

Monday Adoration: June 9, 2008
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The Lord's Prayer (3)

Preamble: As I pointed out during the introductory part of this series, the first three petitions of the *Lord's Prayer* have to do with God while the second three petitions concern our needs. We shall begin today the petitions for our humans needs.

Matthew 6:11: "Give us this day our daily bread."

This petition of the *Lord's Prayer* shows God's goodness for us. It shows that God cares for us. It shows that God cares not just for our spiritual welfare but our bodily needs too. In the Bible, Jesus satisfied the physical hunger of people. This petition concerns both the physical and spiritual hunger of people.

The Miracle of the Multiplication of Loaves

This miracle was recorded in all the Gospels (Mt 14:13-21; Mk 6:30-44; Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-13). This miracle shows very vividly the fact that Jesus cared and still cares for the physical hunger of people. He multiplied the loaves which he used to feed the people. In this narrative, it was Jesus' initiative to feed the people. First, He taught them at great length and afterwards realized that the people had been with him all day and were hungry. He then decided to give them bodily food having fed them with the spiritual food of the Word of God. The disciples expressed concern that the people need to go and buy bread to eat. They asked Jesus to dismiss the people so that they can go to the farms and villages to buy food for themselves. When Jesus asked them to give bread to the people, they said that there was not enough bread to go around such a huge crowd (Mk 6:35-37). Jesus knew what he wanted to do. He fed the people. The disciples expressed their inadequacy in feeding such a crowd. But Jesus blessed the little they had and it fed the people. There were even leftovers. Perhaps, if we are generous enough to share the little we have, Jesus will bless it and it will feed many people with leftovers.

The feeding of the people by Jesus invites us to feed the hungry. At least, that is one of the *corporal works of mercy*. We do not have to wait till we have enough before we can reach out to the hungry. From the little we have and with a generous heart, Jesus will continue to feed the hungry in our midst. And through our modest effort and generosity, this prayer '*Give us this day our daily bread,*' will be answered for some people. God can use us to satisfy the hunger of people. The question is: Am I willing and disposed to be used by God to feed the hungry?

The Parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31)

Lazarus was poor and very hungry. He longed to feed from the leftovers from the rich man but that did not happen. For his part, the rich man did not maltreat Lazarus. He did not drive him away. His problem was that he was not affected by the hunger of Lazarus. He had more than enough to give to Lazarus. He could afford to feast lavishly. But he did not notice Lazarus. He got into trouble not because of what he did but because of what he failed to do. He did nothing when he should have done something. We pray that we will share with others the resources God has blessed us with.

Back to our Text Mt 6:11: 'Give us this day our daily bread.'

This petition teaches us to pray for our daily bread. This shows that we should take it one day at a time and not be anxious and worried about the future. Our Blessed Lord enjoins us not to worry about what to eat and how to clothe the body (Lk 11:22). What the Lord requires from us is to ask for our basic sustenance, and not ask for luxury or to amass a fortune and great wealth but to have the basic needs for our bodily existence. In the OT, God gave manna to the people of Israel. God fed them with manna until they arrived in the promised land (Ex 16). Similarly, Jesus fed the people as noted above. God continues to feed his people. But God wants to do that through you and me. As we pray for our own daily bread, we are called to share our bread with others.

It should be noted that Jesus used the plural 'give us' and not the singular 'give me.' The problem with the world is that very few persons own almost all the world's resources. There is enough to go around in our country and elsewhere but for incessant greed, and the lack of the spirit of sharing. There is always a problem with the distribution of the world's resources. This prayer teaches us not to be selfish but to be concerned about others. Through us, God can answer the prayer of someone less privileged and fortunate than us. Scripture says, 'For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink' (Mt 25:35). And because of that, our Lord would say to us on the last day, 'Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take as your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world' (Mt 25:34).

Spiritual Hunger and the Eucharist as our Daily Bread

This petition also refers to another hunger, namely, spiritual hunger. There is a spiritual hunger of hearing the Word of God. Jesus felt pity for the people because they were like sheep without a shepherd and he set himself to teach them at some length (Mk 6:34). This is how Matthew put it, "And when he saw the crowds he felt sorry for them because they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers to his harvest'" (Mt 9:36-37).

The prayer for our daily bread means the daily bodily and spiritual sustenance. Hence there is always a spiritual dimension to the *Lord's Prayer*. The Holy Eucharist is our daily bread. For daily communicants, they feel their day is incomplete if they did not receive the Holy Eucharist. It is instructive in John's Gospel that after Jesus had fed the people with physical bread, he went on to give them Himself in the Holy Eucharist, "I am the bread of life" (Jn 6:35). Jesus is the bread which we receive in the Holy Eucharist daily for our salvation. Jesus gives us a special bread different and superior to the one the people of Israel ate in the desert: "This is the bread which has come down from heaven; it is not like the bread our ancestors ate: they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live for ever" (Jn 6:58).

Conclusion: Presently, there is food shortage in the world. This crisis means that many especially the poor will die. May God touch governments and individuals to avert this disaster! We really need to pray for our daily bread. And so we pray, *Our Father.....!*