partly responsible for the deaths of asylum seekers on Nauru. *"I thought I was helping Australia, I thought I was helping the refugees themselves. Eventually it becomes torture when you don't have a future."*

WE READ: The Federal election campaign of 2013 was the first time in our political history that both major parties campaigned on a promise to be cruel to a particular group of human beings. They promised to treat those seeking asylum so harshly that others would be deterred from seeking our help. This completely ignores the point of the Refugees Convention, and it ignores Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Right.

WE REFLECT: remembering and acknowledging the members of our human family who are suffering as a result of the punitive and harsh policies and conditions to which people seeking asylum in Australia are being subjected

WE STAND with the refugees brought from Manus Island and Nauru who are subjected to body searches, denied access to family and kept in bug-ridden rooms while waiting for treatment. From her hotel in Brisbane, through a screen door, Nesha* can make out part of the city skyline. Even the view is prohibited. She spends most of the day in the small room, leaving only briefly to eat. Her balcony is kept locked. Serco guards sit permanently in the corridor, entering Nesha's room at night and causing her ongoing panic attacks. When she has to leave for an appointment, two security staff escort her "like a criminal" by gripping her upper arms. Leaving the hotel for any reason involves regular invasive body cavity searches by security staff.

WE PRAY:

We lament the lack of compassion for people seeking asylum in Australia, we lament the denial of human dignity and freedom, we lament the indifference, we lament our inability so far to turn the tide.

1. We pray for the women, men and children who embark on hazardous journeys seeking freedom and dignity.
2. We pray that the Australian community may experience a change of heart, and welcome those who come to our shores.
3. We pray for an end to the violence and poverty that displace so many of our sisters and brothers from their homes and homelands.
4. We pray that all Australian political parties may come to an awareness of their legal and moral responsibilities to people seeking asylum and refuge.

LIGHT a candle for the more than 20 who have died as a result of the cruelty of our policies. WE grieve with the 90 men who have self-harmed or attempted suicide on Manus Island since the election in May and for the gentle Hazari man who set himself alight in the Melbourne detention Centre on Tuesday. We give thanks for the many women and men of courage and compassion who continue to speak up for and offer ongoing support to those who are suffering in our detention centres.

The Governor of Manus Island Province recently called for action from the Australian Government. After the dramatic increase in self-harm and suicide attempts among people seeking asylum in Papua New Guinea since the Australian election, he said, "They don't want to be here and Australia, you have to take responsibility. You have to move them." There has not been any response from our government to this plea.

Earlier this year, the Catholic Bishops of PNG made a similar plea. "These people have paid a price that is beyond what humans can tolerate... they are giving up on their lives... this chapter has to close. There is one and only one solution," he said. "For the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea to tell the Prime Minister of Australia, that enough is enough."

LET US ACT:

- ✚ We call on the Australian government to show compassion to people seeking asylum in Australia;
- ✚ We call on the Australian government to uphold the human rights and human dignity of all asylum seekers;
- ✚ We commit to talking to our friends, colleagues and our federal member about the rights of asylum seekers; we hope for a turn in the tide.