

A Conversation Between Good Friends

Intro. When we are children, we address adults in respectful ways such as *Mrs. Grabowski*, *Señor Hernandez* or *Mrs. Kristen*. When we become adults, it can feel awkward when they ask us to call them *Rita*, *Tomás* or *Kristen*. I struggled for years to call my mother's best friend by her first name, *Betty*, rather than *Mrs. Chamberlain*. It sounded strange to me. The Lord taught the disciples to call God, *Father*, something that must have been hard.

I. In the Old Testament, God was often seen as a stern judge of the Israelites. In the first reading, we hear Abraham "negotiate" with God about saving the people of Sodom. Several times Abraham says, "See how I am presuming to speak to my Lord." "Do not grow impatient with me if go on." Abraham had some nerve.

No one would dare talk to God like that, but Abraham did. Prayer was very formal, a job only for the priests during worship at the temple. Few people were worthy to address God. The Lord taught his disciples they could pray in a more familiar way. The prayer he taught is short and simple. The first part is like our regular conversation. If I talk to someone, I usually use their name, "Henry, you did well," and so we can say, "Father." Next, we recognize the holiness of his name – not to be used in bad ways – and his kingdom coming. The next are petitions for the daily nourishment we need, both physical and spiritual. We ask forgiveness *if we forgive others*. Finally, we ask not to experience trials, tribulations or temptations. The story the Lord told illustrates how important it is in prayer not to give up. We must acknowledge a

reality: our prayer is not always answered or not in the way we want. We could be asking for something that is not good for us. We could also be asking for something that *is* good for us or for someone else, like healing. Theologians nor scripture experts can really explain it. I can't. What I *do* know is there can be something good even if it's not what I prayed for. My father was diagnosed with cancer and within a couple of months died. I was very angry at God for doing that to me. For months after, my conversations with God were not gentle. My father had a drinking problem. He was never abusive; just not fully present. One day, a thought came to me, "Mike, can you be thankful for the fact that he got into AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) before he died? That he had a clear mind?" I had to admit I was thankful. That was a prayer I had prayed

for many years. I was still not happy that my dad died, but this answer to another prayer helped me heal.

Concl. In our conversations with each other, how we talk depends on our relationship. With strangers, our words are guarded, stiff and revealing very little. With friends we are more casual and willing to reveal more about ourselves. But with our *best friends* we are open, sometimes revealing secrets about ourselves no one else knows. We feel free to share our heart and soul. The Lord invites us into that kind of relationship with his Father by making him "our" Father, using a less formal word. When we pray it or any prayer, slow down, listen and be open to an answer. Fr. Michael Pendergraft, July 24, 2022