

### USE WISELY THE BLESSINGS OF GOD

Few people at Mass really listen to the opening prayer which is said immediately after the Gloria. These prayers are generally short and contain only one or two general petitions, sometimes maybe three. Everyone listens, answers amen and then sits for the readings. The first five or ten minutes of Sunday Mass are generally distracting as many people come late and are searching for seats which they hope will be as far from the altar as possible. Why so many want to distant themselves from the Altar has always been a mystery. But that is another topic.

The opening prayer last Sunday, the Seventeenth Sunday in ordinary time contained only one petition. Most likely few if any remember just what it was that they along with everyone there prayed for. The petition was short but in reality it contains a broad and very powerful and meaningful subject to pray for, especially in these modern day times. And just what was this petition? We all asked God to help us use wisely the blessings he has given to the world. Now this petition sounds simple enough and is certainly broad enough to cover almost everything. No one could or would object that we as citizens of this world would ask God to help us carry it out. But perhaps it is its simplicity that hides the true realty of what we all prayed for and all personally really want in our lives.

When God created man, Adam and Eve, and gave them control of the entire planet along with a command to multiply and subdue the planet, he in fact made them partners with him in his work of creation. He had given each of them a soul, that unique part of every human being which is created and given to each person when they are conceived. It is the soul of a person that enables them to rise above all creation in that they can now act as true human beings, think and make judgments, and above all use this ability to truly love another and beyond that to love their creator and God. When God created the universe some thirteen billion years ago with what they now call the "Big Bang" he patiently waited as all the laws of nature which he put into the universe slowly worked to develop what we have today, something almost beyond comprehension in its immensity and intrinsic beauty.

When the time was right and all was in order, God then created human beings to be partners with him in completing his total vision of what was to be in the distant future. If every human being has a stake in the final outcome, one can then see how much God cared for humans in that he wanted each and every one of them to be intimate partners in achieving the ultimate goal of his creative work. And beyond that, it means that God wanted humans to know that they not only had a part in the whole scheme but were in fact vital to helping it come to fruition. What will happen after that is known only to God, but he did give his promise that all humans were destined to live forever. Thus what the ultimate distant future holds, we do not know but in faith we know we will all once again be partners with God in it.

All this was in the divine plan of creation. But to really make humans to be a part of it, God had to give each and every human being he would create the gift of freedom. Without absolute freedom, humans would never really be able to love which in reality is the driving force of all that God does and hopes for humans to partner with him. But the gift of freedom was a risky gift in that humans

would have the power to say no to God! They would have the power to do it their way and ignore God. In a word, they could in their own way of thinking, make themselves into a God! God knew this, yet he also knew how he could work around it without taking away freedom. Love was all behind his thinking.

The world today is completely different from the days of Adam and Eve. Using the talents and abilities that God has given to every human, men and women have made the world so much easier to live in and to cope with. Even just two centuries ago, people living then could not even dream about how it is to live today. We all take so much for granted that we just accept today's marvels as almost owed to us. The electronic marvels exceed human imagination, yet there is almost no one who does not take advantage of them and take them for granted. Stop for a moment and just think about all the goodies you have over and above real needs to simply enjoy life more.

But there is a dark side to all this. Take the internet for an example. It is simply a marvel almost beyond comprehension as to how much it has changed everyone's lives. Communication has and is continuing to constantly change as more and more people and businesses take advantage of its potential not just to run their businesses more efficiently but to enjoy life more. But it is also the easiest and most available means of searching and finding so much which is morally wrong. The pornographic industry has grown by leaps and bounds as more and more people "secretly" look up their products and before they realize it are hooked and become deeply addicted to watching others do wrong and sinful things, all for an easy and quick thrill, while at the same time without their realizing it becoming less and less human and more and more animal-like. The minutes quickly become hours which quickly become days, etc., all for cheap thrills gotten through wrong and sinful ways. And then the fear of being found out, the fear of losing one's true humanity, the fear of committing deliberate sins, all of which slowly but surely changing one's whole human character.

And one must not forget the growing number of those who are deliberately out to rob others of their good credit line, of their identity, ultimately of their good name and all their cash. Original sin is not a myth; it is a reality, and everyone is touched by it, like it or not, and everyone is tempted to step over the line periodically. This is not using the gifts of God wisely as the Church prayed for a week ago. The list of wrong doings is long and getting longer day by day through misuse of the gift of freedom.

And then there are the young, the vulnerable, the trusting future of our world. It is so easy for them to become used, to become immoral in their thinking. And so often parents simply look the other way, rather than put up with a fight with their children. Peace at all costs becomes a way of life. The list of wrongdoings, crimes and total deviant behavior grows daily. Sin is a reality, a real reality today, like it or not.

So what is the answer? Honestly turn to God's way, to God's words, to God's love in action, his Son, Jesus Christ. Realize that the prayers we say at Mass have serious meanings, to say nothing about the value of the Mass itself. Prayer is the ultimate answer along with a growing trust in the Lord. All this comes from honestly talking with the Lord, quietly in one's own words, honestly in showing your faith in the Lord by not giving up prayer, and taking a stand as an adult believer, an

adult Catholic. With God on one's side, doing the right thing is possible, even enjoyable. Take him at his word; trust him; and be willing to at least try to change; it works!!!

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