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## 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time - 24 July 2022

Gerard Moore

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# 24 July 2022

## Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Gerard Moore

### Introduction

Our readings open us to the centrality and necessity of petition and prayer to God, setting this within the unfathomable depths of divine generosity. Today our church calls us to celebrate grandparents and the elderly and also Bible Sunday.

### Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you draw us to the Father.  
Lord, have mercy.

You teach us to pray.  
Christ, have mercy.

You strengthen us with your Spirit.  
Lord, have mercy.

### Collect

*The oration*

O God, protector of those who hope in you,  
without whom nothing has firm foundation, nothing is holy,  
bestow in abundance your mercy upon us  
and grant that, with you as our ruler and guide,  
we may use the good things that pass  
in such a way as to hold fast even now  
to those that ever endure.

There is a deep sense of sacramentality underpinning this prayer. God, our protector, ruler and guide gives good things and helps us to use them so that their good is realised in us. However, there is also a more particular sense derived from the history of the prayer. The petition to hold onto the good things that pass originated from a prayer of Pope Vigilius (d.555), prayed in Rome during the year 537 as the besieged city anticipated the defeat of the Arian invader Witiges and the consequent lifting of the siege due to a fresh injection of

troops on behalf of the Romans. The pope was anxious that in the rush of victory the population should remain mindful of the things that were both good and also a foretaste of life in the divine city. In particular then, the good things that pass are the liturgy, the fasts, and the divine mandates. To partake in them on earth is to have an experience of the unchanging joy of eternal life. Another feature of the prayer, so typical of the collects, is the way in which God is understood as intimate to the life of the community, offering continuous protection, guidance and leadership. Even in the midst of calamity, God is seen as close, merciful and abundant. (Gerard Moore)

## **First Reading**

### **Genesis 18:20-32**

Our first reading sets intercession as an essential part of Israelite prayer, a form of prayer heard by God openly and responded to with generosity.

## **Responsorial Psalm**

### **Psalm 137:1-3, 6-8. R. v. 3**

*Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me.*

The psalmist shows clearly the intercessory prayer of the Israelites and the deep confidence in the God of compassion and generosity.

## **Second Reading**

### **Colossians 2:12-14**

In Christ our transgressions are forgiven.

## **Gospel Reading**

### **Luke 11:1-13**

The Gospel teaches of the unbounded generosity of God, inviting us to be generous disciples

## Reflection

We begin our reflection with the first reading. This wonderful, if not unusual passage, is set alongside our Gospel as an illustration of the importance of prayer, and how our petitions are heard by God. It is a slightly odd juxtaposition, and one that does not do full justice to the episode.

There is a primal quality to the reading, one that shows the easy relationship between the divine being and Abraham, with a closeness reminiscent of Adam and Eve both in and out of the garden. The text comes from the deep recesses of Israelite faith and carries an important teaching. The human Abraham is daring to bring to God the very tenets of divine justice that God has taught Abraham! For the peoples of the ancient near east the gods were above justice and could not be called to account by creatures. Not so here, where integrity is a characteristic of the divine being. If God's justice is to be taken up by the people, it must also be evidenced in the actions of the divine one.

Abraham's is a brave discussion, marked by politeness and a degree of cunning. Ultimately if forty just people are to be saved, then as the bargaining continues it is apparent that each and every just person deserves to be spared. Clearly as the story progresses it is easy to see that Abraham is looking out for the safety of his nephew Lot, however he is also learning to understand that justice is integral to the nature of God.

In terms of prayer, the reading sets intercession as an essential part of Israelite prayer. It is a form of prayer heard by God openly and responded to with generosity.

Our Pauline text is the next in a series of excerpts from the Letter to the Colossians. It is a remarkable statement of God's love for us in Christ, a love so faithful that it remained constant despite sin and is marked by forgiveness. It is God who loved us first and removed any barriers between God and creation. In setting this with our first reading, we see here another level where the justice of God is underpinned by the love of God. This is another reason to be confident in the role of petition: our prayers are heard by one who loves us unconditionally.

