



AMDG
16TH SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME
YEAR A
23RD JULY 2017



God knows everything in our hearts

OPENING PRAYER

Show favour, O Lord, to your servants
and mercifully increase the gifts of your grace,
that, made fervent in hope, faith and charity,
they may be ever watchful in keeping your commands.

This coming week we are reminded that however hard we may find it to pray, the Lord always knows what we need to say. It is God's own Spirit that prays within our hearts.

The first reading addresses God directly as the all-powerful one who cares for everything he has made. Though he is the God of strength and justice, he is also lenient and merciful – and so we, too, must try to act with kindness, even when we are challenged. The psalmist praises the Lord's goodness and mighty deeds, yet again reminds us that he is slow to anger. We can ask our loving, compassionate God to turn to us whenever we are in need.

The short second reading offers us great hope, for it assures us that we can hand over to the Lord any struggles we experience in prayer. St Paul tells of the indwelling Spirit of God, who prays within each one of us whether we can find the right words or not. Jesus tells three parables about growth in the Gospel. In the first, someone has sabotaged a field of good wheat by planting darnel (weeds). Yet Jesus invites us to think carefully and be patient. If we hurry to pull out the weeds we might end up sacrificing the whole crop, instead of allowing God to work in his own time.

This week, perhaps I might ask the Lord for a deeper trust to share all things with him in my prayer, even those things I find it hardest to express – knowing that he already sees and understands.

SECOND READING: ROMANS 8: 26-27

The Spirit comes to help us in our weakness. For when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit himself expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words, and God who knows everything in our hearts knows perfectly well what he means, and that the pleas of the saints expressed by the Spirit are according to the mind of God.

I prepare to come to inner quiet in a way that feels comfortable for me. How am I today? Do I find it easy to settle, or am I distracted? However I feel, I trust that the Lord looks on me with infinite love.

In time I read these few words slowly, prayerfully, several times. I may like to put them into the first person ... 'The Spirit comes to help me in my weakness...'

I notice how this touches me. Paul knows full well that praying isn't always easy. But even when we struggle to find words, we are reassured that God's Spirit within us is already taking care of things. I reflect on this.

Perhaps I take one or two deep breaths, consciously drawing God's Spirit deeper into my being. I take time to notice anything that stirs within me.

Can I trust that God already knows and understands the deepest movements of my heart, however difficult they are to express?

I ponder this with the Lord, and rest here as long as I need to.

Are there pleas that I need to bring before the Lord today – whether for myself or others? If so, I share them with confidence.

Perhaps I spend a moment talking directly to the Holy Spirit, this vital helper alive within me.

I may like to return to these same words again, especially at any time when praying seems not to come easily.

When I feel ready, I gently end my prayer, giving thanks for the gift of the Spirit within me: 'Glory be ...'

GOSPEL: MATTHEW 13: 24-43 (EXCERPT)

Jesus put a parable before the crowds. ‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everybody was asleep his enemy came, sowed darnel all among the wheat, and made off. When the new wheat sprouted and ripened, the darnel appeared as well. The owner’s servant went to him and said, “Sir, was it not good seed that you sowed in your field? If so, where does the darnel come from?” “Some enemy has done this,” he answered. And the servant said, “Do you want us to go and weed it out?” But he said, “No, because when you weed out the darnel you might pull up the wheat with it. Let them both grow till the harvest; and at harvest time I shall say to the reapers: First collect the darnel and tie it in bundles to be burnt, then gather the wheat into my barn.”

How do I come to prayer today? I ask the Lord to help me be aware of his welcoming presence here with me, and try to offer anything that burdens me into his hands.

In time, I turn slowly and prayerfully to the Gospel. Perhaps I imagine myself among the crowd, noticing how Jesus looks and speaks as he tells this story. How do I respond to it myself ...? with amusement ... puzzlement ... confidence ... or ...? I ask the Lord to show me what he wants me to see and hear within it.

Perhaps I think of something promising within my own life that was sabotaged unexpectedly. I share this with the Lord.

Or perhaps I am drawn to ponder the mix of ‘wheat’ and ‘weeds’ within the world around me ... and within my own self.

Can I entrust both the bad and the good to God to deal with in his own time? I ask to recognise those things that I may simply need to ‘let be’ for the time being, and for a greater trust in God’s love for the whole world, and for me.

Eventually I end my prayer with a slow sign of the cross, asking the Lord to stay close as I continue my daily life.

Finally, I bring my prayer to a close with ‘Our Father ...’

Here's a text if you've only got a minute...

God himself is my help. The Lord upholds my life. *Entrance antiphon*

Your justice, Lord, has its source in strength. *First reading*
O Lord, you are good and forgiving, full of love to all who call. *Psalm*

The Spirit himself expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words. *Second reading*

The dandelion and the wheat ... let them both grow till the harvest. *Gospel*

This week's texts if you want to reflect further:

Wisdom 12: 13, 16-19; Psalm 85 (86); Romans 8: 26-27;

Matthew 13: 24-43



How does this image help me meditate on these readings?



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