

Matthew 6:7-15
February 12, 2008
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May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable to you, our Father in Heaven.
Amen

I have been thinking about prayer a lot these days. Not just because it is Lent but also because my 13 year old Goddaughter and niece recently asked her mother how to pray. Now you need to understand a little about Rachel. She has grown up in the church, serves as an acolyte, is involved in youth group, prays before every meal, says prayers before bed, prays for the sick and dying, turns to prayer in times of strife and feels very comfortable in her faith. So I must admit when my sister asked for some suggestions, I was somewhat at a loss.

Then I began to think about my own life. I don't ever remember as a child or young adult being "taught" how to pray, even though at the end of my confirmation classes, I certainly had memorized all of the "required" prayers. So why should Rachel's experience be any different than my own. She was merely asking questions and going deeper into her faith at a much earlier age than I had.

Then I thought about this Gospel passage and the simplicity of God saying "Pray in this way". No matter where we are on our spiritual journey of faith, God makes prayer

accessible. The Lord's Prayer is a universal language among Christians – something we find no need to debate or argue about, but rather something at the core of our foundation. It unites us in ways that are only known to God.

I must confess that in spite of all the time I spend in church and the countless times I recite prayers, the Lord's Prayer is the only one that I know with complete certainty and never worry about stumbling or forgetting the words. For me, it is my constant companion. It is a part of my being. It is the prayer I turn to for settling myself when I cannot sleep, for calming myself when I am nervous (Yes I said it before I stood up here this morning). I say it when traveling just before the airplane takes off and just when the wheels touch down safely. It fills me with joy and hope and comforts me when I am alone or in pain.

When my mother-in-law, Grace, was dying, my husband and I had the opportunity to visit at her bedside. She had not been eating nor drinking and we were not going to do a feeding tube. She had not spoken in several days. Although my father-in-law went to see her every day, it was so uncomfortable for him because he no longer could communicate with his wife of almost 60 years. I asked Woody and Kurt if I could bring my prayer book and say some prayers with Grace. I used one of the prayers for the dying and one or two psalms. Then, I held her hand and recited the Lord's Prayer. Grace started to say the words with me. Her voice was not loud and every word was not audible, but what was so clear was that she was praying

with us. The Lord's Prayer was her companion, especially now on her journey home. Even though she may have lost all other ability to communicate, Grace knew these words that her Father in heaven had taught her and she had used throughout her lifetime.

So, when I think about Rachel and what I will share with her about prayer, I will remind her that she already knows how to pray. She knows the words and will be comforted and guided by them throughout her lifetime. Prayer is easy, it's the journey that can be so complicated and challenging.

AMEN