

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Jan 10th 2015

“We have this confidence in him that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in regard to whatever we ask, we know that what we have asked him for is ours.”

The opening verses in today's first reading deliver a powerful promise – and also can be a stumbling block for some. Personally, I find the message encouraging and enlightening.

Whenever I hear televangelists quote Scripture in regard to God granting whatever we ask because we are believers in Jesus, I cringe. Do I believe God is concerned about all of our needs? Absolutely. Jesus tells us that over and over. Do I believe there are almost magical properties to certain Scripture verses and particular ways prayers are worded, phrased or delivered? No. The message throughout the New Testament is that God, in Christ, is bigger and more powerful than our limited language and understanding.

So what are we to make of this statement in 1 John? People have sometimes been encouraged to breeze past the first sentence, and the first part of the second sentence, and hold on to “...we know that what we have asked him for is ours.”

I prefer to mull over the first sentence, which I believe is key. We are reminded to have the confidence to know that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. Think about that. The onus is on us to make sure that what we are seeking is according to God's will. This is a limited analogy, but it is almost like saying, “If you want God to hear you, you have to speak his language.”

And what language is that? The language of love, the language of faith, the language of the fruits and gifts of the Spirit and more. Is that just a copout? I don't think so. I think it is our responsibility to draw close to God, to be informed as to what Jesus teaches us about God and God's desires.

Does that mean we can't offer quick prayers for assistance in a crisis, without taking time for reflection? Of course not. But to me, it offers comfort that much about God's will for ourselves and others can be learned through patience, practice and spending time in prayer, reflection and reading Scripture. It will assure us that, whenever possible, we are “speaking God's language” when we make requests of God.

