

Fifth Sunday of Easter (B)

I'm sure you've all heard the story about the little old lady named Irene, who prayed to God everyday, "Lord, let me win the lottery----I promise I'll give (most) of it to the poor and to the Church... Just let me win the lottery Lord, and I'll never ask for anything else." And so she prayed day after day, and lit lucky candles and prayed some more.... "Let me win the lottery Lord."

Well, she never did win the lottery... and eventually she died... and since she was a God-fearing woman, and had led a good life, she went to heaven and came before God, and she asked Him, "Father, I prayed and prayed for years that you would let me win the lottery, and in all that time, not even ONE Dollar did you ever let me win.... Why Lord?"

At which point God just kinda chuckled and looked at her in despair, telling her, "You know, Irene, If you wanna win the lottery... You gotta buy a ticket."

Now, I'm not advocating gambling, I tell you this story, because in the readings today, two of them tell us quite plainly, Quote, "We have confidence in God and receive from him whatever we ask." That's from the 2nd reading, and the Gospel says, "ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you."

And yet we know it's not quite so easy and simple. I know a lot of people whose faith is really literally tested because of unanswered prayers. And they're not asking for silly things like a million dollars. They just want some comfort and security for their family... but they remain unemployed. They want a cure for a sick loved one, who ends up dying and is taken from them too soon... They can't understand why-

--and they experience pain and suffering , and CURSE God because he doesn't seem to hear them.....

And yet, Garth Brooks.... Thanks God for unanswered prayers. Are you all familiar with that country song. Sometimes I thank God for unanswered prayers. Remember when you're talking to the man upstairs, that just because he doesn't answer doesn't mean he don't care--- Some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers."

Why? Because we often don't see the whole picture, and we can't know about things beyond our own experience. What Garth prayed for, was to have some girl who turned out to NOT BE "all that", and instead was blessed with a wonderful wife he deeply loved.

Perhaps by having to suffer through some hard times of unemployment, a man's kids are learning the value of what really matters, and building character. Perhaps, by a loved one dying, their suffering is ended, and even though we are in pain, they are in eternal bliss. So.. we have to trust, and have Faith in the VINE.

Now, there is a PRIME example of something that just doesn't seem to make sense. Pruning a vine. I was literally walking through vineyard last week, and the young vines were covered with new growth. And the vine grower was telling me that he would have to go through and knock nearly all of it. I mean, think about it---In order to get MORE fruit... you have to whack away almost all of the growth of a plant... sometimes there's little more left than a stump. I never could make myself do away with all of the lush looking branches, and consequently, never had much of a harvest. But that's just one example of how God's ways are not our ways.

So... What should we pray for? What should we ASK for? Well, Jesus tells us in the Our Father.—

"Thy WILL BE DONE!"

If that's what we pray.... Then we DO GET what we ask for. Remain in God, the VINE, and he will remain in you, and you'll be the biggest winner of all.

Trust me... When Irene went to heaven.... She hit the MEGA Jackpot.