

Pope At Santa Marta: What We Dare Not Hope For

October 10, 2014

(Vatican Radio) We ask for a lot of things when we pray, but the greatest gift that God can give us is the Holy Spirit. This was Pope Francis' reflection Thursday morning at Mass in Santa Marta, commenting on the Gospel of the day, which presents the parable of the man who gets what he needs because of his persistence.

Pope Francis began his homily by noting that "God has so much mercy" and observing that in the Collect we begin by asking God for forgiveness and to "obtain what prayer does not dare to hope for":

"This got me thinking: it is precisely the mercy of God not only to forgive – we all know that – but to be generous and give more and more ... We asked: 'And obtain what prayer does not dare to hope for'. When we pray we might ask for this [intention] or that [intention] and He always gives us more, much more!"

The Pope underlined three key words in the Gospel: "Friend, the Father and gift". Jesus shows the disciples what prayer is. It is like a man who goes to a friend at midnight asking for something. In life – he observes – "There are truest friends" who really give their all. "There are others who are good friends more or less", but the Bible tells us, 'one, two, or three ... no more!'. Then, others who are friends, but not like these". And even if we are demanding and intrusive "the bond of friendship means that we are given what we ask".

"Jesus goes a step further and speaks of the Father: What father among you would hand his son a snake when he asks for a fish? Or hand him a scorpion when he asks for an egg? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

The Pope continued – "not only the friend who accompanies us on our journey of life helps us and gives us what we ask, but Our Father in heaven" who "loves us so much and of whom Jesus said that He cares about feeding the birds in the field. Jesus wants to awaken faith in prayer" and says: "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened ". "This – says Pope Francis – is the prayer: ask, seek and knock at the heart of God." And the Father "gifts the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

"This is the gift, this is God's added extra. God never gives you a gift, something that you ask for, without wrapping it up well, without adding something extra to make it even more beautiful. And that little bit more that the Lord, the Father gives us, is the Spirit. The true gift of the Father is the one that prayer does not dare to hope for. 'I ask for this grace; I ask for this, I knock and pray so much... I only hope that you will give me this'. And He who is Father, will give me that and more: He will give me the gift of the Holy Spirit"

"You pray – said the Pope – with a friend, who is your companion on life's journey, you pray with the Father and you pray in the Holy Spirit. The friend is Jesus":

"He accompanies us and teaches us to pray. And our prayer should be Trinitarian. So often [people ask]: 'But do you believe?': 'Yes! Yes!'; 'What do you believe in?'; 'In God!'; 'But what is God for you?'; 'God, God'. But God does not exist: Do not be shocked! So God does not exist! There is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, they are persons, they are not some vague idea in the clouds ... This God spray does not exist! The three persons exist! Jesus is our companion on the journey who gives us what we ask; the Father who cares for us and loves us; and the Holy Spirit is the gift, the extra gift from the Father, that our consciousness does not dare to hope for"