

Traveling Companion: A Knock at God's Door

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The other day as I read the gospel at daily Mass, an interesting thought occurred to me. The gospel passage was Matthew 7:7-9 which says. "Ask and you will receive, Seek and you will find, Knock and it will be opened to you.. For the one who asks, receives. The one who seeks, find. The one who knocks, enters."

I kept thinking that prayer is a knock on God's door. As I did, my mind began to take me deeper into its implications.

I began to think of our experiences of visiting someone and knocking on the door of their home. I began to notice that, when we visit someone's house and knock at their door or ring their doorbell, what we do while we wait for someone to open the door becomes very revealing.

Just watch yourself the next time you visit someone's home and knock or ring the doorbell. Notice what you do while you wait for the door to open.

I notice that people adopt either of two postures while they wait for the door to open. Some ring the doorbell. Then they stand back, turn their back to the door and begin to look in the opposite direction. Others ring the doorbell and stay standing there looking at the closed door until someone opens it.

The person who rings the doorbell and turns their back on the closed door is really preparing themselves for rejection; for the possible inevitability that either no one is home or if they are, they don't want to be bothered with a visitor at their door.

The person who rings the doorbell and stands facing the closed door is optimistic, feeling assured that there is someone home and that that particular person will be glad to see them, allow them in and visit with them.

I sense we bring either of the two attitudes to prayer when we come to knock at God's door. If we are the kind of pray-er who knocks and turns away, expecting rejection, we bring an attitude of defeatism to our prayer knocking. We approach prayer as if it is a nice thing to do, a kind of "courtesy call" on God but we conclude that God is too busy; that God has more important things to do and more important people to listen to than them with their insignificant and trivial prayers and requests. Such pray-ers expect the worst, prepare for the worst and end up worse because they doomed themselves to failure.

If we are the kind of pray-er, who knocks on God's door and stands there confidently, knowing that God is going to be in and that God will allow us in and visit with us, then the visit will be filled with optimism; the pray-er will be enriched by the conversation and will be excited about a return visit

The first kind of pray-er; the one knocking at God's door but expecting no answer reminds me of the person who call me up on the phone or drops in for a visit but feels guilty for doing so. Such a person usually prefaces their question or request by saying something like, "I know you are busy and I don't want to bother you with this." Then they pause, expecting me to agree with their judgment and end the brief conversation. Some ask, "Am I interrupting you?" Others state, "I know I am not one of your parishioners and you have enough to worry about with your own parish than think about me." The only expectation is rejection. We can adopt similar stances in our prayer approach to God or we can say, "God, you said it was okay to knock. I did. I knew you would be home. I knew you would have time for me so here I am and this is what I need."

Sorry! There's the doorbell, I must go and answer it but first, I think I will look out the peephole and see what the person knocking expects. Maybe they have a prayer!