

The disciples ask Jesus a most important question. How do we pray? His answer brings us to the beginnings of the Our Father. It is perhaps, the most known prayer in all the world. If only the “us” in the world would follow his example; it would not be on fire today. Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. The beginning is easy to unfold. Father holy is your name; your kingdom will come; it is not here. Jesus said as much while he was among us. His world was on fire too.

We ask to have our sins forgiven as we forgive those who have offended us. On our side of the prayer, of course, that is the hard part. We want to be washed clean of our offenses against God and neighbor, but we and I mean the grater humanity do not forgive each other so easily. Cut someone off – and who knows what could happen.

Some cultures and religions hold ancient grudges against each other; a thousand years removed from the original insult. And, we see the result: generations, lost to senseless acts of violence in the name of God. It seems each generation needs to sacrifice its sons and daughters for the greater good that never seems to come.

But we also need to ask – what kind of God would want us to invoke his name as we smite down one another. He is clear here in this simple prayer. “Forgive everyone in debt to [you], and [we plea] do not subject us to the final test.”

Because if we were held accountable for our sins, I suggest, most would fail the final test mentioned here. We need the grace of God – each one of us.

There is another consideration here as well. Does God hear anything we have to say? Why does he seem to answer some prayers and is desperately silent on others? I could fill this church with both kinds of people. Those who know without a doubt that God answered a personal prayer request and handed them a miracle and others who are broken from a loss God seemed to miss.

As we know President Lincoln could not out run the Civil War. Each day as he got out of bed, he was faced with its destruction. He saw it outside of the windows of the White House. He said this about God in his own questioning about prayer and the very existence of God in the seeming despair by which he was surrounded.

“I can see how it might be possible for a man to look down upon the earth and be an atheist, but I cannot conceive how a man could look up into the heavens and say there is no God.”

Looking around the world in which we live today it is easy to say: there is no God – how could he allow that truck to even move in Nice, or the carnage in the Sandy Hook school or Columbine or Dallas or a dozen more places that we all could name with surely more to come? There is no easy answer on this

side of heaven, but as sure as I am standing here – God does not allow any of this: if he does, “I quit.” It is part of the fallen human condition. The more society moves away from a sense and need for God the more it seems that the world is changing and not in a good way. **It seems we cannot go it alone.**

As Lincoln suggested – if we look to the magnificence of the heavens in the night sky, the wonders and beauty of the earth or hear of advancing wonders in medical science, I think we could also say – how could there not be a - God?

Does he hear our prayers? Maybe it is we simply we don't take the time to pray enough as individuals as a collective humanity of all faiths. When was the last time you sat down to pray other than at the Mass or a family crisis? Have you taken the time over the past week to communicate with God your needs or simply to offer thanks?

Someone once said that prayers are like the light of a flashlight beam spread out in the darkness. Some parts of the light rays are brighter than others. They are the stronger and more consistent prayers to God. They go on to say that angels catch the prayers they can see and carry them to heaven. Miracles, I suggest, do happen as the result of prayer more than we know.

Jesus, in this Gospel, gives us just one example of prayer. He also talks to us about giving. When I baptize babies, I always tell the young couples that

they need to give their sense of God to their children if their children are to know God in their own lives. He must be present in their home. God is not just found in church or a cross on the wall. God is found in everyday events. He is present in highs and lows and personal tragedies that we will all come to know as human beings. They must be able to call on a God that they know if they need him. So, with this in mind, I tell them, in my world, two things are very important; one is to teach your children how to swim and the other is to teach them to know God from your POV.

How do the two relate: Swimming and God? We teach them to swim because we know as parents we will not always be around them when they fall or are pushed into water over their heads, so they need that important skill to survive, to get back to the side of the pool or the beach. They also need to know God in a way that is real where they can talk to him; count on him. Some of those ways are in prayers like the Our Father – or just in a plain conversation with God. Because of state the world in which we all live, now: none of us know what will come next or from where. We need God in our lives now more than ever.

God says to all of us gathered here "For whoever asks, receives, whoever seeks finds; whoever knocks, is admitted. As Christians we have to believe this; this is the center of our faith, our stake in heaven with a God who loves us more than we could ever know.