

(English translation)

September 1981¹

Word of Life

‘Truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them’ (Mt. 18:19-20).

This, it seems to me, is one of the things Jesus said that most fill our hearts with joy. How many needs in life, how many good desires we don’t know how to satisfy! Possibly you feel sure that only divine intervention, a grace from heaven, can gain what your whole being longs for. And now you hear words of amazing clarity and absolute certainty coming from Jesus’ lips:

‘Truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.’

You have probably read in the gospels how often Jesus urges us to pray, and he also teaches us how to receive what we ask for. But this prayer is truly original. For it to be answered, it must be offered by several people, by a community. Jesus says: ‘If two of you...’ Two. It’s the smallest number for a community. What matters to Jesus, therefore, is not the number, but that there should more than one believer.

In Judaic tradition, as you may know, it’s an accepted fact that God takes pleasure in prayer offered together, but here Jesus says something new: ‘If two of you agree...’ He wants several people, but he wants them united; he stresses their unanimity. He wants them to have one voice.

Of course, they have to agree on what to ask, but their request must be based above all upon the agreement of their hearts. Jesus affirms, in practice, that the condition for getting what we ask is our mutual love.

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You might be wondering why prayers offered in unity are more pleasing to the Father.

The reason, perhaps, is that these are the most purified kinds of prayer. For isn’t it true that our prayers are often reduced to little more than a series of selfish requests that make you think more of beggars before a king than of children with their father?

What we ask for together with others is certainly less tainted with personal interests. In contact with others we are more likely to be open to their needs and share them.

But it’s not only that. It’s easier for two or three persons to understand just what to ask the Father. So, if we want our prayer to be heard, it’s better to keep exactly to what Jesus says, namely:

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Jesus himself tells us the secret of this prayer's success. It's summed up in those words, 'gathered in my name.' When we are united like this, he is present among us, and whatever we ask together with him will be received more easily. For it is Jesus, present where mutual love unites hearts, who himself asks the Father together with us for the grace we seek. Can you imagine the Father not hearing Jesus? The Father and Christ are one.

Isn't this amazing? Doesn't it inspire trust? And make you confident?

'Truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.'

At this point, you're probably interested in knowing what Jesus wants you to pray for.

He himself makes it very clear: 'anything.' He sets no limits.

From now on, then, why not add this type of prayer to your daily life? Perhaps your family, or you yourself, or your friends, or the groups you belong to, or your country, or the world round about you, lack countless useful things because you've not asked for them.

Get together with the people close to you, with whoever understands you or shares your ideals. Having set yourselves to loving one another as the Gospel commands, be so united that you have the presence of Jesus among you. Then ask. Ask as much as you can. Ask during worship. Ask in church. Ask anywhere at all. Ask before making a decision. Ask for anything.

And, above all, don't act in such a way as to disappoint Jesus by not caring after he has given you such an opportunity.

People will smile more; the sick will find hope; children will grow up better protected, homes be more harmonious; the world's huge problems will become faceable even in the intimacy of the family... And you will gain Paradise, because prayer for the needs of the living and the dead is also one of the works of mercy that will be asked of us when we are judged at the end of our lives.