

## 17C

*Two frogs accidentally fell into a bucket of cream. They swam around and around in the cream, and every effort they made to climb up the side of the bucket was in vain. They were trapped, with no evident means of escape. One of the frogs just gave up hope, sank to the bottom and drowned. The other frog was no quitter. He was convinced there must be a way out, and was determined to find it. He gave it his best shot, as he splashed and thrashed around in the cream. Imagine his surprise and his relief, after a while where he found himself sitting on top of a big lump of butter. He rested there, regained his strength, and leaped out the bucket.*

The gospel calls for persistence in prayer. It would be sad if we only prayed to God in time of difficulty or when confronted with a problem and ignore Him the rest of the time.

Prayer should become second nature to us. Normally we don't skip meals, so also no day should go by without us raising our minds and hearts to the One who made us – even if it's only for ten minutes. St Theresa used say that if we are too busy to pray then we are too busy. The same woman, however, found prayer a hard slog. Like the egg-timer she used try and shake the sand through the hour glass to speed things up at private prayer time which, of course was a waste of time.

Some people give up praying when they don't get what they want. Others give up on God when he unexpectedly takes someone close away from them. A couple of years ago I did the funeral for my first cousin in Manchester. He lost his wife when she was only in her late thirties leaving small children behind. He questioned how a good God could allow this? I got the feeling he didn't go to Mass very much after that. Have we ever been tempted to do the same when felt hard done to by God? When Jesus was filled with foreboding as His Passion approached he didn't abandon ship by turning his back on His Father Will.

In the spiritual domain, God owes us nothing. We, however, are indebted to Him for everything, especially life itself. In one of the Sunday prefaces we say: 'in him we live and move and have our being'. Bearing that in mind we know who's in charge of things both up there and down here. So, when we don't seem to get immediately what we pray for, God will have better things in store for us - if we persist. God doesn't deal with us in an arbitrary fashion. He doesn't 'play games' with us. Anything he does for or with us is totally for our salvation. He knows best.

Prayer is a journey into love. Without it, loving God and neighbour with any real depth would be an uphill struggle. Prayer helps break down those barriers between people and open the door to reconciliation and peace. But for these things to happen we have to persevere with it.

You can pray anywhere - before you get out of bed, while waiting for bus, while walking. But just like food is best digested when sitting down at the table and taking time over it, so also we need to take time out each day for more concentrated prayer to make it really worthwhile.

*Like the frog in the opening story, today's message is not to be a quitter when it comes to prayer - it's none other than our life-line with the Almighty.*