

We do not know yet what heaven is like. But we know it involves God. If we hope to reach God in the end, then we probably need to have some kind of relationship with Him now, right? Some kind of practice or spring training for heaven, so to speak.

So here's an easy question: How do we develop a friendship with the Lord, now, while we are still here on earth? Maybe by... praying?

We just heard the gospel passage about the Samaritan woman at the well. To pray is like going to a well. Someone who prays opens up his soul to God like a thirsty person opening his or her throat for cool, refreshing water.

When we open up like this, when we go to the well of prayer, we find Christ waiting for us there, like the Samaritan woman found Him. Upon meeting Christ at the well of Christian prayer, we discover three things...

1. While of course we come thirsty to the well of prayer, we discover that the Lord also thirsts. "Give me a drink," He says.

Now, what on earth do we possess that we can give God to drink? Can we give water, or a cherry Coke, to the One Who measures out the depth of the oceans and holds the rain clouds in His hands?

No. The Lord thirsts for one thing and one thing only. He thirsts for our devoted love. On the Cross He opened His arms to us. His throat was parched. He said to each of us, “I thirst. I thirst for you.”

2. The well of Christian prayer is the well of our forefather Jacob, the grandson of Abraham. Many centuries before Christ, Jacob dug the well we heard about in the gospel passage.

So we have to be willing to imitate Jacob. As we read in Genesis, Jacob struggled all night in the darkness. Some unknown foe wrestled with him. Jacob refused to give in. Then, in the morning, Jacob received a blessing and a new name. The Lord called him Israel, because he persevered in his struggle through the dark night. That’s what the word Israel means, the one who struggles with God.

At the well of prayer, the Lord Jesus pours out the living water of the Holy Spirit. But to pray in the Holy Spirit, we have to be willing to persevere through the dark struggle, like Jacob. The Holy Spirit is infinite divine love. But love isn’t all candy and roses. Love can be rough. The Holy Spirit doesn’t send Hallmark cards. He lifts us up to dizzying, frightening, unfamiliar heights.

3. The third thing that we discover when we meet Christ at the well of prayer is this: The Lord Jesus is the Messiah Who makes it possible for us to worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

Now, human beings are naturally inclined to pray. But a lot of things can get in the way. Spiritual laziness. Self-centeredness. Attachments to material things. False ideas about God. Distractions. Distractions. Distractions.

In Christ, we find humble and true prayer. In Christ, man prays for everything that is truly good. The Catechism of the Catholic Church has a beautiful one-sentence explanation of what Christian prayer is: “Prayer is the response of faith to the free promise of salvation.” The response of faith to the free promise of salvation.

What did the Lord say to the woman at the well? “If you knew the gift of God!”

The woman had rebuffed the Messiah at first, because He made a request she didn’t think she could deal with. She couldn’t fully grasp what He was asking her. She had her ideas about how she fit into the world. And this interaction with Christ fell outside those ideas.

If only we knew the gift of God!

But we waste our time thinking thoughts like: I'm a loser, because I don't have very many facebook friends. Or: I'm not worth anything, because I'm fat. I'm not cool, because I only have an iPhone 5. I suck, because I can't cook, I can't jump, I can't attract attention at parties.

No! If we only knew the gift of God, the promise of salvation. He is saying to us: I died for you, at the exact weight you are now, with the exact number of facebook friends you have right now! You don't need to be any thinner, or have any more facebook friends, for me to love you. I suffered agony and died for you exactly as you are—I suffered that much, and died that miserably, precisely to show you how much I want you with me in heaven.

So, please, for a minute, says the Lord, just forget your diet and your job and your husband and your wife and your children and your parents and your neighbor and your car and your business and your dog and your cat and your homework and your resume and your money and your apps and your Netflix—forget it all for a minute.

Believe that your Maker has suffered and died on the cross out of love for you. And talk to Him.