

St Barts Burnley 27th July 2025
Pentecost 7.

Gospel Luke 11.1-13.

How often do you pray? Do you pray each day or only when you come to Church? In our busy lives' prayer can become a causality of our business. I know I do not pray enough. I find myself however often asking for inspiration, strength, direction and courage particularly when I find myself becoming angry or frustrated at the lies and lack of compassion and integrity in people who should know better and who sometimes use prayer as a means of avoiding and taking actions and making right decisions for the benefit of all and not just the few. Increasingly I prefer a quiet time of reflection and meditation, often over a glass of wine or port and especially under the stars in outback Australia. Here I sit and ponder the meaning of all that exists and the creative spirit of the divine, the God of all.

The existence of God has never troubled me. My understanding of God has changed over the years and the place, purpose and meaning of prayer has also changed. Prayer is not something we just use when

things go wrong in our own lives or when we want something. It is not like praying for a car parking spot when shopping or even that my favourite football team will win the Grand Final. Yet often so much of our prayer life centres on self. If our prayers are not answered we may feel disappointed or even conclude that God is not interested in our needs, aspirations or hopes. Prayer encompasses many aspects of our relationship with God, the sharing of our thoughts with each other in community.

"There is a church on the hillside on the Mount of Olives, looking over Jerusalem, which has the Lord's prayer in very many different languages inscribed on its walls on beautiful tiles-something like 140 different languages at the last count.-----It has become a traditional site for the teaching of the Lord's prayer to the disciples. It is captively beautiful, and communicates a sense of peace, and order, and hope, despite the throngs of tourist and pilgrims". The description of this place reminds me of the time I travelled to Turkey and visited the many sacred places associated with the early Christians who lived in caves as hermits and close to home the Carmelite sisters.

The Lord's prayer is prayed in many different languages and in some churches people from different backgrounds are invited to say the prayer in their own language.

One of my favourite books of prayers is titled "The Prayer Tree" by Michael Leunig. In his introduction he speaks about the challenges of prayer including the challenges of accepting that life can be difficult, that love is not always easy and that suffering, and failure are inevitable for each and every one of us. In these words, he emphasizes what it means to be human and goes on to speak about how we seek life to be easy, we want things to go our way and we get angry with God when God fails to answer our prayers. We are ok about prayer when God responds in the way we want. He goes on further to speak about prayer as the medium to share our deepest thoughts about the community, the nation and the world of which we are part. Prayer requires imagination and thoughtfulness that embraces not only our own needs but the fears and challenges facing people across the globe and here at home. It is not simply asking for God's intervention but rather speaking and living out in our own life words of hope and inspiration for building the Kingdom of God. The

Kingdom is a central theme of the teaching of Jesus and it is therefore not surprising that the Lord's prayer invites us to seek the Kingdom of God as Jesus calls us to build. A world where relationships take centre stage, where we all have respect and are treated with compassion and understanding. Where those with wealth and resources use their resources for the benefit of the poor. Where we are good stewards of the creation and love its beauty and wonder.

In the face of the challenges facing our world, including political polarization and unrest in many countries, the threats to our democracy, the rapid rate of climate change there is the danger that prayer has become the code word for I do not know what to do or say. How often do we offer prayers because it is the easiest thing to do?

The disciples had witnessed that whenever Jesus their teacher had exhausted himself he would withdraw from the crowd in order to pray. They had seen the results and they wanted to do likewise. They ask him "teach us how to pray"? They wanted the strength and assurance that Jesus had in doing the will of the Father.

In today's Gospel Jesus offers a parable about a shameless neighbour whose persistence will eventually get him the help he needs. Perhaps you read and hear this as a promise and that if you pray hard enough you will get what you need, but our prayers need to have feet and hands. Our feet and hands are essential part of the prayers we offer. Prayer is the practice of seeking God's presence and guidance as we work towards building the Kingdom here among us. God is not a magician and if he was it would mean we are simply robots without free will. Let me conclude with this prayer that enshrines what I have been trying to say today.

**Dear God,
Thank you for this amazing space,
thank you for the amazing people
that you have brought to this place.
We thank you for your love.
We thank you for your grace.
We thank you for your mercy.
God, we are praying for your courage,
for you to give us the will,
give us the heart,
give us the mind,
give us the spirit
to draw closer to you.
And by drawing closer to you,**

**drawing closer to your people -
your people who are suffering,
your people who are struggling,
your people who are incarcerated,
your people who are hungry,
your people who are naked,
your people who need us to be near them
to show them your grace and mercy.
Lord, teach us to go to difficult places and say, "I
am here."
Teach us what it means to change narratives.
Teach us what it means to be hopeful.
Teach us what it means to do uncomfortable
things in your service.
God, we bless you for the opportunity and
privilege of being able
to represent you on this earth.
Empower us to represent your grace,
your mercy,
your calling for redemption and transformation.
We ask that you give us all the blessings that we
need to do these works,**

In the midst of despair, disappointment that many feel
in today's world it is good to remember that millions of
people each hour of the day are praying "Your Kingdom
come your will be done."