

Homily for the 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C
St. Francis of Assisi Church – Belchertown, Massachusetts
July 28, 2019

Scripture Readings: [Genesis 18:20-32](#) ✕ [Psalm 138:1-3, 6-8](#) ✕ [Colossians 2:12-14](#) ✕ [Luke 11:1-13](#)



One night, when I was about 14 years old, I was staying at my Dad's house and was getting ready for bed when I heard a knock on the door. It was my younger brother Scott, who was about seven years old at the time. He told me that he was afraid of the dark and he wanted to sleep in my room that night. I told him that he couldn't sleep in my room and he should go back to bed. He left but, about a minute later, I heard another knock at the door. Once again it was Scott telling me that he was afraid of the dark and that he wanted to sleep in my room. Again, I told him that he couldn't sleep in my room and he needed to go back to bed. About a minute later there came another knock. The scene repeated itself again and again and again.

Finally, after being very patient with him for about a half-hour, I blew my stack. I yelled at him and told him to grow up, to stop acting like a baby, and to go to bed and to leave me alone. He left the room and I turned out the light and went to bed.

About 10 minutes later, just as I was falling asleep, there came another knock on the door. Once again, Scott was standing there telling me that he was afraid of the dark and that he wanted to sleep in my room. I patiently told him "no". He left the room but, as I'm sure you already know, he came back. After another half-hour, I blew my stack again, but I finally told him that he could stay.

I think of this incident with my brother Scott whenever I hear the story of Abraham in our first reading today. I think of his persistence, his fear, and his trust that I would answer his plea. I also think about how I was patient for while but, in the end, was very impatient.

This impatience stands in sharp contrast to the patience and mercy of God shown to Abraham. Even listening to this dialog some 3,000 years later, it's a little hard to take Abraham's persistence in his conversation with God. His persistence, however, shows not only God's mercy and compassion, but also Abraham's faith that God would listen to his prayer and that God would take care of the people for whom he prayed.

The idea of prayer is one that is filled with a great deal of ambiguity. On one hand, we ask God for specific things that we believe we need or want in our lives. On the other hand, we have been taught by Jesus that we should pray that God's will be done in our lives. He taught us this when He showed us how to pray, and He also taught us this when He knelt down in the Garden of Gethsemane and

pleaded with His Father to save His life, but in the end, He said, "Still, not my will, but yours be done."¹

To pray as Jesus prayed, to pray that God's will take precedence over our own desires, wants and needs, to trust that God is with us and that God is compassionate and merciful when things are not going our way and even when life is tragic: this is faith. It is faith to trust that God is with us in the good times and in the bad. It is faith to trust that our prayers are answered even when we don't get that for which we asked, even when life is difficult, even when life is tragic.

It's important, too, to remember, that it is never God's will that we suffer, that we endure hardship, that we have a difficult life. But it is God's will that He be beside us at every moment of our lives, as we face the triumphs and tragedies, the joys and sorrows. It is God's will that we join Him in Paradise but, before we get there, we have this life to live. There is evil and hardship in the world; that's the price we endure for the tremendous freedoms that God gives us to accept or reject His love. We need to rely on God to be with us and to give us the strength to endure and the courage to bring this world closer to His Kingdom, especially those in our world who have rejected God's love.

Prayer keeps us close to God and helps us to endure the disappointments, struggles, and tragedies in this life. Prayer keeps us focused on God's promise of eternal life and it keeps us focused on His constant patience, mercy and compassion. Prayer helps us to remember God's words to Zion in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah when Zion believed to be forsaken and forgotten by the Lord. God said, "Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you."²

God does not forget us. God is with us and gives us strength, courage, endurance, and faith to live our lives and to accept His promise and gift of eternal life. And God is not impatient with us. He does not tell us to go away. He does not tell us to grow up and take care of our own problems. Instead, He shows us mercy, compassion, and understanding.

May we, in our prayer and reliance on God, be persistent and may our prayers, like those of Abraham, seek the good for others and not just for ourselves. By our prayers, may the presence of God be keenly felt throughout the world. ✕

¹ [Luke 22:42](#)

² [Isaiah 49:15](#)