

Serving Berlin's English-speaking Catholic Community since 1957



Catholic Community

Member of the English-Speaking Mission

Mass: Fridays at 6 p.m. in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel

Sundays at 10 a.m. in the main Sanctuary

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Office Hours: Mondays and Thursdays 10-12

July 31st, 2016 – Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings (Missal p 196 et seq.): Eccl 1:2, 2:21-23 • Ps 90:3-6, 12-17 • Col 3:1-5, 9-11 • Lk 12:13-21

Celebrant: Fr Wolfgang Felber

To pray is to ask God to make us open to his will

In today's reading from Luke's **Gospel** (Luke 11: 1-13), the disciples ask Jesus to teach them how to pray. You may have remarked that Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer is shorter and more concise than Matthew's version. Is this a problem? What was the real prayer Jesus taught? Well, what is important to grasp is not the words of the prayer, but the *attitude* of prayer Jesus teaches. So it does not matter which WORDS he actually used or taught.

And here I find one of my favorite topics when it comes to prayer: **To pray is not to impose our will on God but to ask God to make us open to his will.** In other words, we pray not to change God's mind but for God to change ours. You may remember that I quoted Soren Kierkegaard here with his saying: **Prayer does not change God, but it changes the one who prays.** We do not manipulate God when we pray, we open ourselves to what God calls us to.

Authentic prayer, as taught by Jesus and contained in the Lord's Prayer, has three elements:

-The first: we acknowledge the goodness and love of God: Jesus teaches us to call God "Father." God is not the cosmic tyrant out of whom gifts have to be extracted by imploring him, by sacrificing things and animals, by humiliating ourselves. No! God is the loving eternal Parent, Father or Mother, who delights in providing for the needs of the children.

-The second element of authentic prayer is: we should ask that we may do God's will: Prayer worthy of God asks for the grace to do the work God calls us to do. This can be to grant forgiveness, to be open for reconciliation, to do justice; in other words, to become the people God calls us to become. We are brothers and sisters under our heavenly Father, our heavenly Mother.

-The third element of authentic prayer is that we express our hope in the providence of God: The providence of God... a friend will aid a friend; parents will provide for their children. Yes, we come before God knowing that God will hear our prayers and give us all and more than we need. Just like friends, just like parents. Even if it seems as if our prayers are unanswered, we live with the confident faith that God is always present to us. You may remember my homily about prayers of Jesus that had not been answered. And Jesus did not despair.

Today's **first reading** (Genesis 18:20-32) is a humorous and entertaining example of eastern bargaining at its best. The good and faithful Abraham barter with God to spare the innocent of Sodom and Gomorrah. In the end, God reveals himself to be a God of limitless forgiveness and mercy. And that is the whole point of this story: God needs not to be bartered with – God has the limitless forgiveness and mercy.

In today's brief **second reading** (Colossians 2: 12-14), Paul also speaks of the forgiveness of God. And Paul speaks of the promise of the resurrection won for us by Christ on the cross. Resurrection not in the sense that there will be something better after our death, but resurrection in the sense of "life in abundance" – not only in heaven, but already here on earth.

We are gathered here on a Sunday, in a church, we are gathered to celebrate together. Sometimes one may have the impression that we have managed to confine God and religious "stuff" to a Sunday morning time slot.

Sometimes one may have the impression that we have jealously shielded the home, work and play dimensions of our lives from any intrusion of the spiritual. Yes, as a religion, we have established socially acceptable vehicles and formulas for "acknowledging" God: for example, our Sunday Eucharist's. Real prayer, however, transcends those boundaries we have set, transcends those formulas we have committed to memory but not necessarily to practice. These formulas are important, our written prayers and rites and documents and doctrine are necessary, this is for sure.

But prayer is a constant state of awareness of God's presence in every moment, every challenge, every decision of our lives. Find God in all things – as Ignatius of Loyola said. Find God's traces everywhere in our lives. The Jesus of the Gospel calls us to become men and women of prayer. Men and women of prayer embrace the "spirit and attitude of prayer" that constantly discerns and celebrates God's presence in all things.

In today's Gospel, Jesus gives us more than a prayer text - he teaches us the attitude necessary for authentic prayer. In many of our prayers we ask God to come around to doing our will; but true prayer is to discover God's will for us. We often approach prayer as if we are trying to wring gifts from an unwilling God; in fact, we come before a God who knows our needs better than we do ourselves. True prayer is to imitate the compassion of Christ with us, with humankind. True prayer raises our hearts and voices in a cry for forgiveness, for reconciliation, for healing. A cry for mercy for our world.

Prayer, as Teresa of Avila taught her sisters, "is the conformity of our will to the will of God." And remember what Kierkegaard said: ***Prayer does not change God, but it changes the one who prays.***

Fr Wolfgang Felber, SJ

Welcome to All Saints! Many of us are gone for the summer and return in August but would like to welcome you to our community.

A few events to look forward to:

- **Confirmation Mass on Saturday, October 8th (Contact: Lynn Brinda)**
- **Fall Family Bazaar on Saturday, September 17th. Contact Heide: h.doblhofer@t-online.de**
- **Welcome BBQ Potluck on Sunday, September 11th after Mass. Please bring a side-dish.**

Have a great summer everyone!

Update on Friday Mass!

Mass will be celebrated throughout the month of August by Father Sylvester on Fridays in the Sacred Chapel beginning at 6 p.m.

Volunteers sought: If you are a lector, altar server or would like to host hospitality after Mass, let Konrad, Heide or Buck know so we can add your names to the bulletin.

Designated collections are for special purposes in the Archdiocese of Berlin and are transferred in full. **However, in agreement with the Archdiocese, All Saints receives no financial support, so we are completely dependent upon your donations.** Please continue to donate to All Saints by using the **WHITE ENVELOPES** stamped "**ALL SAINTS FUND**" and/or transferring your donation to the Pax-Bank account written below. **THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT! • *Friends of All Saints e.V.*, IBAN: DE15 3706 0193 6001 6690 18, BIC: GENODED1PAX**