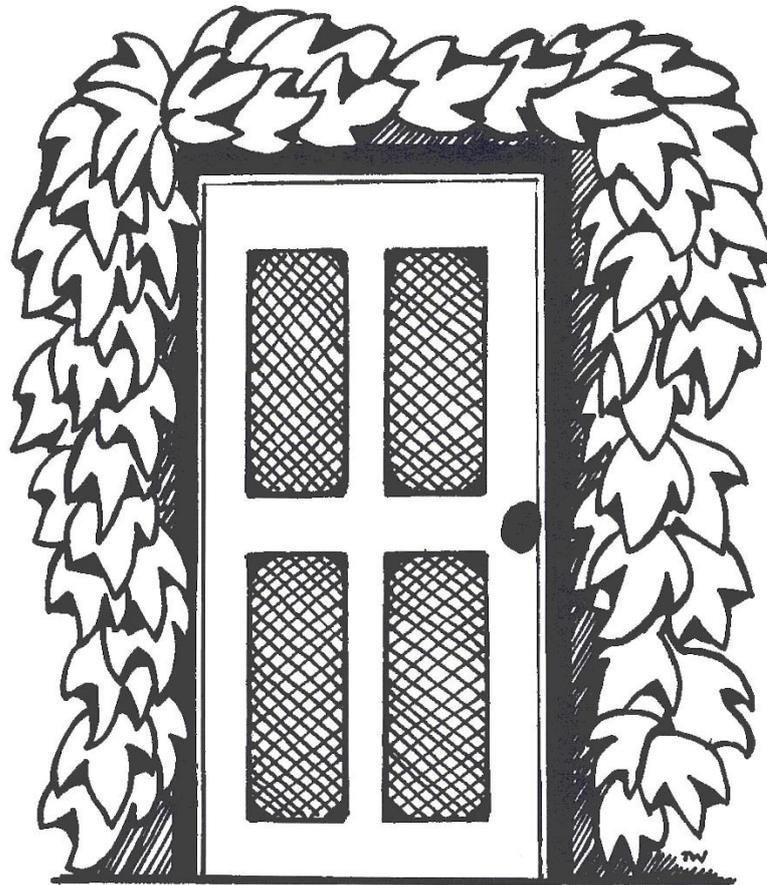
The Gospel reflects the generosity of God. Jesus is asked about prayer, and his response is around petition. It is a further development of the approach we heard earlier from Abraham. The patriarch works slowly to uncover the justice of God. Jesus goes further, setting prayer and petition in the context of the goodness of God and the closeness of God to us. It is a picture painted with warmth and underpinned by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The reading opens with Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer. It is a shorter, starker version than that of Matthew, and brings out quite clearly a dynamic within petition. Jesus is insistent on the generosity of God, encouraging us to seek and to knock. At the same time this petitionary impulse also has a conversion impetus. As we seek forgiveness, through the Lord's Prayer we pray to become more forgiving. The generosity of God is a reminder that our calling is to be like God, particularly emulating the forgiveness we have received. As a consequence, the master teaches us to pray for forgiveness that we will forgive those in our lives. It is not difficult to see that the petition

for our daily bread is equally a moment when we realise that we are to share the bread we have been given.

There is a point to be made with the language of the Lord's Prayer. Jesus teaches us to pray, and in this, folds us into his relationship with God. To capture the closeness of this belonging Jesus names God as 'father', and uses images based in this to build our trust in God: *what father among you would hand his son a snake ...*

Yet the image of God as father is only one amongst so many in the scriptures and is an invocation used only rarely in the Latin tradition of missal prayers. Jesus' point is not to privilege male gender but to highlight the depth of the relationship.



**Knock and the door will  
be opened to you.**

Lk 11:9

# Prayer of the Faithful

## Introduction

The psalmist exudes confidence in God's generosity and so we offer our needs and the needs of our community.

## Petitions

We pray for the leaders of our church:; Pope Francis, all the clergy, lay and religious leaders. May they always show us how to deepen our relationship with God through prayer and contemplating scripture.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for world leaders who struggle with their own human weaknesses as they work in a troubled world. May they find strength in recognition that they are not alone and that there is a greater source of power beyond themselves.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who help bring the Bible into people's lives. May their dedication to the Word of God help to bring the message of the Gospel to people throughout the world and may we work towards better knowledge and use of the Bible in our lives.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the people who are suffering from war, famine and upheaval in their home countries, particularly the elderly who are displaced and without any resources. May our generosity to organisations be fruitful in helping those most in need.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all grandparents and elderly people that their wisdom and life experiences be valued and honoured. May those who care for them accept the responsibility with grace and dignity and find that they are gifted in the effort of caring.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for families who live without access to grandparents. May they find intergenerational relationships of value within their communities and find benefits for all who participate.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

## Conclusion

Loving God, your son Jesus taught us to pray, and taught us that what we ask will be granted, and so we offer these needs in his name and through the power of the Spirit.

**Amen.**

## Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Title	AOV1	AOV2	AOVK		GA	CWB	CWBII		MP
A child's prayer			111						
A family prayer			16						
Always on this first of days					532				
Forgive our sins as we forgive						680	120		
Glory and praise to our God	16				417		491		
I am the bread of life	49				204	718	509		
O Father, I know I can count on your mercy						762	122		
O Lord, hear my prayer	17				431				
Praise to the Lord		132				792	586		
Seek, O seek the Lord					211	802	595		
Seek ye first	48				456		594	160	
Sing praise to the Lord all our days							260		
Tell out, my soul					550		213		
The Beatitudes					489	817	456		
To you, O Lord, I lift my soul (Smith)	108								
To you, O Lord, I lift my soul (Willcock)					26	592	632		
We are children of the living God			15						

## Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

*Psalm 137: Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me.*

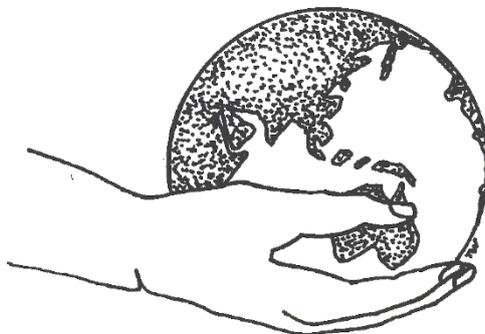
	CWB	GA	JOBC	JOBF	LPC	PM
Psalm 137	399		pg. 82		pg. 124	

## Music selections by Michael Mangan

**Merciful (DOM)** [Gifts]

**Knock, knock (SHOF)** *Based on Lk 11:9-10* [CHILDREN: Gathering, Recessional]

**Mercy shall be yours (DOM)** [Communion, Recessional]



**Touched by God's  
hand, our world is  
holy.**