

6th Sunday after Trinity

Gen 18:20-32

Col 2:12-14

Lk 11:1-13

When our life is running smoothly, it is easy to push God aside and behave as if there is no God except ourselves. But when the going gets tough we look for support or an escape route. Without a good relationship with God, the options are usually drink, drugs, pornography or an adrenaline rush, all of which become addictive.

The collect for the 2nd Sunday in Lent reminds us that we have no power within ourselves to help ourselves, so we need to deepen our relationship with God and that includes questioning, challenging or arguing with Him.

Abraham was concerned about God's judgement on Sodom and Gomorrah, so he tries to bargain with Him to see how far he could push Him to guarantee the safety of the citizens. The philosopher Voltaire regarded Abraham as an inveterate haggler, but more modern Jewish writers see him as being compassionate, pleading for other people and not himself.

Some scholars see this encounter as God allowing Abraham to discover what His will is. This is how God acts. He does not make His plan to us clear in the hope that we might agree with Him. He invites us to become a disciple of Jesus and only when we say, "Yes," does He reveal His plan for us, and even then, only one step at a time. He does this so we can be drawn into a deeper relationship with Him. As Woody Allen said, "If you want to hear God laugh, tell him your plans!"

Our relationship with God deepens through prayer. Jewish rabbis taught their students the techniques of how to pray, but Jesus told His disciples to hold a conversation with God, their loving Father. They were to bless His holy name, pray for their daily bread, forgiveness of sin, victory over temptation, deliverance from evil and the fulfilment of God's Kingdom. Prayer is not so much an activity of ours, but an activity of God in us with which we are associated.

Prayer restores our relationship with God, and in response, God establishes harmony and peace among humanity (Robert Sarah, Catechism of the Spiritual life). Prayer is a matter of love and while we may use words, we also need to encounter God in stillness and silence so that we may learn what God's will is for us. This parish is blessed to be able to have several Contemplative Prayer groups during which the participants look silently at God as He looks on them. (Contact Joan, Jean or Ann).

If our prayer is limited to public worship or the classic acts of devotion in a group, we also need to spend time with God as an individual. How can God speak to us if we never stop talking? How can God challenge us if we only tell Him what we think He wants to hear? How can God draw us closer to Himself if all we do is ask Him for favours or to fix our or the world's issues?

Real prayer means being open and honest with God, even being angry with Him. The books and films of the 'Life of Don Camillo', or the Taylor Caldwell novel, 'The Man who

Listens,' are good examples of this and worth watching or reading.

Today's gospel passage also tells us *why* we must pray. Jesus gives us the examples of a persistent neighbour and of a loving father who provides good things for his son. Prayer is not a technique to wear God down, but rather we pray because God wants to provide for our needs. Jesus makes the point that God will not ask of us more than we can achieve, but rather He will give us the Holy Spirit, who is the assurance of His love and presence within us. In doing this, He is giving us His Kingdom. All He needs is for us to say, "Yes."

Msgr Harry Entwistle

July 27th, 2025