

February 25, 2021

Thursday of the 1st Week of Lent

Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25

Matt 7:7-12

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”

I think this Scripture passage is often misunderstood. It is NOT an invitation to treat prayer as some sort of letter to Santa Claus asking that our every wish be granted and that our every desire be fulfilled. Rather, this Scripture passage is teaching that if you want something, you better work for it. You gotta ask; you gotta seek; you gotta knock. Otherwise, don't bother praying for it. But if you are committed to working toward a goal, your chances of success are greatly increased if you involve God in your quest.

I find it interesting that this teaching on prayer in Matthew's Gospel concludes with the Golden Rule: “Do unto others whatever you would have them do to you”. I think the point is this. If you are pursuing an objective and you decide to ask God to help you, make sure that what you are trying to achieve is not something to be gained at the expense of others, but rather something that will benefit others.

The first reading today from the Book of Esther clearly illustrates this teaching of Jesus about prayer.

Esther is the favorite wife of the Emperor of Persia during the time that Israel existed only because it came under the protection of Persia. There is a plot afoot in the court of the Persian Emperor designed to launch a campaign of genocide against the Jews. What the Emperor doesn't know is that Esther herself is a Jew.

To make a long story short, Esther is presented with a window of opportunity to foil the plot against the Jews through some political intrigue of her own, but executing her plan puts Esther's life at risk. Nevertheless, Esther proceeds with her plan. But recognizing the mortal risk she is taking, Esther prays. **“My Lord, you alone are our King. Help me, who am alone and have no help but You.”**

Esther is fully committed to her planned course of action to save her people. Her cause is worthy, so through prayer she involves the Lord in her quest. In the end, the Lord answers Esther's prayer and she is successful in saving her people—and herself.

So remember this. Prayer is most powerful when you are committed to actions worthy of the Lord's help because your actions are designed to help others.

As we continue our celebration today, let us ask the Lord to help us choose pursuits that are designed to benefit others. May He then give us the wisdom to seek His involvement in our activities so that doors may be opened.