

My Dear Brothers and Sister in Christ,

Jesus tells us in today's Gospel, "Whatever you ask the Father in My name He will grant it to you." For many of us, we may have a little trouble with this for many different reasons. I am sure that many of us have prayed for something and it has not been given to us. When my brother had cancer and we were told that most likely it was terminal, I began to pray harder than I had ever prayed before. I fasted, I offered up Masses, I prayed the Rosary every day, and other acts of devotion. When my brother died I was angry. I began to ask myself, did I not pray right, did God not love me as I believed, was I being punished. I found myself in front of the Blessed Sacrament asking God why. I heard as clear as day our Lord tell me, "Your brother has found his way back to me. If I would have cured him, he would have become lost again. This way you will be separated for a short time and united for eternity. The other way you would have had him for a short term and separated for eternity." In that, I came to realize just how much God loved me and my brother.

God answers prayers in three ways. He may say yes. He may say wait, you are not ready yet. He may say no. Jesus tells us, "What father would give his son a snake when he asks for a fish, or what father would give his son a stone when he asks for a loaf of bread." Sometimes God says no because what we ask for is not good for us. I remember my parents saying no to me many times. I remember asking my mother for one of the cookies she had just baked and she said no. I started to think, "She has got lots of cookies but will not give me even one, so she must not love me very much." The reality was something very different. It was only 30 minutes before dinner time and she knew the cookie might cause me to not eat what was good for me.

As I have gotten older I have come to more understand how saying no was so much harder on my parents than giving me what I wanted all the time. I understand what pain it caused them when I questioned the love they had for me, or the sadness they felt as I was sad. What love they truly had for when they said no. I think our relationship with God can be very much the same. We say, "God is all knowing, God is all powerful, and He has not given me what I want, so He must not love me." In reality, like any good parent, God says no *because* He loves us. We may not see it at the time, or even in our lifetime, the love God must have for us when He says no. I think you and I are called to ask ourselves - how do we respond when God says no.

As many of you may have read the requirements on our website for reopening the churches in the Diocese of Peoria (and all of Illinois), you might have noticed that *we need 6 people to be trained in how to keep the churches clean*. The training is done by watching a 60 minute video, and then be willing to help keep the church sanitized. The guidelines call for people under the age of 65 with no conditions that will put them more at risk. *We will not be able to open the churches in phases 1A and 2 if we do not have these people in place*. We will need hand sanitizer and antibacterial wipes to sanitize the church after each use. If you fit these guidelines and are willing to volunteer, email the church office at secretary.stmary@mchsi.com.

Thank you,

Fr Tim