

**Fifth Sunday After Easter  
21 May 2017**

***“Amen, amen, I say to you if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you.” Jn. 16:23***

Today’s liturgy, as in the past Sundays after Easter, prepares us for Jesus’ Ascension, when He will leave His Apostles, and opens the way to Pentecost, when He will send them the Holy Spirit to enlighten and strengthen them. Jesus also wants to console the Apostles for His absence by promising them that they can ask the Father anything **“in His Name”** and they will receive it: ***“Amen, amen, I say to you if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you.” Jn. 16:23.*** This is truly a consoling promise to the Apostles who were so forlorn on hearing Jesus’ words of departure. They no longer have to fear being alone, for not only will Jesus always be there for them, but also the Father. Jesus’ promise of asking the Father for help **in His Name** in today’s Gospel (Jn. 16:23-30) and the teaching of today’s Epistle from St. James (1:22-27) provides us with a solid teaching on efficacious prayer. If we pray, as Jesus taught His Apostles to do, then we have absolute confidence that we will be heard. All we need to do is to pray **“in the Name of Jesus”** with a good conscience, with humility and with confidence.

**Ask “in the Name of Jesus”**

When we pray **“in the Name of Jesus,”** our prayers and our good works obtain a superabundant value as they are founded on the infinite merits of Jesus Christ. We must remember that we are unprofitable servants (cf. Lk. 17:10) who can do nothing (cf. Jn. 15:5) of ourselves and that our sufficiency comes from Jesus Crucified. **“Consequently,”** according to Fr. Gabriel in *Divine Intimacy*, **“the first condition of prayer made ‘in the name of Jesus’ is humility, an ever deeper and more realistic sense of our nothingness. It must be complemented by the second condition, a boundless confidence in the merits of Jesus, which surpass all our poverty, misery, necessities and needs. In view of Jesus’ infinite merits, we can never ask too much in His Name: we can never be too bold in imploring the plenitude of divine grace for our souls, in aspiring to that sanctity which is hidden, but genuine. ...Moreover, there is no creature of good will, no matter how weak and insignificant,**

who, **‘in the Name of Jesus,’** cannot aspire to sanctity.” Fr. Gabriel, p. 524

***“Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only.”*** Ja. 1:22

**“However, in order to make our prayer effective, a third condition is required: our life must correspond to our prayer, our faith must be translated into good works. *‘Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if a man be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he shall be compared to a man beholding his own countenance in a glass. For he beheld himself, and went his way, and presently forgot what manner of man he was.’* Ja. 1:22.** This strong exhortation of St. James, which is found in today’s Epistle is an urgent reminder of the practical character of the Christian life. **Vain is our prayer, vain our confidence in God, if we do not add our generous efforts to perform all our duties, to live up to our high vocation. We can add, and we should, hope for everything in the ‘Name of Jesus,’ but He expects a constant effort on our part to be entirely faithful to Him.”** Fr. Gabriel, p. 524-5.

**“...through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Cornelius a Lapide in his *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, also reminds us why it is so important to pray genuinely **“in the Name of Jesus”**: **“...To ask in the name of Christ is to ask through Christ, or through Christ’s merits, dignity, and authority. For Christ, by His passion and death, merited that we should obtain from God whatever we ask in His name. Therefore this obtaining, with respect to us, is grace, and with respect to Christ is but justice. ‘His name’ signifies in Scripture His strength, virtue, merits, grace, dignity and authority. Therefore to ask in the name of Christ, is to ask while counting on His merits, and to trust in them, not in our own; that God may look, not on our unworthiness and our sins, but upon the face of His anointed, and on account of His sanctity and merits grant us that which we do not deserve. Christ therefore points here not merely to God, but to God incarnate, and obedient even unto the death of the cross. For He merited, that the Father should hear our prayers. This is the Church’s interpretation, for she ends all her prayers ‘through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ Thus the Jews used to pray through the merits of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But we Christians pray through the**

merits of Christ, who infinitely surpasses their merits.” a Lapide, p .660.

