

Homily – Lk. 11: 1-13
17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C
23rd July, 2022, Riverstown

I had the privilege of visiting Fr. Patrick Peyton Memorial Centre in Attymass, County Mayo in 2019 along with the priests of St. Mary's Cathedral, Sligo. The centre today is a popular attraction for pilgrims and tourists alike, providing an interesting presentation on Fr. Peyton's life story and a photographic exhibition of his prayer crusades. And, I should say it was indeed a great prayer experience for me to visit this centre of Fr. Peyton, the Rosary Priest in Ballina, Co. Mayo.

Well! Fr. Peyton, born on 9th January 1909, was one of 9 children. And at the age of 19, he and his brother Tom immigrated to the United States to join their sister, Nellie. And there, he pursued his studies for the priesthood. But during his final year in the seminary, he was diagnosed having tuberculosis, an illness that was considered incurable at that time. Fr Peyton was very weak and was given little hope by the medical team of recovering to full health. But he had great faith and prayed to the Blessed Virgin Mary for a recovery to health. His prayers were answered and his health began to improve to the amazement of everyone. Fr Peyton was so grateful to the Blessed Virgin Mary for his health, that he, with the

permission of his superiors, began the Prayer Crusade which took him all over the world preaching the importance of prayer, especially family prayer. And he kept telling all those who flocked to listen to him this great message: “The Family that prays together stays together”.

Well, the disciples of Jesus come to Him in the Gospel of today and they say to Jesus: “Teach us to pray”. Now, this is not an unusual request, because Rabbis always taught their disciples how to pray. But compared to other Rabbis, the prayer that Jesus teaches His disciples is remarkable for its brevity and simplicity. Jesus taught them to call God: “our Father”.

Now throughout the Gospels, Jesus has been using images of a loving parent to convey the truth of ‘who God is’ and ‘how God loves us’. In Mathew’s Gospel, Jesus uses the image of a mother gathering her young ones close to her in order to convey how much God loves each of us. In John’s Gospel, Jesus uses the word ‘Abba’ for God, conveying trust. And here in the Gospel of Luke, the disciples ask Jesus: “how should we pray?” and Jesus tells them; call God “our Father”. It’s as if Jesus is saying to us: ‘God is so in love with His children that He wants to carry each of us in His arms’. Yes, ‘the God of Jesus Christ is a God who desires intimacy with us’. That is really why Jesus was born. This is why the Word became flesh.

From all eternity God has something profoundly important to tell us. God wants to tell us how deeply we are loved and God knows that this kind of message has to be delivered in person, face to face. So, He sends His only Son Jesus, who becomes one of us. And whenever we draw close to the person of Jesus, we will be able to hear the heartbeat of God because Jesus is the revelation of the heart and heartbeat of God who He taught us to call “our Father”. Yes! Jesus has taught us to address God as Father.

Now, a loving Father listens to his child, but does not blindly endorse every request. Instead, a loving Father provides what is needed, including discipline. Well, we need to remember here dear friends, that to pray is not to impose our will on God, but to ask God to help us remain open to His will; in other words, we pray not to change God’s mind but for God to change ours. William McGill an American psychologist would sum it up this way. “The value of persistent prayer is, ‘not that God will hear us but that we will finally hear God’ ”.

A story is told of a mother whose only child, a son, was confined in a hospital, seriously sick. She cared for him as best as she could. And during this difficult period, she also found time to be in the Chapel on her knees. And in tears before the Blessed Sacrament, she began by

acknowledging God as the Source of life and thanked Him for the gift of her son who had brought joy to her life. Then she begged God to spare him. The worse his condition became, the harder she prayed. But despite her relentless prayers, her son died. Her relatives and friends were worried how she would take this turn of events. But she was calm and serene. And when asked how she was able to do that, she answered, “What I prayed for was what I wanted. But during my prayer, there was something in me that said, ‘Let go and let God!’ Thus, at one point, I finally said, ‘Your will be done, Lord.’ With my child’s death, it was obvious that God did not go along with what I wanted. Though painful, I accepted His will wholeheartedly. He knew what’s best.”

Yes, He knows what’s best. Those moments dear brothers and sisters, in which, we might feel that we do not get what we want, be assured, God our Father always gives us what we need.

I’m sure the following lines we have heard so often in life might help us keep our prayers in the proper perspective: “I asked God for strength that I might achieve; I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey. I asked for health that I might do great things; I was given infirmity that I might do better things. I asked for riches that I might be happy; I was given

poverty that I might be wise. I asked for all things that I might enjoy life; I was given life that I might enjoy all things. I got nothing that I asked for but everything I had hoped for; despite myself, my prayers were answered. I am, among all people, most richly blessed. God bless you all, **Amen.**