Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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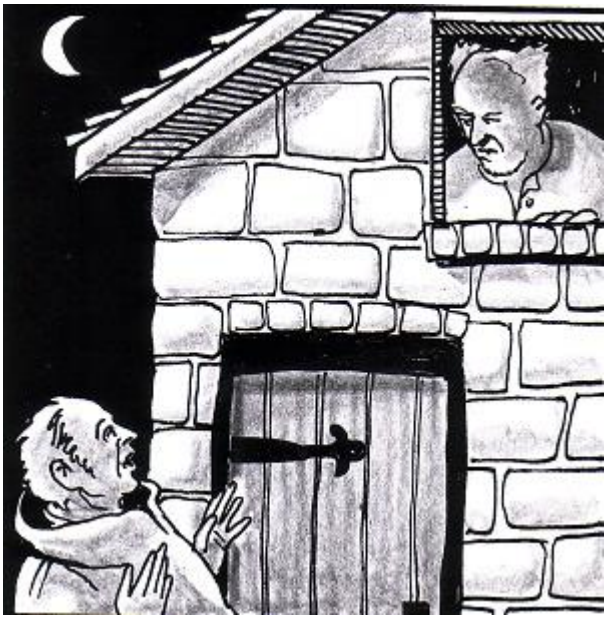

“Knock and the door will be opened to you” (Luke 11:10).

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gn 18:20-32; Ps 138; Col 2:12-14; Lk 11:1-13

In his teaching on effective prayer, Jesus makes clear that forgiveness of one another is how we open our hearts to God’s forgiveness. A closed fist cannot receive a gift. The human heart has one door, and if it is closed to others, it is also closed to God, who so often comes to us in the guise of our neighbor.

But there is another dimension to prayer called hospitality. After teaching his disciples how to pray the “Our Father,” Jesus tells them a parable about a person who has unexpected guests at his door at midnight and runs to his neighbor to beg for bread to feed them. The story is about someone who needs hospitality to show hospitality, and it reveals the basic network of generosity on which every community depends, that those with resources be willing to share with those in need because they might be in need themselves the next time.

The host of one house encounters the reluctance of the host at another house to get up to help him. The chain of kindness is threatened, one neighbor’s “no” will send “sorry” down the line to the arriving guests, whose hungry children will remember never to depend on others but to provide only for themselves. The social compact is diminished, neighborliness is strained, reciprocity breaks down, the covenant is ignored, and the poor go hungry.

But the story does not end that way. The sleepy neighbor in the end realizes that his persistent neighbor must be served to restore peace to everyone. The circle is unbroken.

Jesus teaches us that prayer is less about *quid pro qu***o** than about interdependence and relationships that, if honored, build up community and ensure that every need is met, every door opens when someone knocks, every question or problem is resolved with generous love. God, the source of all blessings, guarantees it.

But a single selfish neighbor, a neighborhood that loses this spirit, a city that grows cold with fear and distrust, a nation in which competition ensures scarcity and disparity among its citizens, will not know how to pray when we need God the most. A nation that ignores the knock at midnight because it fears the stranger or because its conscience has fallen asleep, will miss the joy of the Gospel.

Because everyone depends on this chain of hospitality, let us pray with all our hearts: “Lord, teach us how to pray."

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