

✱✱✱ JESU JUVA ✱✱✱

**ROGATE / THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER**

Text: St. John 16:23-33

CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED! ALLELUIA!

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✱ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

What is prayer if it is not being in dialogue with God? The answer is quite simple really; prayer, no matter how pious, no matter how sincere, no matter how profound, no matter its length or quality, if not addressed to the One True God, is prayer to demons. For we have only one God, in three Persons, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, and we have only One Mediator before God, our LORD, JESUS CHRIST, who is Himself God and God's SON.

For this reason, we do not pray in the name of popes, saints, or earthly kings, but in the Name of JESUS, for it is upon this Name, the Name, JESUS, that our prayers must rest and it is in this Name, and for the sake of this Name alone, that God hears us.

Therefore, prayer is not made perfect in our speaking. Prayer is not made perfect in flowery words nor their quantity nor quality; prayer is made perfect in faith, by the Name of JESUS.

So, it is then, that we are to ask for all things in JESUS' Name, and all we ask in His Name and according to God's will, His Father and ours will provide. Yet, I would caution you. Our God is not to be treated as though He is the great sycophant in the sky who tremulously stands by ready to fulfill your every whim and desire. Requests made of the FATHER in the Name of the SON are not to be frivolous or worldly, as such things can only serve to hinder our salvation and therefore cannot be rightfully requested in our LORD's Name.

Instead, when we pray, our FATHER in Heaven desires that we should seek all *good* things from Him, things that will help and not harm us. He is truly pleased when we approach Him in confident prayer seeking from Him peace and comfort knowing that He loves us and grants our requests based, not on any good thing in us, not on our own worthiness or merit, but simply because He loves us for the sake of His SON, our LORD, and SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST, even as an earthly father loves his children for no other reason than they are his children.

Through faith in Christ, we are given access to our FATHER in heaven. By faith, we pray the FATHER to give us all the things needed for this body and life and our FATHER hears our prayers even as JESUS has promised. He hears them and answers them because we have loved His SON, JESUS, and believe in Him. We, therefore, come before the FATHER praying with confidence born of the HOLY SPIRIT in the conviction that God, the FATHER, hears and will answer our prayers for the sake of God the SON.

We pray in JESUS' Name because of ourselves we are truly unworthy to approach our FATHER in heaven in prayer. Yes, our worthiness, our righteousness, means nothing before God. For this reason, we pray in the Name of JESUS; the Name above every name; the Name every tongue will confess and at whose speaking every knee shall bow; of those on the earth and those under the earth. We do not pray in any other name but the Name JESUS, the SON of the living God. For it is upon His Name alone, the Name, JESUS, that our prayers must rest, and it is in His Name, and for the sake of His Name alone, that God hears us.

Such prayer then, that is, prayer in JESUS' Name, is the distinguishing mark between Christian prayer and all other prayer, for not all prayer among us is God-pleasing or even Christian. St. Paul tells us in our Epistle text appointed for this day, that there is only one way to truly come to the FATHER: through JESUS CHRIST alone, by faith in JESUS CHRIST alone. Any other way only leads down spiritual blind alleys and dead-ends. *“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man CHRIST JESUS, who gave Himself a ransom for all.”*

To pray in JESUS' Name, then, means to pray with faith in JESUS as your only Mediator; as your only access to the FATHER. To pray in JESUS' Name means to pray with faith in what He has done to save you, to know that it is only because of His merits that you can even approach the heavenly throne of God with your petitions and prayers. To pray in the Name of JESUS means admitting that there is no merit within you that brings your supplications to the ear of God.

Thus, without the Name of JESUS, our prayers avail us nothing. Such prayer would make us out to be hypocrites, like men who killed an only son and then stretched forth our blood-stained hands seeking the right hand of fellowship and peace from the murdered son's father—which truly is what we once were. However, for the sake of His SON's redeeming death, God no longer sees us as we once were, rather He sees us as what we have become in JESUS, what JESUS has made of us: righteous, holy, innocent.

