July 24, 2022
17ᵗʰ Sunday in Ordinary Time
Gen 18:20-32
Ps 138:1-3,6-8
Col 2:12-14
Lk 11:1-13

GROWING IN PRAYER?

A mother was headed to McDonald's with her 5-year-old son one day, and as they drove they passed a car accident. The mother had a practice of encouraging her children to pray for those who might be hurt, so the mother pointed and said to her son, **"We should pray."** From the back seat she heard his prayer: **"Please, God, don't let those cars block the entrance to the McDonald's."**

What the little boy uttered was a prayer. However, there is something wrong with it. **What is wrong with that prayer?** The prayer uttered by the little boy was so self-centered. His mother was asking for prayers for the car accident victim but the prayer he uttered was for himself.

How is our prayer life? Are we becoming more and more God-centered and other-centered? Is there growth in our personal relationship with the Lord Jesus especially in the context of the Holy Eucharist/Mass? Or are we stagnating/declining in our prayer?

In our gospel proclaimed we have heard St. Luke's version of the '**Lord's Prayer** or **Our Father**.' His version is shorter than St. Matthew's version. Regardless of the version, the prayer contains three (3) common elements of Jewish prayers, namely: **praise**,**petition**, and **a yearning for the coming of the kingdom of God**.

Are these three (3) common elements of prayer present in the celebration of the Mass? Where can we find the parts of praise, petition, and a yearning for the coming of the kingdom of God in the celebration?

In the celebration of the Mass, we praise the Holy Trinity when we make the **Sign of the Cross**. We praise the Triune God for gathering us as a community of faith. This praise part is also visible when we sing the **Gloria**. In singing it, we join the hymn of praise of the angels who sang at Christ's birth, and that John heard in heaven *(Lk 2:13-14, Rv 15:4)*. In singing it, we are expressing our great joy in God for becoming one like us in all things except sin. The praise part is also imbedded in the**Eucharist Prayer** that the priest prays.

What about the petition part? In the **Penitential Rite**, after acknowledging humbly our sins, we are petitioning/imploring/begging the Lord Jesus 'to have mercy on us, sinners.' Thus, we say or sing, **"Lord, have mercy."** In the **Prayers of the Faithful**, we are petitioning/pleading the Lord Jesus for the needs of the Church, the world, and the local community. Basically, the prayer of petition acknowledges both our poverty and God's great riches. In the prayer of petition, we recognize God's goodness and greatness. In our petition we admit that without him we can really do nothing.

On the other hand, the **yearning for the coming of the kingdom** is very evident, for example, in the singing of the **Holy**, **Holy** wherein we hope to join the angels and saints in heaven one day. We also reiterate this longing when we pray the **Our Father**. In praying it, we are not only 'asking for our daily bread.' More than the bread, we are longing that 'his will be done here on earth as it is in heaven.' This longing for God's kingdom is expressed after the **Our Father** when we say, **"For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever."** When we humbly receive the Lord Jesus in Communion, we are demonstrating our thirst to be more and more like him. We hope and pray that we 'become what we eat' in the celebration of the Mass.

Indeed, the celebration of the Mass is a beautiful prayer celebrated by the community of faith. The people gathered in faith express their **praises**, **petitions**, and **yearning for the kingdom**. In return, the Lord Jesus gives the grace to his people gathered. Hence, the Mass becomes a 'real encounter' between the Lord Jesus and his people.

As we offer this Mass, let us continue to thank the Lord Jesus for instituting the Mass which for us, Catholic, is the source and summit of our Christian life and the highest form of prayer done by the community of faith.

God bless and stay safe!