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Pope: Prayer shouldn't be all about requests

by Carol Glatz by Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY -- Prayer should not center just on asking God to fulfill one's hopes and desires, but must include praise, thanks and trust in God's plan which may not match one's own, Pope Benedict XVI said.

The way Jesus prayed to his Father "teaches us that in our own prayers, we must always trust in the Father's will and strive to see all things in light of his mysterious plan of love," he said during his weekly general audience Dec. 14.

In his catechesis to nearly 6,000 people in the Vatican audience hall, Pope Benedict continued a series of talks on Christian prayer.

Everyone should seek to understand that when asking something of God in prayer, "we mustn't expect the immediate fulfillment of what we are asking for, of our will, but rather trust in the will of the Father," the pope said.

Requests, praise and thanks must be included in every prayer. "even when it seems to us that God is not living up to our real expectations," he said.

Prayer is a dialogue with God and entails "abandoning oneself to God's love," he said.

The most important thing to discover, the pope said, is that the one who answers humanity's prayers is more important than the actual prayers answered.

Jesus showed that before grace is received, one must "adhere to the giver" of that grace, that is, align oneself and comply with God, the pope said.

Having God in one's life, his friendship, his presence, his love are all more important than any concrete thing that he could give in return, he said.

Jesus "is the most precious treasure to ask for and always safeguard," he said.

Because prayer guides people to see beyond their own needs and wants, it also helps open their heart to others and offer them compassion, hope and the light that comes from Christ, the pope said.

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At the end of his main audience talk, Pope Benedict greeted 49 newly ordained priests of the Legionaries of Christ. Cardinal Velasio De Paolis, the papal delegate to the Legionaries, ordained the men Dec. 12 in the Basilica of St. John Lateran.

Fifteen of the new priests are from the United States, including Fathers Jason and Michael Mitchell, who are brothers from western Pennsylvania, and 20 men from Mexico.

At the end of the audience, the pope prayed a few moments before a traditional Mexican Nativity scene decorating the Paul VI audience hall. The large painted ceramic figures were handcrafted by artisans and were a gift from the Mexican state of Puebla.

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