

Homily - October 7, 2020

By Fr. Virgil Petermeier, osc

Today we commemorate Our Lady of the Rosary. The dominant prayer therein is the "Hail Mary"—starting with two affirmative greetings to Mary, based on scripture stories. By happenstance today, the Gospel is nearly entirely another prayer which also appears several times in the rosary. That prayer is the Our Father. We believe that good prayers help us become more loving. Sometimes we compromise our prayers and pray time, and so we call out: Lord have mercy!

Some time ago I recited Jesus' prayer and began to see how his prayer is an invitation transform me by calling me OUT OF MYSELF and getting me BEYOND being FULL OF MYSELF in the way I think, speak and act. Here's a very brief and initial attempt to hear words and phrases of the Our Father inviting me beyond myself:

"OUR FATHER"—The very first word is **"OUR."** Not MY Father, but OUR father. That word "OUR" already puts me into a "WE" mode/attitude rather than "Me" mode. I am being invited to see God as a single source of more than just myself.

"WHO ART IN HEAVEN"—the word, "heaven" usually means total happiness. Yes, happiness can be total due only to total obedience to love/God. Again, I am being pulled beyond myself—beyond selfishness. I am drawn towards loving totally.

"HALLOWED BE THY NAME"—calls me to let go of hallowing my name. I am here for the GLORY of God, and not for my glory.

"THY KINGDOM COME-THY WILL BE DONE"—Yes, God's will and not my egocentric will must be done. I am not here to create my kingdom.

"ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN"—I am called to exercise God's will in my concrete daily world in such a way that it heads for and spawns a life of total happiness.

"GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD"—I am asking God to give me what He/She wants to give in order to nourish my life. Left to my own wiles, I may want to fill my body, soul and mind with certain "fast-foods" that may not be healthy for me. By asking God for bread, I am allowing God to give me food I might not like, yet food that truly is the right nutrient for my body, mind and spirit. God's daily bread WILL be that right kind of medicine.

I am allowing God to feed my whole being TODAY and tomorrow--on a daily basis. Truly, another invite to go beyond my tastes.

“FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US.” This is really a clever inverted call for me to get on with truly forgiving, especially if I have had trouble with forgiving. I am being called beyond revenge and beyond hanging onto my angers.

“LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION—DELIVER US FROM EVIL”—How easy to say, when we sometimes would rather dawdle awhile in such evils as revenge, self-glory, over-eating, over-drinking or other unhealthy physical, spiritual and mental pleasures. We are asking God to help us get beyond our habits of unhealthy selfish behaviors, good as they may feel and seem for the moment.

“FOR YOURS IS THE KINGDOM, POWER, GLORY FOREVER AMEN.” That’s a grand AMEN and agreement with GOD TO HELP US COME OUT OF OURSELVES—TO EMPTY OURSELVES of power-play and vain-glory. We consciously allow only God to be glorious and powerful in our lives. Only then may we enter a life filled with forgiveness, peace, kindness, true joy and oneness.

In the Hail Mary, spoken more than fifty times in one rosary, reminds us that our God went beyond himself through Gabriel to hail Mary and affirm her. That divine love drew Mary to go beyond her little village of Nazareth for a visit with her cousin, Elizabeth. Elizabeth, in turn, went beyond herself to greet Mary, affirming her and the child in her womb as most blessed.

Hopefully it is clear to all of us, that simply uttering these prayers more intentionally and slowly can allow these Divine words to become a fruitful rain seeping into the very depths of our lives, transforming us into new and more loving persons. Praying can help us live out our Christian discipleship in a consistent way, which is what Paul wanted of Peter, as we heard in the first reading.