

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, July 24, 2022

Abraham Drew Nearer

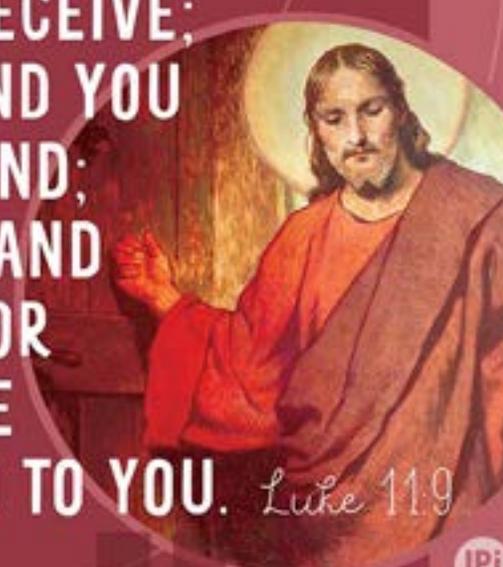
Written by Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman

Genesis 18:20-32

Colossians 2:12-14

Luke 11:1-13

ASK AND YOU
WILL RECEIVE;
SEEK AND YOU
WILL FIND;
KNOCK AND
THE DOOR
WILL BE
OPENED TO YOU. *Luke 11:9*



I'm from the Midwest. My parents and grandparents were all born, raised, and lived their lives in the Midwest. There is a pathological politeness that has worked its way into our genetic code and the thought of inconveniencing another person causes us actual physical discomfort, so we find it impossible to ask for help unless we preface the request with five minutes of apologies and explanation.

"I'm so sorry, no pressure, I would never ask unless it was an emergency, I hate to do this, you can absolutely say no," et cetera and so forth, until our poor victim wants to collapse from sheer social discomfort. If you put us all in a room together and forced us to accept favors from each other, you would have utter chaos.

Which is why I deeply identify with the very Midwestern moment that Abraham has in [today's reading](#), where he finds himself concerned for the innocent residents of Sodom and Gomorrah but cannot bring himself to bother God about it. God assures him that He will spare the cities if He finds even fifty innocent people there. It isn't enough, Midwestern Abraham is still worried, and he needs more assurance, but he can't do it without falling all over himself apologizing.

God's patience with him throughout the exchange is just so wholesome and parental. You get the sense that Abraham is twitching with anxiety, and the Lord knows this, but gently and matter-of-factly answers his questions, one after the other, all calmness and serenity.

The theme that leaps off the page from today's readings is persistence in prayer. To the modern world, that's a very strange — almost silly — concept. If God is omnipotent, why does He need to be asked to do anything? And isn't that a paradox, anyway — trusting in God's providence, but daring to ask again and again for what you need? What makes that different from nagging? Isn't that just trying to micromanage the Almighty?

And then there's the inescapable truth that so often, the very specific things we request will never materialize. We pray for peace and plenty, and in return we are treated to an endless barrage of headlines announcing violence, recession, and disunity.

What's the use of praying, we might ask, when our hearts will continue to break?

I return to today's readings, in particular to one phrase: *Abraham drew nearer*. The phrasing makes me think of a child having a meltdown, trying to keep it together, little fists clenched around his face to hide the tears, as his father stretches out his arms to bring him into a reassuring embrace that says, "See how I am here. See how I love you. See how I will take care of you."

God desires relationship with us, and you cannot have relationship without conversation. One of the greatest communication tools my husband and I ever learned was the power of saying, "I need to express this thing that's in my head, and I know you may not be able to do anything about it, but I have to talk about it and let you know, preferably while eating ice cream." Persistent prayer is really just good communication. It's letting someone know about your feelings and your needs and allowing them to be there for you. Even if you're from the Midwest, and even if it causes you physical discomfort.

God's faithfulness is what we need. The world is broken, it will always be broken, and us along with it. There is only one who can piece us back together again, and only if we ask. There will be those who tell you that thoughts and prayers are not enough when it comes to combating the great evils of the world. But I think we will find that any action *without* prayer is what is insufficient. Prayer changes things because it changes people. So, keep praying. Dare to seek, to knock, to ask. Dare to draw nearer.

Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman

PRAYER

From the rebellion against
childlike dependence on you,
deliver me, Jesus.

— [*Litany of Trust*](#), written by
[Sr. Faustina Maria Pia, SV](#)