

11 OT Thursday 2020  
MT 6:7-15

John the Baptist may seem like a strange place to begin this homily, but taking the four accounts of the Gospel as a whole, it will make sense in a minute.

Consider John the Baptist, first at the River Jordan. This son of the choicest family of the chosen people became a hermit to prepare for the coming of Our Blessed Lord. A camel skin tunic, and wild locusts for food symbolized his alienation from the world, not because he became disillusioned, but rather, to become a voice. John the Baptist was the first to fix his eyes on Our Blessed Lord. Yet:

- ✓ No miracles
- ✓ No feeding the 5000
- ✓ No healing at the pool of Bethesda
- ✓ No glory of the Transfiguration

brought him to Christ.

Being young, John the Baptist was:

- ✓ uncompromising,
- ✓ black and white,
- ✓ either – or.

There was no middle ground, just instant demands, non-negotiable “nows.” According to Luke, this is the John the Baptist who taught his disciples to pray. “Lord teach us to pray as John taught his disciples to pray.” I would imagine impetuous John the Baptist has a pretty short turn around built into his prayers, which I would imagine, contrasted with how Our Blessed Lord taught His disciples how to pray, specifically, “give us this day our daily bread.”

Anyone who wants to know what it was like, and is like for Jesus’ disciples would do well to read the Our Father. While everyone knows the prayer by heart, it’s not a prayer for everyone. It’s a prayer for only true disciples and followers of Jesus. It is “their” prayer. It distills the whole of what moves and defines them.

Regarding “give us this day our daily bread,” the Greek word used for “daily” is *epiousios*, which literally means, the bread that is needed for tonight and tomorrow. So why is this included in the prayer? Because Jesus and His disciples are travelling through the land, and they do not know whether anyone will take them in that evening and give them something to eat. Therefore, they have to pray to their heavenly Father, since they have left their earthly Fathers to follow Jesus. Their

prayer is so immediate. Father, take care of us this evening, so our lives will be secure for one more day.

I spoke about the hurricane relief warehouse St. Benedict had established after Superstorm Sandy. For the weeks after the storm, I was the warehouse manager. I can tell you story after story of how Our Blessed Lord “gave us this day our daily bread.” A tractor trailer arrived from out of state. We were not expecting it. It just arrived. So the driver asked me what to do. I told him to back the trailer against the loading dock in the back room. He then asked who’s going to unload it. I had no one. No lie. Two minutes later, the football team from St. John Vianney High School, which is right over the fence from St. Benedict arrived and asked how they could help. I said, “Men, there’s a tractor trailer that needs to be unloaded in the back room.” Unbelievable. Give us this day our daily bread.

A few weeks went by and, eventually St. Benedict had power and it was time to get the parish and school open. I was relieved as manager by someone who worked for the Chamber of Commerce. As I was going through how I managed the store, she asked me, “What do you do for volunteers?” I said, “I pray for them.” She said, “That’s it? That’s your plan?” And I

said, “Yes, do you have a better one, because it has worked every day since we started.” Give us this day our daily bread.

During this pandemic, “Give us this day our daily bread, Lord.” Give us what we need to get through tonight and tomorrow. Tomorrow we will pray for what we need tomorrow night and into Saturday. Another way of praying “Give us this day our daily bread” is praying, “Jesus, through Mary, I trust in You.”

Otherwise, when the pandemic hit, had we prayed further out, we may have been told, “And while you are in the middle of the pandemic, there will be rioting in every major city in the country.” No, we will set our sights on “Give us this day our daily bread,” “Jesus, through Mary, I trust in You,” and then drop down a few verses in the same chapter as today’s Gospel, where Our Blessed Lord says, “Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself.” Why, because we prayed about tonight and tomorrow when we prayed, “Give us this day our daily bread.”