

From the Fathers

From a treatise on the Lord's Prayer by St. Cyprian of Carthage (+ AD258)

Prayer comes from a humble heart

Let our speech and our petition be kept under discipline when we pray, and let us preserve quietness and modesty – for, remember, we are standing in God's sight. We must please God's eyes both with the movements of our body and with the way we use our voices. For just as a shameless man will be noisy with his cries, so it is fitting for the modest to pray in a moderate way. Furthermore, the Lord has taught us to pray in secret, in hidden and remote places, in our own bed-chambers – and this is most suitable for faith, since it shows us that God is everywhere and hears and sees everything, and in the fullness of his majesty is present even in hidden and secret places, as it is written I am a God close at hand and not a God far off. If a man hides himself in secret places, will I not see him? Do I not fill the whole of heaven and earth?, and, again, The eyes of God are everywhere, they see good and evil alike. When we meet together with the brethren in one place, and celebrate divine sacrifices with God's priest, we should remember our modesty and discipline, not to broadcast our prayers at the tops of our voices, nor to throw before God, with undisciplined long-windedness, a petition that would be better made with more modesty: for after all God does not listen to the voice but to the heart, and he who sees our thoughts should not be pestered by our voices. Beloved brethren, let the worshipper not forget how the publican prayed with the Pharisee in the temple – not with his eyes boldly raised up to heaven, nor with hands held up in pride; but beating his breast and confessing the sins within, he implored the help of the divine mercy. While the Pharisee was pleased with himself, it was the publican who deserved to be sanctified, since he placed his hope of salvation not in his confidence of innocence – since no-one is innocent – but he prayed, humbly confessing his sins, and he who pardons the humble heard his prayer.

18th June 2023

Second Sunday after Trinity

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time



'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to his harvest.' The Lord's language of harvest is the language of going out in order to bring in. It is dynamic language. The labourer is sent out into the harvest in order to reap, gather, and to return. It is why the Father sent the Son in the flesh, in his holy incarnation, in order to gather to himself a redeemed human race like wheat that is harvested from a field. And as co-workers in God's great gathering in, the Lord appoints twelve men whom St Matthew lists (himself among them). Their number is highly significant. The Messiah was to gather and unite the dispersed twelve tribes of Israel. In that way he was to be the new David during whose reign Israel's tribes found their unity. The Messiah would restore and perfect that unity. But God's gathering in was not to stop there. Those tribes, once united, were themselves to be the means whereby the whole world beyond the House of Israel was also to be gathered into God Kingdom. The latter chapters of Isaiah attest strongly to this developing belief among the Jews that they were not only the subject of God's love but the instrument through which he would fulfil his redemptive purposes. When the Lord calls The Twelve he is fulfilling Israel's hope and its vocation by establishing the New Israel - the Church - founded upon the Twelve.

Today's Gospel: St. Matthew 9:36-10.8