

HOMILY 17th Sunday Ordinary Time
July 27, 2025

I pray you'll be our eyes, and watch us where we go
and help us to be wise in times when we don't know.
Let this be our prayer, when we lose our way.
Lead us to a place, guide us with your grace,
to a place where we'll be safe.

In the Gospel reading today the disciples ask Jesus to teach them how to pray. We hear a rather abbreviated version of the Our Father that most of us have probably recited thousands and thousands of times. We can say the Our Father and there is nothing wrong with this, but today I want to talk about praying the Our Father because it gives us a blueprint on how to pray. We start "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." We are to acknowledge God's divine nature and how good he is to us. Tell God what you are grateful for today. We have talked about the benefits of keeping a gratitude journal before. It can significantly improve our mental physical and spiritual well being.

Next we say, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." We are telling God that we want to do his will. We can start by telling Jesus what we think we want. That is a good starting point, but God will not give us something that is not good for us. He loves us unconditionally and wants what is best for us. If we do God's will, that will lead to fulfillment, meaning and joy. And we must be persistent in prayer. This does not mean to be persistent in asking for what we want without variation. Discerning God's will is a process. It unfolds over time. Maybe what we want is not God's will at all. We need to be open to what God may be offering us. Be open to the things that are being offered to you as you go through your day. Your answer may not come during your prayer time. Being persistent in prayer is not about wearing God down until he finally gives you what you want. We do not change God through our prayer, he is constant. Prayer changes us.

We also say: "Give us this day our daily bread." We do not say give us enough bread to last for the rest of our lives. Sometimes we would like enough money today to last for the rest of our lives. Sometimes we would like the complete blueprint of what is going to happen for the rest of our lives. That is not the way life works. We try to make plans and then life happens. It is best to focus upon what you need to do today. Today

is really all we have. We sometimes spend too much time living in the past, which we cannot change, or living for the future that may never come. We need to set a general course and then let it unfold over time. And I am grateful that I do not have that detailed blueprint of the rest of my life. I think if I got that all at once, I would be totally overwhelmed and immobilized, but I can usually handle what I need to do today.

So, let's walk through an example. Say you were given a diagnosis of cancer. That is usually a big scare. You take it to prayer. Start by thanking God for the blessings he has given you. This will remind you of how good God has been to you so far and how he loves you. This diagnosis may put you face to face with your mortality for the first time. We all know that we are going to die some day, but now it is more real. If your time may be limited, what do you want to do now? Maybe there are things you have been putting off that you want to do now, getting your affairs in order, taking that trip, reconciling with a friend or family member. Our time has always been limited but now it seems real. We need to pray about our treatment options and the decisions we need to make. We will need strength to get through the treatment. We need to ask God each day for help doing what we need to do today. We need to keep praying while this unfolds. If you focus just upon what you need to do today, you will probably be able to do that. Say you get a good result and are cancer free. Stay persistent in prayer. Your time is still limited and you need to continue to stop procrastinating. Say you do not get a good result. Your treatments are not working. Is further treatment going to help you or just make you sick? Do you want to stop the treatments and make the most of the time you have left? Do you want to try every possible treatment option? How do you want to die? Where do you want to be? Who do you want to be with? How do you want to be taken care of and by whom? All things to pray about. And we have to pray for one another. The prayer can help to give us the spiritual strength to do what we need to do each day.

So thank God for his love and blessings, try to do his will, focus upon what you need to do each day, and be persistent in prayer. That is what we can learn from the Gospel reading and the Our Father today.