

Dear Friends,

It has happened on a couple of occasions recently. While working on things around my house, I frequently like to turn on the news so that I can listen and keep up with current events as I wash dishes or go from room to room straightening up things (Yes, I am somewhat domestic). On a couple of these instances, I have overheard interviews of various individuals who suddenly allow curse words to slip off their tongues. I become amused at the interviewer scrambling to apologize on behalf of the network, while simultaneously admonishing the offender. Such incidences are not altogether rare in our everyday life and they give light to our human struggles with maintaining dignity in our speech.

You'd be surprised that the ears of priests are not immune to hearing these slips of the tongue from time to time. I've been at a gathering where someone will be telling a memorable story when, all of a sudden, a "colorful" word comes out and immediately that person will turn beet red, look at me, and apologize saying, "Sorry Father!" I chuckle good-naturedly as I watch the person squirm in embarrassment.

Perhaps these uncomfortable moments are good for us. They remind us of how we need to be prudent in our speech and maintain a dignity in our conversations. Today's Gospel is the pericope where Jesus instructs His disciples how to pray. He teaches them the "Our Father", which contains within it a reverence for God and all that He has made. In the Lord's Prayer, we pray that the Lord's name might be hallowed. Essentially, this means that we pray that we may strive always to maintain an awesome respect for God and His name. Included within this is a certain decorum in our speech. Whatever we say is a reflection of what is in our hearts. Whenever we avoid bad language, we help to maintain good taste and a respect for God, for ourselves, and for those around us.

Words carry within them much power. Words can hurt, they can demean, they can evoke violence, they can foster goodness, they can promote peace, and they can heal. As we pray the Lord's Prayer, we are reminded that, just as we pray that God's name may be regarded as holy, we should also keep holy all that God created, including our relationships, our heart, and the atmosphere in which our children grow up.

The Gospel passage also tells us that if we ask, we will receive. If cursing is a problem, all we need do is persistently ask God for the grace to overcome it. Most assuredly, He will come to our aid and grant us the ability to let go of all manner of speech that does not reflect His goodness. God bless!

Fr. Paul