Homily for the 17th Sunday(7/28/2019)

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One day, a priest and a bus driver both died and went to heaven. Saint Peter was at the gate of heaven waiting for them. “Come with me,” said Saint Peter to the bus driver.

The bus driver followed Saint Peter to a beautiful mansion. It had everything you could imagine from a bowling alley to an Olympic size pool. Saint Peter said to the bus driver, “Here is your home in heaven.” “Oh my God, thank you, Lord,” said the bus driver.

Next, Saint Peter led the priest to a rough old shack with a bunk bed and a little old television set. And, He said to the priest, “Here is your home in heaven! Enjoy!”

“Wait, I think you are a little mixed up,” said the priest. “Shouldn’t I be the one who gets the mansion? After all, I was a priest, worked for the church every day, and preached the Gospel to the people.’’

“Yes, that’s true.” Saint Peter replied, “But, during your sermons people slept. When the bus driver drove, everyone prayed.”

What should we pray for? Health? Wealth? Deliverance from our trials and enemies? Or should we pray for miracles?

In today’s Gospel, Jesus teaches His disciples how to pray. There were Jewish prayers that the disciples already knew. The Law had taught them exactly how and when to pray. They had to pray to God three times a day.

But, they saw in Jesus something different. They saw an intense, powerful, and personal kind of prayer. They wanted to know His secret, and so they asked how to pray.

Then, Jesus gave them His prayer, ‘the Our Father.’ It is itself a powerful prayer and is also a model of all Christian prayer. It is a great prayer of unity. This is a perfect prayer. In His prayer, Jesus teaches us to address God as ‘Our Father.’ We can reflect on the intimacy, the surrender, and the trust in this prayer.

One of the most amazing things in all the Scriptures is how much time Jesus spent in prayer. He had only three years of public ministry, yet He was never too hurried to spend hours in prayer. He prayed before every difficult task confronting Him. How quickly and carelessly, by contrast, we pray.

Prayer is the method by which we can praise and bless God, and ask for His help in our lives. We pray to God because we need His wisdom, His strength, and His guidance in our lives.

God gives us everything what is the best for us because He is our loving Father and merciful Father, and we are His beloved and precious children. So, we can pray with expectant faith because our heavenly Father loves us and treats us as His children. He delights to give us what is good.

When we truly understand that God is our loving Father, and we are His children, then we don’t have to worry so much about disappointing Him by our prayers. No matter how simple they are, God delights in our prayers when they truly express the feelings and desires of our hearts.

We know when we were very young and first started speaking, we didn’t talk to our parents in long sentences and for great lengths of times. And, yet our parents were not disappointed in us; they were delighted by our attempts to speak.

God never discourage His children from coming to Him with their requests even if He already knows what they want. He loves us, and He takes delight in listening to us. Even if He say ‘no’ to our requests, it is because He knows better than we do what is best for us.

God, our Heavenly Father, loves us, His children, and one of our greatest privileges is coming to Him in prayer. And, because He already knows our needs, we can be confident His answer will be best.

And, most importantly, we need to know that prayer is a conversation with God, talking to Him and listening to Him. But, too often, we do not listen to Him.

We just pick up the phone and read out the list of our problems to God, and then, drop the phone without listening to hear what He is saying to us. After that, we complain, “I cannot hear God’s voice.” Or, “God never responds to my prayer.”

God always says something to us every day. We have to listen to Him. Jesus assures us that we can bring our needs to our heavenly Father who is always ready to give not only what we need, but more than we can ask.

Thank God that He knows our needs and wants us to come to Him in prayer. Remember: Jesus Christ opened the gates of heaven for us by His death on the cross. When we know Him, we can be sure God hears our prayers always!