



### **Seventeenth Sunday Ordinary Time**

Genesis 18:20-32 Colossians 2:12-14 Luke 11: 1-13

“God gave you new life in company with Christ.”

What a wonderful message from Paul. Why do we find it so hard to believe that a close relationship with God is within our reach?

Most children don't spend time reflecting on their relationship with their parents they take it for granted. As we grow older we are aware of the costs involved in parenting so we come to appreciate at a new level, and with adult understanding what we have received. As our relationship matures our parents cease to be just someone to fulfil our needs, but people with concerns that are much wider than the family.

The Gospels and New testament writings show us how to develop an adult relationship with God. We call the process of growing in our relationship with God, prayer.

In this passage from Luke, the writer tells of a conversation the disciples had with Jesus about prayer.

They knew about the public, temple and synagogue prayer and they had stories of great dialogues between God and people like Moses and the prophets but they wanted to know about the quiet times. They knew Jesus took time out from the busy round of healing and teaching.

Jesus gave the disciples a model or pattern of prayer which later became formalised in the Our Father. This pattern begins with a greeting which acknowledges the dignity of God but maintains intimacy. Then the prayer touches on the hopes of God for the world.

As food is the fuel of life so we need both natural and spiritual nourishment on a daily basis.

The final part of the prayer asks for forgiveness, knowing that we need to remind ourselves how easily we forget the responsibilities we have to others and to the planet. We also ask for the courage to face the trials and testings of discipleship, as Jesus did, knowing that in whatever befalls us God is present.

We can put this in even more easily remembered terms.

Give glory and thanks to God. Ask for what you need to be a good disciple. Ask for forgiveness for weaknesses, and strength to be faithful to the mission.

Jesus tells two stories to illustrate aspects of prayer.

God is like a good friend whom you go to in difficulty. When someone asks for help we often give it so that we won't be bothered too much. Jesus says our friends aren't always pleased to see us but we ask anyway. God is our friend so ask even if we think we've let the friendship lapse.

In the next story Jesus says God is like a parent who is faced with a child who asks for something dangerous. A good parent will not allow harm to come to the child. Sometimes what we ask for isn't possible so we have to trust that God will help us to accept the outcome.

God does not run a heavenly Warehouse. God doesn't change the laws of nature for our convenience. God doesn't harm us. People harm people. Sometimes the connection isn't always easy to see – like flooding that follows de-forestation. The land takes time to heal after disasters but even the planet cannot keep up with rate at which it is harmed.

Life and death are great mysteries. When we are confronted with these great mysteries we often become afraid and cry out for some explanation. The loss of control we experience reminds us of our fragility.

Jesus tells us that God is with us in our pain. In the middle of the dark and confusion we need to hold on to this belief.