

Institute '77:

Intercessory Prayer

BY FATHER
ROBERT J. KENNEDY

To ask God for the things we need presents us with a problem. On the one hand, we trust and even rejoice in the Lord's invitation: "Ask, and it will be given to you" (Luke 11:9). Yet we have misgivings that our prayer might be selfish or childish or not in accord with "God's will" and "plan." We know, too, that things we have asked for in the past have not been granted us.

If we are to "pray rightly" we must first allow ourselves to be drawn into God's view of things: we must be drawn into his love for us and all His creatures. This means that we first of all see this world of ours as belonging to Him: it is good and gracious. Then, we must see ourselves as part of this good creation, His redeemed people, washed in the blood of Christ, a new

creation in the power of the Spirit. We are gifted and possess as the highest gift of the Father a stewardship over this good and bountiful earth.

This view of things makes the first prayer out of our lips a prayer of thanksgiving. It is a prayer that recognized our life as a loving gift from God, and reflects a deep reverence for the dignity and worth of this gift in everyone.

Recognizing this, however, makes us painfully aware of our need, our weakness, our frailty, our radical dependence upon this good and gracious God. We know this need in our own hearts and lives, and we see it so shockingly in the lives of many others. God does not want this unhappiness and pain in His people, nor is He waiting for someone to say "pretty please" before He acts to remedy the particular hurt. Rather, He tirelessly works among us for our good, seeking ways to make His Life live among us. It is up to us to cooperate with Him.

In the moment when we are turned to look in the direction God is looking, we can make true intercession for our brothers and sisters who are in need. For, first of all, we will recognize what the real human need is. It may not always be what we want (then again it may), but it will be what God wants, namely, the good of the

person or persons involved. Secondly, we will discover that we are not praying alone; Christ is in our midst praying with us and for us. He is not a Christ "who is incapable of feeling our weaknesses with us; but one who was tempted in every way that we are, yet never sinned" (Heb. 4:15). He understands our struggles, having shared them with us, and stands as God's Presence even in the midst of our deepest anguish. This leads us, thirdly, to the realization that we cannot ask for things irresponsibly. With compassionate hearts and prayerful lips, we must work to alleviate the needs of our hearts, homes, neighborhood and world, whatever they may be. We must make visible in our deeds the Christ who is in our world working for our salvation. God does not perform magic tricks but miracles through the work of our hands.

This means, finally, that our prayer of intercession is a communal prayer. Any request must be our request, a request that arises out of our solidarity with those in need, out of our faith-full view of God's world, out of our trust in His continuing love for all His creatures.

My particular needs give way to the needs of the whole of His family, and when they do, I find my needs are answered.

This is a heavy load of meaning for one "Lord, hear our prayer." It does focus, however, the seriousness and attention with which the Prayers of the Faithful ought to be formulated and prayed, with what dignity and care the intercessions of the Eucharistic Prayer ought to be spoken, and with the compassion Grace Before Meals should be voiced.

"Lord of all things, may our words and work be a worthy expression of thanks for your gifts to us."

OPERETTA

An operetta by John A. Gaspar, a Nazareth College junior, will be presented three times during the weekend of Aug. 5-7 in the Nazareth Arts Center, under the auspices of the students' chapter of the Music Teachers National Association. Local actors will perform For Want of Rapunzel at 8:15 p.m. Aug. 5 and 6 and at 3 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 7.

"Count" Unit Elects Officers

Make Today Count, an organization for cancer patients, persons with chronic illnesses, their families and health professionals, has elected officers for its steering committee.

meets the fourth Tuesday of each month at the Monroe Developmental Center, 620 Westfall Road, at 7:30 p.m. For further information, the offices of the United Cancer Council should be contacted at 473-8230.

Bernice Barnes of Rochester was re-elected chairperson, and Mary Lou Marks of Rochester secretary-treasurer.

Make Today County

UR THEATRE

Bertolt Brecht's Jungle of Cities is playing tonight through July 30 at the University of Rochester Summer Theatre, 612 Wilson Blvd.; 8:30 curtain.

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CROP CYCLING

The Rev. David Belcastro of Columbus, Ohio, is due here Saturday noon, July 30, at the end of a 500-mile bicycle ride for CROP, a Church World Service hunger relief agency. He expects sponsors' pledges to provide at least \$1,000, with which seeds will be purchased for planting in Honduras. The Community Christian Church on Chili Avenue is Mr. Belcastro's destination.

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