Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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“You built up strength within me” (Ps 138:3)).

Est C:12, 14-16, 23-25; *Mt 7:7-12*

Jesus teaches that prayer is not a quid pro quo moment in which we ask God for something, and God either gives it to us or not. No, prayer is a process that takes us deeper into our relationship with God. We can imagine this process in human terms.

When a person seeks, he or she begins a process of discerning what it is they are looking for. “What do I really want?” “Am I looking in the right places?” “Is there a deeper gift behind the thing I first thought would satisfy me?”

The prayer actually begins when we start to dialogue with God, who listens to us describe, then refine our search. God is like the friend who listens to us tell how

difficult a problem is or how much we want something, then says, “I am here and willing to work with you on this.” Not, "Here’s your answer."

Part of this process is realizing that God always gives us what is good. This frees us from the fear many people bring to prayer, that God will asks us to do something extremely difficult as a bargaining chip or to test of our faith. The God Jesus describes is like the loving parent who always gives a child what is good and appropriate; bread not a stone, an egg not a snake.

So God accompanies those who seek, works with those who keep knocking on doors until one opens, or explores a question someone is carrying until insights begin to appear, strategies that they can try. The process always involves the person who is praying. They often have the answer to their own prayer. God enhances our dignity by showing us how we can solve our problems without instant help or miracles.

And, whatever the prayer, along the way we get closer to God, trust God more, realize that the most important result of prayer is not stuff but God, the Source of all blessings. We come to know face-to-face the One who knows us and loves us already and wants us to experience the power of the faith community around us, the many needs and resources waiting to be shared, the joy and gratitude that comes from understanding that the way to heaven is heaven.