So, it is then, that when we come before the throne of God, we come as penitent sinners with contrite hearts and our prayers are nothing less than pitiful cries for God's mercy. For as sinners, we have no choice but to throw ourselves on God's mercy.

In this, our prayers echo the penitential cries of King David: *“Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight— That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.”*

Even so, we also pray with confidence born of faith in God's mercy: *“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, And blot*

*out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your HOLY SPIRIT from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous SPIRIT... Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation, And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. O LORD, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise.”*

Thus, true Christian prayer is based not on the content of one’s heart but on the richness of God’s mercy and love as it has been revealed through God’s Holy Word by His HOLY SPIRIT. Godly prayer is shaped by God’s Word. Prayer in JESUS’ Name is prayer that proceeds from faith in Him. Therefore, faith never prays *“My will be done,”* but *“Thy will be done.”* Faith trusts that God’s will in JESUS is always good and gracious.

So it is, for it is by God-given faith in JESUS’ sacrificial death and His victorious resurrection from the grave, that God the FATHER showers His grace upon you. You are sprinkled with the atoning Blood of CHRIST’s sacrifice and buried into His terrible death in your Baptism, to be raised again to new life as a child of your FATHER, God, Most High.

Indeed, it is only because God has come to be your FATHER and JESUS your Brother, that you can pray to Him. Only because CHRIST JESUS has taken your sins on Himself and suffered your death on the Cross may you approach God in prayer. Only because CHRIST JESUS has taken your sins on Himself and wiped them out by His victorious death can you stand before God, forgiven—eternally His child in CHRIST. Only as you are bound to CHRIST may you come before God as His child, for then God sees you through CHRIST, wearing not the filthy rags of your own merit, but arrayed in the pure garment of CHRIST’s righteousness. So, it is, that all contact, all prayer, indeed, your entire relationship with the FATHER is in CHRIST your SAVIOR—in the Name of JESUS, through faith in JESUS.

Pray then for what you will, knowing your FATHER in Heaven will hear you. You do not need to worry about forming the perfect request. Even before you ask, your Father knows what you truly need, and as your FATHER, He lovingly provides it for you. He provides what you need not because you pray, but because as your FATHER, He loves you.

Therefore, you pray, *“LORD, have mercy,”* and God the FATHER pours His mercy over you, absolving you by the Blood of God the SON for all you have done or left undone. You pray, *“Create in me a clean heart O God,”* and He does, with JESUS’ own Body and Blood, strengthening you against the assaults of the evil one, against the world, and your own sinful flesh. You may pray, *“Our FATHER,”* because CHRIST JESUS has made Himself your Brother.

In CHRIST JESUS, God is your FATHER and He, Himself, loves you with a love beyond all imagination. This is true comfort for a lost and hurting soul. This is true comfort for a dying world! This is the message your FATHER in heaven wants so desperately for you and all mankind to hear, the message that your God is your true FATHER who does not ignore your

prayers, but who welcomes the petitions of His children that come before Him through His SON and in His Name!

Therefore, pray and listen, for God's answer to your prayers is not silent. God speaks in His Word. With that Holy, inspired, inerrant Word, your prayer to God is not a one-way conversation. In Holy Scripture, God reveals His will for you and to you. He reveals to you His loving mercy and infinite compassion. In the death and resurrection of JESUS, the FATHER has revealed His will and love for you.

Your God of grace who speaks in His Word, answers your prayers. He provides friends, family, food, all things needed for this body and life. Most significantly, however, He who provided the ram in the thicket to Abraham that Isaac would go free, has provided His SON as a perfect sacrifice in your place, and delivers that same SON to you in His Body and Blood upon the altar. By His Word, in the Name of His SON, JESUS, He provides. He forgives. He renews. He strengthens and restores. God hears your prayer and He answers, *"I forgive you all your sins."*

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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