

Homily – July 25, 2010 – given by Diane Ludin

Today's Gospel contains the familiar story of the disciples' request to Christ: "Lord teach how to pray".

Luke, however, doesn't record the full Lord's Prayer as we say it. The prayer we say comes from the Gospel of Matthew. Luke records an outline of Christ's words – five talking points if you will.

The first is: "Father, hallowed be your name." Father denotes the relationship we're to have with God, a personal relationship. We are of God's family and we pray that our father's name be revered among all people.

Although today some people might be upset at what seems to be a clearly male definition of God, remember the patriarchal culture Jesus was speaking to. Most important is the message that we are all members of God's family, very precious, members. And our relationship with God is that of parent and child, bound by UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.

Second: "Your kingdom come". This phrase can be interpreted in many ways. Christ could be speaking about the world to come after the end times, about our earth today, or about our personal lives. In fact, he's probably talking about all three.

What about accepting God's will in our own daily lives? That can be a stumbling block. We don't want it to be God's will that we break a leg, or lose a loved one, or see people die in a natural disaster. However, despite the stories of the first section of our Bible, which often describe a wrathful God, I do not believe the LOVING God we know wills bad things to happen. Bad things certainly happen in our world. They happen, but they're NOT ORDAINED.

Furthermore, accepting God's will comes with the promise of His help to get through whatever challenges lie before us. We will not be alone. Help will be there if we reach out for it.

"Give us each day our daily bread": Who wants bread, we might think, when there's so many other tasty things to eat? But, as we gain knowledge it

becomes clear that bread is a SYMBOL for whatever we need – the stuff of an abundant life. It's not steak and caviar or living on an estate on a hill overlooking the ocean, although there's nothing wrong with those things. It's more like the basics: three squares, a roof over your head and, most importantly, Love. I don't believe we're limited to the basics, but the basics are all we NEED to live a happy, fulfilling life.

The fourth point is “And forgive us our sins, as we, ourselves, forgive everyone who is indebted to us.” In this phrase there is both plea and promise. We need forgiveness for our sins because, even if they are sins of omission “things left undone”, we often can't forgive them by ourselves. We need the reminder of God's Love and forgiveness.

We promise in return to be forgiving in our lives. It's a difficult promise to keep: no grudges, no wallowing in self-destructive hate, no getting even. We need constant repetition of this promise to help us keep it.

Finally: “And do not bring us to the time of trial”. What does that mean? Again, this plea can be seen on heavenly, earthly and personal levels. We fear the end of times and hope never to suffer the tragedies predicted. However, some of those tragedies occur more or less frequently on earth. “War, pestilence and plague” are familiar to us from our news media, and we pray to be spared them.

In our own lives, also, we ask not to be tested lest we fail. However, we must remember not to despair. God, our father, is with us.

It is in this knowledge of God as a loving parent, who promises unfailing help to get through life's rough spots, an abundant life of love and sustenance, and forgiveness for ever, that our Lord Jesus Christ leads us to pray.