

## Year C II Seventeenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

- What wonderful readings we have today, truly outstanding examples of God's justice, love and mercy.
- This story in the first reading from Genesis presents a wonderful scene— illustrating at once God's justice and his clemency. For the sake of ten just men he would spare a whole city whose iniquity cried aloud to heaven. "Shall he who rules all the world not act with justice?"
- St. Thomas and others define justice as the "constant and perpetual will to give another his due." Or in other words, always wanting to give to another what they deserve or have earned.
- We as human beings often fall short of this definition. We are moved by emotions anger, fear or love. This sometimes leads us to act unjustly.
- God, however, cannot be unjust because He is the ultimate justice, justice itself in fact.
- But God is not pure justice and nothing else, no He is also Love and Mercy. And because of His love for us He is merciful to those that humbly seek His Mercy.
- Because the people of Sodom and Gomorrah would not humble themselves and ask for God's mercy, Abraham did it for them.
- How many of us would love our neighbors enough to stand in front of God and ask Him to do something different than He had set out to do?
- Abraham knew that the Lord was just, but he also knows that he is merciful, it is his confidence in God's mercy that allows him to speak the way he did.
- Abraham asks, but never demands, he humbles himself before God even saying "See how I am presuming to speak to my Lord, though I am only dust and ashes!"
- This should give us the same confidence when we approach God in prayer on behalf of someone else! Even though we may sin, if we humbly approach God in prayer for someone else, we can have confidence in God's love and his mercy.
- All of this help to illustrate the beauty of today's Gospel reading.
- The disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray. And as in all things that He does Jesus gives us the most perfect prayer.
- By teaching his disciples to begin their prayers with the words 'Our Father', Jesus wishes to inspire them with confidence; there are two things looked

for in the person from whom we seek favours: the ability to do what we require and the goodwill to do it for us. But if God is our Father, then he has our good at heart, and if he is a heavenly Father then there is no need to doubt his ability.

- Jesus then tells the story of a man in need of something from his neighbor and having been initially refused, keeps asking and through perseverance finally gets what he needs. Very similar to Abraham in the first reading.
- Is Jesus telling us to be a pest and to bother our neighbors? No, of course not. That would not be very loving to our neighbor and we would probably not have too many friends after doing this to them a few times.
- Are we supposed to pester God with constant requests for what we want? Not exactly, remember that a lot of what Jesus teaches us focuses not only on what we are doing but on why and how we do it also.
- Jesus, in answer to the request of His apostles, taught them how men ought to pray. But Jesus knew that those who had received this teaching, would pray according to the form given to them, but carelessly and lazily, and then when they were not heard in the first or second prayer, would stop praying. That this might not be our case, He shows us by means of a parable, that cowardice in our prayers is hurtful, but it is of great advantage to have patience in them.
- The Gospels only show us one instance of Jesus praying for Himself, during his agony in the garden of Gethsemane. In this prayer we see Jesus, even in the midst of tremendous suffering, teaching us by example how to approach praying for things we want when He ends His prayer with “not by will, but yours be done.”
- We must trust in God’s will, in his perfect plan, to provide us with just the right thing at the right time because we don’t always want what is good for us, or we may not understand why what we want is not what we need at the time.
- Look closely at the examples that Jesus gives the disciples, “What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?”
- He speaks about a son asking a father for food, for something that is needed as well as wanted.

- Jesus assures us “Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”
- But how God answers our prayers may not be in a way that we expect.
- There is a song that says “I prayed for strength and I got pain that made me strong. I prayed for courage and got fear to overcome. When I prayed for faith my empty heart brought me to my knees, I don't always get what I want I get what I need.”
- In my own life I learned this quite well. When I was having trouble trusting in God’s will and his plan for my life, I prayed that he would help me trust.
- Now this might come as a bit of a surprise to some of you, but as a man, I don’t always see or understand subtle clues or hints. I see all the women understand this.
- Being a bit hard headed and stubborn it seems that God knew the answer to this prayer would have to be a simple and obvious one.
- So he sent me a benign brain tumor. This was the perfect answer to my prayer.
- Some of you might think that I’m insane, and you might be right.
- But I know for certain that this is so and I’ll tell you why. By giving me this illness God put me into a position where I could either trust Him or despair and give up hope.
- I chose to trust Him.
- I have received so many blessings as a result. I wish I had time to tell you about all of them, but I’ve gone on long enough.
- Remember today’s lessons and when you are going through your daily routines this week, I invite you to look back on your lives and see where God has given you an unexpected or even expected answer to your prayers.
- Can you see now how it was the perfect thing at the perfect time?
- That my friends is the wonderful, amazing God we have as our Father.