### **For the good of our salvation**

Since Jesus promised us that the Father would answer all our prayers, if we pray in His Name, we might ask why then are our prayers not answered as we wish? Cornelius a Lapide answers this observation: **“Again, to ask in the name of Christ, is to ask those things which He wishes and desires to be given us, those namely which concern the salvation of the soul. Hence such a prayer is effectual, and is heard by God....The reason they obtain not, is because they ask not the things which they ought, not in the way they ought....It requires contrition for sin, so that he who prays may be, or may heartily wish to become, a friend of God. Sinners therefore, wilfully persisting in sin, are not heard by God.... It requires great faith and hope, or confidence, that we shall obtain what we ask for through the merits of Christ. This confidence many have not, and therefore they obtain not... Lastly, St. Augustine rightly observes, ‘God occasionally refuses what we ask for, because this is more expedient for our salvation and His glory. God therefore hears us, not according to our wishes, but according to our salvation.’”** a Lapide, p. 660-1

### **The Need for Prayer**

Pope St. John Paul II, spoke of the absolute need for prayer in our lives: **“... we must pray too because we are fragile and culpable. We need to admit humbly and truly that we are poor creatures, with confused ideas...We are fragile and weak, and in constant need of interior strength and consolation. Prayer gives us strength for great ideals, for keeping up our faith, charity, purity, generosity; prayer gives us strength to rise up from indifference and guilt, if we have had the misfortune to give into temptation and weakness. Prayer gives light by which to see and to judge from God’s perspective and from eternity. That is why you must not give up praying! Don’t let a day go by without praying a little! Prayer is a duty, but it is also a joy because it is a dialogue with God through Jesus Christ.”** (St. John Paul II, *Audience with Young People*, 14 March 1979)

### **May is the Month of Mary:**

Pope St. John Paul II spoke of the importance of devotion to Our Lady and the Family

Rosary: **“The Christian family finds and consolidates its identity in prayer. Make the daily effort to find a time to pray together, to talk with Our Lord and listen to his voice. How beautiful it is when the family prays in the evening, even though it be only a part of the Rosary. The family that prays together stays together; a family that prays is a family that is saved. Act in such a way that your home may be a place of Christian faith and virtue through your praying together.”** (*Address to families*, 24 March 1984)

### **May, Our Lady’s Month**

St. Maximilian Kolbe spoke of all those who are consecrated to the Immaculate: **“She penetrates our soul and directs its faculties with unlimited power. We truly belong to Her. Therefore, we are with Her always and everywhere...”**(SK 461)

And further still: **“We are Hers, of the Immaculate, unlimitedly Hers, perfectly Hers, we are, as it were, Her very self. She, by means of us, loves the good God. She, with our poor heart, loves Her divine Son. We become the means by which the Immaculate loves Jesus, and Jesus, seeing that we are Her property, a part, as it were, of His most loving Mother, loves Her in and through us. What beautiful mysteries!”** Sk 508

St. Maximilian declared that those who are consecrated to the Immaculate would be a means of holiness and grace to others (especially their own family): **“She needs to be brought into all hearts,’ so that She, upon entering into these hearts, may give birth there to the sweet Jesus, to God, and bring Him up even to that perfect age. What a beautiful mission!”** SK508

St. Louis de Montfort tells us of Total Consecration to Mary: **“This devotion consists, therefore, in giving ourselves entirely to the Most Blessed Virgin that, through her we may belong entirely to Jesus Christ. We must give her: (1) our body with all its senses and members; (2) our soul with its powers; (3) our material possessions and all that we may acquire; (4) our interior and spiritual possessions—our merits, our virtues and our good works, past, present, and future; in short, all that we possess in the order of nature, in the order of grace ...”** St. Louis de Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary*, p. 88-9