

Homily for Thursday of the 11th Week of Ordinary Time

Matthew 6:7–15

The Sermon on the Mount takes up Matthew 5-7. The Lord's Prayer, which we heard today comes at the very centre of the sermon structurally helping us to understand that all of Jesus' teaching is governed by this most familiar prayer.

The Lord's Prayer is divided into seven petitions. The first three expressing our reverence and love for God as we pray for "thy name", "thy kingdom" and "thy will". The subsequent petitions express our request for God to guide us with four verbs. We ask God to give, forgive, do not subject us and deliver us.

These seven petitions set us on the firm foundation of God's love because they

- Settle our relationship to the unseen world
- Settle our relationship to the seen world
- Settle our relationship to one another.
- Settle our relationship to ourselves

Our relationship with the unseen world is settled because the one whose is the centre of that world – heaven - is God, the Father. It is telling that the two most vivid descriptions given to us of heaven are by Jesus in John 14 and St. Paul in 2 Corinthians 5. Jesus at the Last Supper says of heaven, "It is my Father's House and in this house there are many rooms. I am going there to prepare a place for you." In 2 Corinthians 5 St. Paul echoes our Lord's words when he writes:

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

A home that is a building eternal in the heavens where the Father's name is revered and loved his kingdom fully operative because his will is always exercised. Such is our understanding of our relationship to the unseen world that awaits each of us after death. Such is the world that intersects with our world now in the Eucharistic Celebration and in our life of prayer as we ask for the intercession of Mary and all the saints.

This prayer also settles our relationship with the seen world. We understand that because the unseen world is our ultimate goal we are to live in this present world daily hallowing the name of God as we extend his kingdom in this world through fulfilling his will. The first series of petitions carries us toward God, for his own sake: *thy name, thy kingdom, thy will!* It is characteristic of love to think first of the one whom we love. Therefore we want to be attentive to how we address God, and how we use our private and personal world where only God and our nearest see us. Are we seeking to conform our thoughts, words and actions in such a way that

they truly honour and revere God? This is so our interior disposition is being formed to reflect that we are being conformed to our ultimate and heavenly home. To put this another way: Does how we live in our earthly home mirror what we will be live in our heavenly home?

With this perspective we can settle our relationship with one another. Notice that nowhere in this prayer are personal pronouns used. They are all plural: “Our Father”. “Give us” “Forgive us” “Do not bring us” “Rescue us”.

At the heart of Christianity is this understanding that when we come to know who God truly is it settles how we are to relate to one another.

We cannot call God Father without relating to each other as brothers and sisters. Such a way of life calls us to intentionally grow in the practice of daily virtue because we live in a world where we are also called to settle our relationship with ourselves. When we see ourselves aright we are able to recognize how much we need mercy because we have to live with other people who we at times intentionally and at other times unintentionally injure. We live in relationships where we are at times intentionally or unintentionally sinned against and thereby injured. We have to live in a world where the influence of the evil one wants to separate us from God and from each other. And it is because of this that we pray for our daily bread. That is to ask for God to so sustain us through this day that we will come to its end having been fed in our relationship with the Lord, with one another and with ourselves.

Such is the significance of this prayer that sets our lives on the firm foundation of Father’s love so we can be guided through this seen world to the unseen world that is to come.