

Living the Golden Rule

Thursday 1st Week of Lent

What does it mean to ask for something? First, we identify a void or need within ourselves that we intend to remedy. This intention drives us to act, but instead of trying to fill the void by ourselves, we often opt to engage another person as the source of the good we desire—be it information, an object, or a benefit. In approaching the other, we acknowledge the gratuity of the other person's response to our request. Thus, asking for something is different from fixing something by oneself. Asking is different from taking or demanding it from someone. Asking is different from control. Asking is dealing with a need in an open-ended way. In the spiritual life, the desire to control, to demand, or fix things on our own is often an obstacle. In the spiritual life, we must learn to ask properly. We must learn to trust. This is what Jesus wants to teach us today.

In a similar way, Jesus encourages us to set out on the spiritual journey of discipleship by seeking. Seeking, too, is open-ended. Someone who seeks doesn't know what he will find. On the other hand, logic suggests that we certainly cannot find anything if we do not seek. Again, here lies a truth for our spiritual life which Christ wishes to teach us: Life in general, and the spiritual life in particular, often presents us with findings that surprise us, as they will not align accurately with our expectations. He who is sure about the future will not react with docility to findings that he did not expect. Jesus wants us to seek and find surprises so that we can learn to be docile to God's inspirations.

Jesus encourages us to shift the weight in our spiritual life. Whether we ask for something, or seek something, or knock at a door, these actions always involve someone else on whom we depend for an answer, or for a clue, or to open the door for us. Jesus wants us to learn to depend on God as we progress on our life's journey—to exchange control for trust, certainty for docility, self-centeredness for God-centeredness.

As we learn to live a docile, trusting, God centred life then we will see others as brothers and sisters invited to participate in path of God's loving grace. In turn we will see others as Jesus sees them and thereby practice the Golden Rule:

In everything to do others as you would have them do to you.

For when we treat others the way we want to be treated then together we are asking, seeking and knocking to discover the way of Jesus saving and life giving love and so learn to live the words we prayed in today's Collect:

Bestow on us we pray, O Lord, a spirit of always pondering on what is right and of hastening to carry it out, and, since without you we cannot exist, may we be enabled live according to you will.

With this in mind may we resolve this day to say to the Lord:

Lord, today, by your grace, I will do for another (a friend, my spouse, a colleague, a family member) what I am expecting him or her to do for me.

Let us pray. My Lord Jesus Christ, here I am asking and seeking and knocking. I am willing to shift the weight of my life in your direction. I know what that means: that I depend on you, that I ask for your generosity, that I need you. I ask for your grace, I seek your will, I knock at your door to find you.