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"The Ask"

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“The Ask”

Fund-raisers for non-profit organizations seek donors to contribute to their specific causes. Before asking, most of those who try to obtain financial gifts will attempt to inform prospective donors about the significant work being done, and they will also try to identify an appropriate amount to suggest as a donation. They prepare, before making “The Ask.”

We are told in both Scripture and Tradition to ask God for what we need. Each of us can be considered as a “non-profit” entity. Valued as we might be, and perhaps given some payment by those we serve as employees, leaders, or helpers, we remain completely dependent upon God as the giver and sustainer of life – both here and hereafter.

Like eager fund-raisers, do we need to inform God our benefactor about the value of our not-for-profit lives? Though God knows everything, and does not need to learn from us in order to be convinced of our worthiness, we benefit by “making our case” with God. By describing our need, we are drawn into honest reflection, and become more aware of both our sincere desires and our human limitations. In trying to cast our request in terms that will appeal to the only motive God can have in our regard – love – we begin, even in describing our needs, to receive the “funding” that enables us to accomplish the purpose for which we are given life.

When we consider the qualities of our Benefactor carefully, we are easily and naturally drawn into valuing what God values, and we will modify our requests accordingly. In consciously suiting our appeals to the One upon whose donations we depend, we will deepen our trust, hope, and love. Though we begin asking out of an awareness of our immediate need, we often end with a broader, more inclusive petition that connects us directly with God. When we ask, we always receive.

What size donation do we think God might be willing to make to our cause? God’s resources are unlimited. But we are very aware of constraints, such as time, money, and energy, which affect all of us. We are so used to dealing with measured amounts we might think that we should keep our requests of God to a minimum. We could even believe that if God gives us what we seek at one time, we should not ask again soon. But size and frequency are of no concern to God. Rather, we are welcome at all times to bring our requests to God, however great or small, whenever the inspiration to ask occurs to us. God initiates every movement of honest relationship that we

experience, including not only the spontaneous concerns we might lift up in prayer, but also our habits of making requests in Liturgies and in private devotions. We learn as we go, about making "The Ask."

Even if we do not plan to make a second request of a benefactor, we would be most ungrateful if we did not give thanks for what we have received. Sincere gratitude enlivens us, whether or not it pleases others. Only a forced acknowledgment of a gift can be made with a frown; real thankfulness brings a smile to our faces, and completes a cycle of love: asking and receiving.

Donors often like to be informed about how their gifts have been used. Repeat donations are encouraged thereby. Might we consider the use to which we have put God's latest gifts to us? Though God knows better than we all the effects that follow upon the responses given to our requests, our reflections about the benefits we have received will greatly encourage us. Rather than becoming selfish about what we have been given, we will more likely become more generous in praying for others as well as ourselves, and more open to the mysterious but loving ways that God answers us.

Ask.