

The common theme of our first reading and Gospel passage today is prayer of petition. We notice Abraham in the first reading petitioning God to spare a wicked city from destruction. Then in the Gospel we see our Lord instructing us to ask for what we need. Each time we ask God for something we are following our Lord's instruction in today's Gospel to ask God for what we need. If we think of all the different times in our private prayer and in the Mass we have asked God for things, we see how great that number is. That great number shows how we are obeying our Lord's instruction in today's Gospel to pray for those intentions.

If we wonder sometimes why our prayers are not answered, the way we ask them to be answered (such as when we pray for peace in the world) we can remember that it is God's decision to give each person a free will so that if some do not want peace, we then understand how wars continue despite our prayers. Those prayers are still valuable even though they do not seem to be answered for that reason or for other reasons.

One of the ways they are valuable is that they bring us closer to God. As the Navarre commentary points out, we see in the Gospel today the disciples asked our Lord how to pray because they had seen him praying. That shows us how important our example of praying is for young people. That prayer our Lord taught the Apostles is the perfect prayer of petition because our Lord gave it to us. The Navarre commentary explains that the Our Father, on one hand, is so simple that a child can learn it, but at the same time has such depth that a whole life can be spent meditating on its meaning. We see an example of those meanings the Our Father has and so see the depth of meanings it has by seeing how the Catechism of St. Pius X explains it. That catechism explains that the first line of the Our Father, when it asks for God's name to be hallowed, is praying that all people on earth come to know God and that all people come into or return to the Church. That Catechism teaches that when we pray Thy Kingdom come, in addition to praying for God's kingdom to come in its fulfillment at the end of time, we are also praying for the kingdom of God which is in each of us because of our baptism.

That kingdom of God in us is God's grace and we ask God to be in our souls and that he keeps us united to Him through our faith, hope and charity. When we pray that God's will be done, our Lord gives us an example of how to understand that when he was in the Garden of Gethsemane on the first Holy Thursday night, where he prayed that the suffering he knew would come could be avoided, but that if it was the Father's will that he suffer, then that is what our Lord wanted too. St. Bernard of Clairvaux in speaking about our Lord's saying "Thy will be done" points out that our wills are often different from God's will. That shows us why we must make the effort daily to live our faith and why prayer is needed, why the Sacrament of Reconciliation is needed, so that we will know and do God's will.

The St. Pius X catechism teaches that when we pray for our daily bread we are to ask God for what we need for both our soul and body. We ask for his grace which we need continually. That Catechism of St. Pius X teaches as well that our soul is sustained mainly by God's word and Holy Communion. St. Bernard says we ask God for material things and that we are to ask for them for the purpose of supporting us in God's service. St. Bernard says we are to pray mostly for the necessities of our souls, for grace and the virtues and that we must pray for the crown of eternal life.

The parable of the friend asking for bread at midnight in today's Gospel, the Navarre commentary explains, is to teach us the need for perseverance in prayer. St. Bede says we need to persevere in prayer by praying constantly. St. John Vianney speaks about perseverance in prayer by saying one of the reasons we would not receive what we ask God for is that we do not persevere in

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prayer. He says other reasons our prayers would not be answered are that we do not pray with faith or with pure hearts or with confidence. He says God has never refused and will never refuse anything to those who ask for his graces the way they should. So, we remember to ask God to help us pray with the proper disposition.

As we continue with this celebration of the Eucharist, we remember that this representation of our Lord's sacrifice on Calvary is the greatest prayer.