

ROGATE / THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Text: 1 Timothy 2:1-6; St. John 16:23-33

ALLELUIA! CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED! ALLELUIA!

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

We are blessed in that we have access to our FATHER in Heaven through faith. With faith in GOD and His promises we pray the FATHER to give us all the things needed for this body and life, and GOD hears our prayers as CHRIST has promised. GOD hears our prayers and answers them because we have loved His SON, JESUS, and believe in Him as our SAVIOR. We, therefore, come before the FATHER praying with confidence knowing that He hears and will answer our prayers.

Still, we should not be deceived into believing that GOD is some sort of divine sycophant hanging on our every word and granting every request no matter how frivolous or worldly our desires may be. Requests made of the FATHER in the Name of the SON are not to be frivolous or worldly, for such things hinder our salvation, and therefore, should not be requested in JESUS' Name.

Instead, our FATHER in Heaven wants us to 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 worthiness or merit, but simply on the fact that He loves us for the sake of His SON, our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Indeed, we truly are not fit for prayer, but our fitness, our righteousness, means nothing, for 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.

Thus, we do not pray in the name of popes, saints, or earthly kings, but in the Name of JESUS, the SON of GOD, for it is on this Name alone, the Name, JESUS, that our prayers rest, and it is in this Name alone, and for the sake of this Name alone, that GOD hears us. Therefore, prayer is not made perfect in our speaking, but is made perfect through faith in JESUS' Name.

Such prayer, that is, prayer in JESUS' Name, is the distinguishing mark between Christian prayer and all other prayer, for not all prayer among men 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 to 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 our only Mediator and Advocate; as our 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 at all 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 before 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. Yet, 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, that is, the FATHER sees us as 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 beggars and penitent sinners, whose 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. Thus our prayers echo the cries of King David in Psalm 51:

“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. 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.”

True Christian prayer is based not on the content of your heart, but on the richness of GOD's mercy and love as it has been revealed by the HOLY SPIRIT through GOD's Holy Word. Thus, godly prayer is shaped by GOD's Word and proceeds from faith in JESUS. Faith trusts that GOD's will in JESUS is always good and gracious, such that true faith never prays *“My will be done,”* but, *“Thy will be done.”*

And 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 that terrible death through your Baptism, to be raised again to new life as a brother or sister of JESUS and a child of GOD Most High, our FATHER.

Surely, it is only because GOD has come to be your FATHER that you can pray to Him. Only because CHRIST JESUS has taken your sins on Himself and suffered our death on the Cross can we approach GOD in prayer. Only because CHRIST JESUS has taken our sins on Himself and wiped them out by His victorious death can we stand before GOD forgiven and eternally His children in CHRIST. Only as we are bound to CHRIST can we come before God as His children, for GOD the FATHER sees His children through JESUS all atoning sacrifice wearing the garment of His righteousness. So it is, that all contact, all prayer, indeed, your entire relationship with the FATHER is in CHRIST, in the Name of JESUS, through faith in JESUS.

Pray then for what you will. There is no need to worry about forming the perfect request. Even before you ask, your FATHER knows what you 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. You pray, "*LORD, have mercy,*" and GOD pours out His mercy upon you, absolving you by the Blood of CHRIST for all you have done and left undone. You pray, "*Create in me a clean heart O GOD,*" and He does, with His own Body and Blood, strengthening you against the assaults of the evil one, the world, and your own sinful flesh. You pray, "*Our FATHER,*" because faith in CHRIST JESUS has made Him your FATHER.

In CHRIST JESUS, GOD is your FATHER and He, Himself, loves you with a love beyond all telling. This, then, is true comfort for a lost and hurting soul. This is true comfort for a dying world! This is the message our FATHER in Heaven wants so desperately for you 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 to Him through faith in His SON and in His Name!

Know this also, GOD's answer to your prayers is not silent. For GOD speaks to you through His Word. With that Holy, inspired, inerrant Word, your prayer to GOD is not a one-way conversation. In the Bible, GOD reveals His will for you. He reveals to you His boundless grace, His loving mercy and infinite kindness. In the death and resurrection of JESUS, the FATHER reveals 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. But most significantly, He who provided the ram to Abraham in the thicket that Isaac would go free, has provided His SON as a perfect sacrifice in your place, delivering that same SON to you, His true Body and true Blood upon the altar, in the elements of bread and wine. By His Word, in the Name of His SON, JESUS, our FATHER provides. He forgives. He renews. He restores. He strengthens and encourages. He hears every one of your prayers, 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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