

**After the Heart of Jesus ...**

*"I tell you, 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."*

*Luke 11:9-10*



Today's readings, especially the Gospel, share some important Good News about prayer. Jesus' disciples ask him how to pray, and he teaches them what we know to be the Lord's Prayer – the Our Father. Then he continues to speak about the persistence needed in prayer and that we need to ask, seek, and knock.

Yet for many of us prayer doesn't always seem to be this easy. How many times have we asked and never received; sought and never found, knocked on the door and it was never opened? So we wonder, "Maybe I'm just not praying right. Maybe I don't know how to pray!" And that is why we can ask along with the disciples today, "Jesus, teach us to pray."

Prayer is our hearts meeting God's heart, the ongoing conversation we have with God. Huge books have been written on prayer, so to devote space in my weekly column to prayer seems grossly inadequate. Yet prayer is not so complex an action that some simple thoughts cannot be shared. One thought I want to share is this: The prayer forms the pray-er. This can be taken two ways. The pray-er (the one praying) shapes the prayer spoken. Our life situation and our past experiences help mold and develop the way and words we pray. We might also say that the prayer (the way we offer prayer) shapes the one who prays. Many times we are what is most changed by our prayer, not the externals around us.

A great teacher once said this about himself after a long life: "I was a revolutionary when I was young and all my prayer to God was: 'Lord, give me the energy to change the world.'

"As I approached middle age and realized that half my life was gone without my changing a single soul, I changed my prayer to: 'Lord, give me the grace to change all those who come in contact with me. Just my family and friends, and I shall be satisfied.'

"Now that I am an old man and my days are numbered, I have begun to see how foolish I have been. My one prayer now is: 'Lord, give me the grace to change myself.' If I had prayed for this right from the start I should not have wasted my life.'

This weekend gives each of us the opportunity to review our prayer life and ask, "How am I praying?"

This weekend we say "thank-you" and "farewell" to our seminarian Jason Stone. He will be returning to seminary studies at Mundelein Seminary in a few weeks. He has been a joy to have in the parish house, and he has been very helpful in pastoral ministry. He worked especially hard in the Summer Scripture and Fun for our high school teens. I hope that Jason will always consider St. Walter to be a home away from home for him. Please pray for Jason and for all the seminarians preparing to be priests for the Joliet Diocese.



We are in beginning the process of doing a parish census. All families that are currently registered at St. Walter Church should receive a census form with an explanation letter in the mail. These are being sent in green envelopes that clearly indicate a census form is enclosed. We want to make sure that our database of parishioners is up-to-date and accurate. Please complete the form as soon as possible and return it either through the mail, by placing it in the Sunday collection, or by dropping it off at the parish house.

Thank you to all those who are making Theology on Tap such a success this summer for our young adults. We have had very good crowds, and the sense of hospitality and welcome has been awesome. Kudos to the team of young adults doing the planning – **Erin Gaffey, Sara Perez, Jessica Wigg, and Jason Stone**. The final gathering at St. Walter is this coming Tuesday. The special Finale Mass and Picnic in Chicago with Cardinal George and Bishop Sartain will be on Sunday, August 5.

I am looking forward to a few days away in Wisconsin this week. Father Mario and Jason will not be coming this time, and I hope there are no flat tires, farmhouses, or barns with horses and pigs. I hope we all have some quiet time to enjoy these summer days before they come to all too soon an abrupt end with the beginning of school.

May our prayer this week form us to live ...

After the Heart of Jesus!

*Father John*