

## **Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time July 23-24, 2016**

**The political conventions of both major US parties are meant to unify their members. The conventions are also opportunities for delegates and others to meet and talk with each other and come to some common ground. Whether they succeed or not is obviously open to question.**

**The life blood of every group is communication, listening and responding with care and respect for each member of the group. The Scriptures for this Sunday are about prayer, which is communication with God. It entails listening to him usually through the Scriptures and the teaching of his living community of the Church. It also entails telling him our needs, fears, hopes, as well as adoring him and seeking forgiveness for our shortcomings and sins. To pray is to be part of God's family.**

**Today's OT reading from the Book of Genesis gives us an example of our father in faith, Abraham, communicating and prayerfully conversing with God, really bargaining and arguing with the Lord about the fate of two notorious sinful cities: Sodom and Gomorrah. He begs the Lord to show mercy to spare the cities from destruction if only 10 innocent people are found there. We marvel at the trusting familiarity of Abraham's relationship with the Lord. This incident is an example of the kind of persistent and trusting prayer which all people of faith can imitate. To pray is to be part of God's family.**

**In the Gospel, from St. Luke, Jesus responds to a request from one of his disciples on how they are to pray. He gives them what has come to be known as the "Lord's Prayer, the Our Father." St. Luke's version differs somewhat from the one found in St. Matthew's Gospel, which is the one we all know so well and pray so often. To pray it is to be part of God's family.**

**This prayer is really a model of how we should pray in our own words. We are to regard God as a loving Father. The Aramaic word used for father is more familiar, more like Daddy or Papa. We pray that we may regard God as holy and that his presence or kingdom might be always present to us. We pray for what we need, physically and spiritually, our daily bread. We pray for forgiveness and for the grace to forgive one another. Finally we pray not to succumb to harmful temptations.**

**Jesus continues to assure his disciples of the need for persistence in prayer and to be confident that God will give us what we truly need, just a loving father gives good things to his children. Indeed. God will give his loving Holy Spirit to all who ask. It will bond us to one another in the Church community. To pray is to be part of God's family.**

**There are several points to notice from these 2 Scriptures. Like Abraham, we should bring to prayer not only our needs but those of others in a confident way, trusting in God's generosity. Secondly, as Jesus taught, we need to look upon God as a caring father, who wants to give us what will truly benefit us. Thirdly, we need to pray regularly and persistently every day, using prayers we have learned from our earliest days or, better, in our own heartfelt words.**

**What we are doing now at Mass is obviously praying in the best way. We are entering into the prayer of Jesus giving himself to us and gathering us into his loving arms to present to his Father. He sends down the Holy Spirit to strengthen our faith and to build up his Church and to bless us in countless ways. We have our own convention to unify us in faith every week as we gather to pray the Mass. To pray is to be part of God's family.**

**May Jesus the Lord continue to teach us to pray!**