



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Gospel this weekend calls us to prayer. We begin the Gospel with Luke's account of the Lord's prayer. You may notice it is shorter than the one we know, the one that Matthew shares with us (Matthew 6:9-13). (Just a note that Jesus was preaching and teaching for three years, so it probably happened that he said the same thing more than once, and had a different twist depending on the context.)

In this scene, the disciples see Jesus praying and are so amazed at the depth of His prayer, they ask Him to teach them. What is the heart of prayer? Not asking for things. Not promising to be good. Not telling God how great He is. It's *relationship*. Jesus starts by saying, "**Father.**" While the text is written in Greek, Jesus probably taught them to say, "Abba" "Daddy." We lose track of how radical and how intimate a prayer this is. Jesus shows us that we can call the God of the universe, "Dad"!! The heart of prayer is a profound trust and confidence in the relationship God has toward us. This is emphasized later in the Gospel as Jesus tells us to ask, seek and knock, and that we

know how to give good things to our children "**how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?**" (Luke 11:13).

Jesus invites us into a relationship of trust with God, trusting His goodness and providence, trusting His love for us. Over the years, I have seen the fidelity of God in action. There have been times that I have asked God for miracles, and He has delivered. There have been times when I begged Him for understanding, and He has given it. There have been times I have been in desperate need of healing and comfort, and He has come through. (There have also been times when He has made me wait, or has shown me that He has something better in mind, but His fidelity has given me the trust for these situations.) With this incredible love poured out from God, why do I sometimes delay my prayer, or put it off for another day?

To be honest, sometimes prayer is boring. I know, you're not supposed to say that out loud, but there are times that it is dry, empty and seemingly lifeless. I think there are a few reasons for this. One might be that I might not be in a state of grace. There are times when my sins keep me from being embraced by the love of God. I know that I have turned away from Him and I don't want to face Him, or I don't want to have to repent of my sin... so I avoid Him. This can be compared to a teenager not looking at His mother, but she comes over and gives Him a big hug from behind anyway. We turn our back on God, despite His incredible love for us.

Other times, prayer might be dry because I am so immersed in the world, I cannot enter into real prayer. I think of all the times when "what I would rather do" comes into my mind. These distractions, if not repelled, keep me from giving myself to the Lord. Imagine you're with a friend, but the whole time you're thinking about being with someone else. What will that do to your attitude and your relationship with the friend you're with? I think also about the distractions of "the screens." They give us instant gratification. It doesn't last, but it *is* immediate. Relationships give us much deeper satisfaction and joy, but they take more time to develop, and they cost something – for all love has some element of suffering involved. If we're not willing to say "no" to the screens – and every other form of instant gratification – in some parts of our lives, we will find friendship with God boring and empty. It is when we turn away from those things that we open our hearts to the deeper and longer lasting joy of relationship with God.

Another reason prayer might seem empty is that that is the normal cycles of the spiritual life. God gives us times of consolation, but He also allows times of desolation so that we do not cling to the gifts, but to *the Giver*. We have ups and downs in the spiritual life. Even for the best of saints there are times of dryness, periods of the dark night of the senses and of the soul. The Lord allows these in order to purify our desires and to draw us closer to Him in our emptiness.

May we continue to seek God with all our hearts, seeking out time of prayer – even in dryness – so that we can grow in our relationship with our God and Father who is head-over-heels in love with us.