

Homily: July 24, 2022

By Fr. Virgil Petermeier, osc

Today we celebrate God, who is active among us. He's active in a compassionate way. However, in all honesty, we quickly focus on all the messes our world is in—including some of our difficulties and messes. Subsequently, we don't see God active. Rather, he may feel distant. For that reason, we come to our compassionate God and call out to him: Lord Have Mercy.

In this homily, I will focus on the request of Jesus' disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray. . ." That request prompted Jesus to teach them the prayer we use repeatedly 2,000 years later--the "Our Father" prayer. Of that prayer, I will reflect on the words, "Thy kingdom come." The kingdom of God is a symbolic way of naming God's new world of love and peace. I want to remind us that three weekends ago, Jesus said, "The kingdom is at hand for you." Yes, God's new world is happening here among us right now, as close as our hands at the end of our arms.

We might want to protest. We deal with Covid that doesn't seem to stop. We hear that another relative, confrer, or friend has cancer. We see tense polarity in our gov't, society, and church. Around 1 million abortions happen annually in the U.S. There have been more than 350 mass shootings and 22,000 other people shot dead by guns in the U.S. to date. We are sad and upset about the Ukrainian war and other wars, along with lots more awful stuff. Some of us might want to say the end of the world is coming soon, or the world is worse than ever.

In the midst of the messes we experience, Jesus calls us to be people of hope when he says, "The kingdom of God is at hand." At Christmas and Easter we say, "Christ's light is overcoming darkness." Do we really believe and see God's new world of love in the process of coming upon us more and more fully?

You may have heard the story about an elderly man, whose house was near a river. He heard the radio alert that there would be a flash flood. He thought to himself, "I pray daily for God to help me. He'll get me out of any kind of trouble." Sure enough, the flash flood happened. Water was rising up the front steps of his house. A boat of rescuers came by and said, "Sir, come on, we'll take you to

safety.” He answered, “No, no, that’s alright. I’m a believer. God will help me.” Water kept rising, and the old man was eventually sitting on his roof. A helicopter came by to rescue him. He absolutely refused, adding “God will help me.” The old man drowned and met Peter at the pearly gates. The old man was angry. I’ve been praying and believing God will help me, but he didn’t come through.

Peter said, “Just a minute, sir. God warned you on your radio about a flash flood. Then he sent a boat of rescuers when he saw the water at the top of your doorsteps, but you refused to leave. Then he sent a helicopter when you were on your rooftop. Again, you refused. As long as you keep blaming God, you can’t enter here,” said Peter.

In today’s Gospel story, Jesus reminds us that God knows what’s best for us, and he’s giving the best to us. However, we might be stubbornly holding on to our old ideas about God, or about other people, to the point we don’t even see the good that God is handing us.

For instance, we may find it hard to believe that a nurse in the St. Cloud hospital, who is wearing a veil/hijab, can be kind and attentive. We may have heard a bad story about fanatic Muslims in the Middle East, so we have a hard time seeing God’s goodness in her. My mother praised the Muslim nurse she had while in that hospital.

When we have an accident, do we blame God for the accident happening? Later, we are surprised to see God’s goodness in the people that stopped to help us. God’s love is present every moment, everywhere. God is giving us our “daily bread” in some form or another. But, if we do not see that “bread of goodness,” then we may end up not believing that God’s Kingdom of love is at hand—is already blossoming forth.

Today Jesus invites us to believe. He said, **“Ask, and you will receive.”** We might ask God to spare us from Covid, but still become sick with Covid. Then someone we haven’t heard from for a long time sends a card or bouquet of flowers. We needed to know that our friend is still attentive. God, our father and mother, knows what’s best for us. Therefore, when we ask for something in prayer we cannot demand only that item we desire with our limited minds. Rather, we should pray, “God, spare me from Covid, but do whatever you know is best for

me. Jesus prayed the same way, "Father protect me from the chalice of suffering. However, you will, not mine, be done."

That's the openness we need whenever we pray, **"Give us this day our daily bread." In other words, "God, give us what we need most, in whatever form you know is best for me/best for us]." AMEN? Yes, AMEN !**