

*And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend to whom he goes at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, for a friend of mine has arrived at my house from a journey and I have nothing to offer him,' and he says in reply from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked and my children and I are already in bed. I cannot get up to give you anything.' I tell you, if he does not get up to give him the loaves because of their friendship, he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence. And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." (Luke 11:5-10)*

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

In the Gospel for the Sixteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time, Jesus teaches His disciples about prayer. In the passage above, Jesus provides us with a parable to help further explain how we are to pray. Often times we may read this passage and wonder "If Jesus says that whatever I ask of Him will be given, then why aren't my prayers answered? Why isn't my family member healed? Why do I still feel miserable?" We receive our answer to these sorts of questions in the line "If he does not get up because of your friendship, he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence." (Luke 11:8). I would like to offer three tips regarding prayer, especially petitionary prayer: persistence, trust, and patience. Our prayers are answered through the persistence and perseverance in prayer. When we petition our Lord for something, do we simply ask once and then forget about it or do we repeatedly approach our Lord in prayer? Do we take the time to listen to Him in silence, both externally and internally? After all, we cannot receive if we do not ask. It is in persistent and regular time spent with our Lord that our prayers are the most strong. Next is trust. Not only do we have to be persistent in prayer, but we also have to trust that our prayers will be answered in one way or another. We have to be open to the manner in which God answers our prayers. If we ask to be patient, He may give opportunities to be patient. If we ask for the healing of a family member, He may heal the wounds of their soul rather than physical wounds. I would say trusting in Jesus in prayer is the most important aspect of prayer. Finally, we have to be patient in prayer. This goes hand-in-hand with trust. As Saint Cyril of Alexandria once said, "The Giver Himself knows the time suitable for His gifts." (Sermon 78 on Luke). In prayer, we have to trust patiently that God will answer our prayers in the perfect time. God knows what we need and when we need it more than we will ever know. It is through patient trust that we are given a sense of peace and security through the Holy Spirit that all will be well. May we then petition the Holy Spirit that we may be persistent, trusting, and patient in our prayer.