

Are you connected?

If I told to you that I was “connected” what would it mean to you?

Depending on your age, it could mean several different things.

For the younger set, it might indicate that I have the latest smart phone, iPhone app, or, perhaps, a lot of “friends” on Facebook ... or it could even refer to how many “tweets” I send or text messages I get.

But for most of us, it generally means knowing someone important. Someone that could ... and just might ... be in a position to do something for us. Maybe offer our son or daughter a job, send some business our way ... or maybe even get our street paved or those potholes filled in!

We heard in Genesis today about how Abraham dickered with God over the fate of Sodom. Obviously, he thought he was “connected”! Not only did he talk to God, but he actually bargained with Him!!!

The psalmist certainly thought he was “connected,” too. Not only had he prayed to God but he acknowledged that God had answered that prayer.

In his epistle to the Colossians, St. Paul reminds us that we, too, are “connected.” As Paul points out, having been buried with Christ in baptism, we are raised from the dead in His resurrection.

Now that’s certainly a “connection” I’m glad to have!

And there’s more.

The Sunday readings don’t always all point to the same idea or theme, but today is one of those days.

In today’s reading from the Gospel of Luke, we find the apostles with Jesus as he prayed in a secluded place.

“Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples,” they begged.

Wait a minute ... don’t you think that’s just a bit curious?

Didn’t they already know how to pray?

After all, they’re Jews ... and if there’s one thing the Jewish people did, it was pray. In fact, there were prayers for each hour of the day plus prayers before and after each course of a meal!

But that wasn’t what they were asking.

They wanted to feel “connected.”

Prayer in those days was never silent. It was spoken aloud, and in the Judaism of Jesus’s time, it was customary for each individual religious group or sect to have their own unique prayers and practices.

So the unnamed disciple asked Jesus for a distinctive prayer that would mark them as His followers ...

... and he gave us what many theologians call “the perfect prayer,” commonly called the “Our Father” or “The Lord’s Prayer.”

Nowhere in the sayings of Jesus is there a more profound summary of the central theme and elements of His teachings.

Indeed, we can safely assume that His disciples were shocked when Jesus told them to address God as “Abba” which not only means “father” but was an everyday, personal form that might be used by a child.

However shocked the early disciples might have been, this prayer is used today by millions of Christians all over the world. In the Catholic Church, it’s used throughout the Liturgy of the Hours and in virtually every Rite we have, including, of course, The Mass.

This certainly makes us all “connected”!

But there’s still a question that we need answered.

Who taught Jesus to pray?

His mother, Mary, of course, and His stepfather, Joseph.

The connection we’re looking at today – from ancient records and Sacred Tradition – is that the Holy Family is said to have lived for a time with Mary’s parents, our patron saints, Ann and Joachim, whose feast day we celebrate today.

These two saints – patron saints of both parents and grandparents – are not named directly in the canonical scriptures ... that is in the books of the *Bible* ... but there is evidence in the *Protoevangelium of James* and in the popular medieval hagiography – or saintly biography – *The Golden Legend* – that attests to both Ann’s and Joachim’s saintly attributes.

It is said that Joachim was a rich and pious man of the house of David who regularly gave to the poor and to the temple. However, as his wife, Ann, was barren, the high priest rejected Joachim and his sacrifice, as his wife's childlessness was interpreted as a sign of divine displeasure.

Joachim withdrew to the desert where he fasted and did penance for forty days whereupon angels appeared to both Joachim and Ann to promise them a child. Joachim returned to Jerusalem and embraced Ann at the city gate. Ann promised to dedicate the child to God's service. Joachim and Ann are believed to have offered Mary to the service of God when she was just three years old.

Through these two saints, Ann & Joachim, we, too, are "connected," first through them to our Mother Mary, and then through her to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

As a believer in the Son of God ... as a baptized Christian ... I am connected with God the Father through Jesus Christ, our brother, who lived and died for us.

Like St. Paul pointed out to the Colossians, Christ died so that those who believe in Him could share in His resurrection.

I have that connection.

Do you?