

Genuine, heartfelt prayer takes courage, pope says at Angelus

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – People should pray with genuine and courageous faith, revealing their whole heart to God, confident he listens with care and mercy, Pope Francis said.

“When faith is alive, prayer is heartfelt: it does not beg for spare change, it is not reduced to momentary needs. We must ask everything of Jesus, who can do everything,” the pope said, speaking to pilgrims gathered in St. Peter’s Square for his Angelus address on Oct. 24.

God “cannot wait to pour out his grace and joy into our hearts; but unfortunately, it is we who keep our distance, through timidity, laziness or unbelief,” he said.

The pope reflected on the day’s Gospel reading about Bartimaeus, who was blind and begging on the road to Jericho. When the man heard Jesus of Nazareth was there, he repeatedly cried out, “Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.”

While the people around him scolded him to be quiet, Jesus called out for Bartimaeus and asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?”

The pope said this shows “God always listens to the cry of the poor and is not at all disturbed by Bartimaeus’ voice.”

God hears that the man is “full of faith, a faith that is not afraid to insist, to knock on the door of God’s heart, despite not being understood and being reproached. And here lies the root of the miracle,” the pope said, because Jesus restored his sight and said, “your faith has saved you.”

“Bartimaeus’ faith is evident from his prayer,” the pope said.

“It is not a timid and standard prayer,” but one prayed with his whole heart.

“And what about us? When we ask for God’s grace, in our prayer do we also include our own history, our wounds, our humiliations, our broken dreams, our mistakes and our regrets?” the pope asked.

When people pray, he asked, “Is it courageous? Does it contain the good insistence of Bartimaeus? Does it know how to ‘take hold’ of the Lord as he passes? Or is it rather content with making a formal greeting every now and then, when I remember?”

“Furthermore, is my prayer ‘substantial,’ does it bare my heart before the Lord? Do I take my story and life experience to him? Or is it anemic, superficial, made up of rituals, without feeling and without heart?” he asked.

When people pray, they must believe that the Lord can work miracles, Pope Francis said.

“Of the one who can give us everything, let us ask everything, like Bartimaeus,” who had “genuine, insistent and courageous faith” and should be an example for everyone, he said.

By Carol Glatz, Catholic News Service