

The Old Testament reading today speaks about the need for intercession. The main character in the story is Abraham, and the key value that is being taught is the value of intercessory prayer.

In the gospel reading today, the disciples ask Jesus to teach them how to pray, for in the tradition of the day, to have their own distinctive form of prayer was the mark of a religious community. In response, Jesus teaches them a short prayer that is a sincere, personal communion with God. A prayer that speaks of the humility of authentic piety and is a form on which to model our other prayers. We know it as the Lord's Prayer.

The prayer places God before all else as the initiator of all goodness and we as responsive beings who depend upon God's love and providence. The prayer not only teaches his disciples the structure of how to pray, but especially how to live and act as his followers. The prayer begins with Jesus distinctive personal individual address to God as caring, provident, gracious and loving parent who is holy and revered.

The prayer has five petitions. *Our father in heaven hallowed be your name. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*, applies to the first three petitions; it expresses the community's desire to reflect God's priorities in its actions and relations. The fourth and fifth petitions are related to basic needs of food and forgiveness and the reciprocity that is vital in the way of God's kingdom.

The point of the gospel story is that we are to persevere. We are to ask, to seek and to knock. This is the life of the Christian. To live in a consciousness, or in today's language, mindfulness of ourselves in Him, which by its very nature, destroys the illusion that we are in some way apart from God or separated from God.

In his letter to the Colossians that we have heard this morning, the apostle Paul reminds the people there about the nature of our baptism. And in the service at All Saints this morning the congregation will witness this in the baptism of dear little Andrew Murray when his parents and Godparents present him for baptism.

Baptism is one of the two sacraments that Christ himself gifted to the church -the other being Holy Communion. They are both central liturgical rites of the church. In Baptism we are welcomed and in Holy Communion we are fed as we go on our Christian journey.

In terms of baptism, the participant - and this morning it will be little Andrew, will experience the Easter mystery of Christ, he will be formed into the body of Christ and he will grow in the life of grace. Paul's language in the epistle, plunges us into the depths of what takes place at our baptism – he tells us boldly; “you were buried with Jesus in baptism and you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God who raised him from the dead”.

Now at this point in this sermon our eyes might begin to glaze over –all this may well seem a little too abstract to get our head around. We might well ask how we, at our baptism, participate in an event that happened two thousand years ago. One response is to say that when Christ gifts us anything – it is himself completely that he gives. In baptism we are gifted

the experience of the mystery of his death and resurrection. In every baptism we are taken back to that first Easter event not only to partake of his death and resurrection, but to witness to it and to witness to something more powerful than anything else, which is the love of God for us through God's love for him, the son.

The gift of baptism and what we believe takes place during our baptism is all part of God's grace that is constantly being offered freely and unconditionally. We might say that it is the practical side of divine love in our life.

Paul talks about how through our baptism we are so very connected to Christ and that first Easter event, that our connectedness cannot go any deeper. Simply put, we are made one with him literally and we share in God's love with him. Paul reminds us - that through our oneness with Christ we can approach matters in the world from a more objective vantage point while being compassionate and empathetic – rather than being intimidated or taken captive by the elemental ways of the universe, which are not according to Christ.

Paul, I believe, is talking here about our consciousness – our mindfulness of our union with Christ, for it is this that tends to lessen any personal negative sense, as it is integrated with a more positive energy and light.

Now consciousness of our oneness in Christ rests on and is empowered by our prayerful relationship or communion with God. We have been gifted a prayer that, although it is nearly two thousand years old, still today signifies who we are in Christ.

In our baptism we have been gifted our oneness with him through his dying and rising in the first Easter event. In Holy Communion we have been gifted communion with God through his body and his blood. We may well say that we are well provided for in our life of perseverance as followers of Christ, and that *Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other* as the psalter prays, in our oneness in him through prayer, our baptism and Holy Communion.

Let us pray the prayer that he leads us to pray as we prepare to baptise Andrew and then partake of Christ's presence with us in Holy Communion.

Let us pray. Our Father in heaven.....

The Lord be with you.