

John 16:23–30
Rogate
Kaiserslautern Ev. Luth. Ch.
May 14, 2023

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dearly bought hearers by the blood of Jesus Christ,

For the third Sunday in a row, we return again to the Upper Room where Jesus prepares His disciples and us for what it will mean that He is going away. That very night, Jesus was delivered over to the authorities for a sham trial. He was then tortured, beaten, murdered on the cross, and laid into the tomb. And on the third day, our Lord rose again from death to new life. Christ is risen! But our Lord taught the disciples that after His resurrection from the dead, He would eventually go away. Jesus would remove His visible presence from this world by ascending into Heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father, where He now rules all things. Yet Jesus remains with us and with His entire Christian Church on earth until the end of the age, coming to us in the ways He has instituted: in His Word and in His Sacraments. Although the disciples were filled with sorrow at our Lord's departure, Jesus says: "I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you." That's what we heard two weeks ago on Jubilate Sunday.

This week, Jesus continues with His Upper Room discourse, saying: "In that day," that is when your sorrow has turned into joy, when the Holy Spirit brings all these things and their meaning to remembrance, "In that day, you will ask nothing of me. Truly Truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." The name of this Sunday is Rogate Sunday, which comes from the Latin verb "rogare," to ask: "Ask, and you will

receive, that your joy may be full.” If you’ve studied Latin, or if you’re currently studying Latin, you’ll recognize the form here as an imperative, the command form. Rogate is a present imperative active: y’all ask! We are reminded on Rogate Sunday that prayer is a command.

That’s exactly how Luther talks about prayer in the Large Catechism as well. He says: “before we explain the Lord’s Prayer part by part, it is most necessary first to encourage and stir people to prayer, as Christ and the apostles also have done. And the first thing to know is that it is our duty to pray because of God’s commandment.” The second commandment requires not only that we not misuse God’s name. There’s also the corollary. The second commandment requires that we call upon God’s Name in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks. Prayer is not a coping mechanism or well-wishing. It’s an obligation. And to see prayer as our Christian duty is one way to prompt our lazy flesh into actually getting down on our knees and talking to our Father in Heaven.

Daily prayer is the duty of every Christian, but it’s a duty all too often neglected. Unlike most other Christian disciplines, prayer can be neglected because other people don’t necessarily see when you pray. Jesus says: “when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Matt 6:6). Nowadays we’re so distracted. We intend to go into our room to pray, but find something else to do. Or we find that we can’t really focus on prayer for even a few minutes. The unholy pace of our lives makes the command to pray more and more difficult. We can hardly sit for a few minutes without getting bored and thinking there’s something more important to do. But there’s nothing more important than prayer. In Philippians 4[:6], the Apostle Paul tells us: “do not be anxious about anything, but *in everything* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your

requests be made known to God.” There’s no situation in your life where prayer is not commanded.

And then, of course, besides the commandment to pray there’s also the promise that God will hear us and respond to our requests. In Psalm 50[15], God says: “Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.” The Lord tells us to pray to Him and includes the promise of deliverance. Jesus tells us: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” If a son asks for bread, would the father give him a stone? If the son asks for a fish, would the father give him a scorpion? Of course not! Jesus says: “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!” (Matt 7:7–11). Our God is a loving Father and He wants to give you, His children, all good things. He wants to hear everything on your mind, every desire and request you have. Take everything to the Lord in prayer because He promises to hear you and to respond according to His will.

When Jesus says: “In that day you will ask nothing of me,” He’s saying we will be in direct contact with God the Father. We can’t ask Jesus questions the way the disciples did because Jesus is not standing right next to us, ready to listen and respond like any other person. Since His Ascension into Heaven, Jesus has not been available to us like He was when He was walking the earth. But that doesn’t mean Jesus is any less present with us. We can certainly pray to Jesus, just like we can pray to the Holy Spirit, since both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are God. But we can also go directly to God the Father.

The phrase that shows up three times in our Gospel text today is key. Jesus says three times: “in my name.” “Until now, you have asked nothing *in my name*.” “Whatever you ask of the Father *in my name*.” “In that day, you will ask *in my name*.” What changes with Jesus’s

Ascension into Heaven and then the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is not our Lord's presence with us, His people. What's different after Ascension and Pentecost is the new relationship we have with God by way of the death and resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The phrase *in my name* here ties what Jesus says on the night He was betrayed to the mission of the Church until the end of time. Right before Jesus ascended into Heaven, He told His disciples: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them *in the name* of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:18–20). In Holy Baptism, you were given the name of the Triune God, the name shared by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus became your brother when He took on the same human nature you have in His incarnation. And God became your Father in the waters of Holy Baptism. There, you were adopted into God's family and given the Holy Spirit, who united you to the death and resurrection of Christ, and who constantly cries out from your heart to Heaven: "Abba! Father!" (Gal 4:6).

So *in the name* of Jesus is not simply a phrase we close our prayers with; it indicates the relationship we are placed into with the Triune God in Holy Baptism. And it is in this new relationship with the Triune God, as children of God, that we then approach God the Father directly in prayer: "Our Father, who art in Heaven." With these words, God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father." God becomes our Father in

Baptism. We then pray in the name of Jesus because that name has been placed upon us, the name Jesus shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

As baptized children of God, we further pray that God's will be done. To pray in the name of Jesus is to pray according to God's will, which means all our prayers will be answered. That's why Jesus can also say things like: "whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith" (Matt 21:22) or "whatever you ask *in my name*, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything *in my name*, I will do it" (John 14:13–14). In so far as we are still corrupted by sin, we often do not want what God wants. But because we are at the same time new creatures in Jesus Christ, our own sinful will is suppressed by the power of the Holy Spirit and we pray as Jesus prayed to God the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane later that evening: "not my will, but yours be done." Then, it was the Lord's will to crush Him (Is 53:10) by allowing the Son of God to be handed over to sinful men and killed. And yet it was in His death that the world was redeemed from sin, death, and the Devil. The will of God is always best for God's children.

Dear Christians, in Holy Baptism you are God's children. The Lord has given you His very name so that you can now approach God the Father, your Father, directly with all prayers, requests, supplications, laments, thanksgivings, and everything else. In the name of Jesus, you have an intimate connection with the Father at all times and places. Besides, you also have the command to pray and the promises connected to prayer. "Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." The Lord wouldn't tell you to ask unless He's serious about His willingness to give you all good things in Jesus Christ, including the joy of the Holy Spirit. Go to the Lord often in prayer, knowing that He is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according

to the power at work within us. To Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph 3:20–21).

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. We stand for the Offertory.