

Ordinary Time 11-B - Thursday

Holy Family Hospital

21 June 2018

Dear Father Hamilton, dear staff, volunteers, residents and patients here at Holy Family Hospital:

Introduction

It is a great privilege for me to be able to celebrate this Mass with all of you this morning – an event to which I have longed looked forward. Since its founding over 70 years ago by the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, Holy Family has cared for its residents and patients with respect, dedication and love. Indeed, there is so much love present here that you can feel it, and, truly almost touch it. Where does this come from? I think from the staff and volunteers who provide such compassionate care, all of them sharing in the healing ministry of Jesus. But this love is also evident in the residents and patients, each of whom makes his or her own contribution to ensuring that Holy Family remains an oasis of love committed to the care of the whole person – in body, mind and spirit.

Let me say how much I admire who you are and all that you do. May the good Lord continue to shower you with his blessings!

National Indigenous Peoples Day

Today, as Chris said at the beginning of Mass, we mark National Indigenous Peoples Day, a celebration honouring the First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada. It enables us to acknowledge and celebrate

the unique accomplishments of Indigenous Peoples in fields as varied as agriculture, the environment and the arts, and their significant contribution to Canadian society and, I would like to add, to the Church. Today also provides an occasion to recognize the Church's need to work ever more zealously to heal the wounds that our past has caused, especially in the residential schools. On this day, when the sun shines the longest, we pledge to foster reconciliation in all the ways that are open to us.

The Gospel of the Lord's Prayer

Today's Gospel contains the prayer most known and shared by all Christians. It is the only prayer Jesus gave us, and so we call it the "Lord's Prayer," even if it is more commonly known, at least among Catholics, as the "Our Father."

What becomes clear right from the outset of this Gospel is that we do not need to make noise or heap up empty phrases that we imagine might impress God. After all, prayer is not about informing God of what we need or trying to get the attention of a very busy person, who might otherwise ignore us.

At its root prayer is an expression of trust, a genuine statement of our hopes and needs. The Lord's Prayer gives us words to use that help us "fill in the blanks" with our own petitions. When we pray that God's will be done, we are asking for something particular, like better health, but we are also saying that we want his will to be accomplished, and

asking for the strength to accept it and do it.

Or when we ask the Lord to forgive us our trespasses, our sins and failings, we are likewise committing ourselves to forgiving those who have offended us. And when we say this, it is always good to think of specific instances in our lives that need forgiveness – and particular people whom we need to forgive.

It is not easy really to forgive, that is to let go of bitterness or resentment, and whenever those we have forgiven annoy us, it rises to the surface once again. Here's something Pope Francis said in a homily that I want to share with you:

Forgiveness is the catch phrase of the Our Father. God frees our hearts of all sin, he forgives every last thing. Yet he asks only one thing of us: that we in turn never tire of forgiving. He wants us to issue a general amnesty for the sins of others. We should take a good x-ray of our heart, to find out if there are blockages within us, obstacles to forgiveness, stones needing to be removed. Then we can say to the Father: “You see this stone? I hand it over to you and I pray for this person, for that situation; even if I struggle to forgive, I ask you for the strength to do it.”¹

¹ Francis, Homily (21 June 2018).

But now let's turn for a moment to the opening which says "Our Father." This word "Father" is the key to not just to this prayer, but to all prayer. We cannot forget this first word, "for the word 'Father' is the key to opening God's heart. . . . As Christians, we do not pray to some generic deity, but to God who is, before all else, our Father. . . even before his being infinite and eternal, God is Father."²

Furthermore, the words "Our Father" reveal our identity. They tell us the deepest meaning of our life: we are God's beloved sons and daughters.

So, let's never tire of saying the "Our Father." This prayer is a constant reminder that none of us is ever alone in this world, because in the Father's heart we are not strangers but his beloved sons and daughters. It will also remind us that there is no Father without us – all of us – so none of us is an only child in this world. We all have the same Father. That's why each of us must care for our brothers and sisters in the one human family.³

✦ J. Michael Miller, CSB
Archbishop of Vancouver

² Francis, Homily (21 June 2018).

³ Cf. Francis, Homily (21 June 2018).