

Chaplain's Assembly – Father Philip Murphy SSC
27th November 2014
“Thanksgiving”

Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

A narrated version of this talk as a PowerPoint presentation can be seen here:

<http://youtu.be/JgleFmV0cUo>

Those in the Second Form of St Paul's recently looked at what we call the ACTS of Prayer, the A – C – T – S of Prayer. That is: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication. There are four different types of prayers which we use, all of which can be found in our College Prayer book. Prayers of Adoration, which have just one purpose: to worship God, to adore God. Prayers of Confession, where we ask for God's forgiveness, and resolve to live a new life following the steps of Christ. Prayers of Thanksgiving, in which we give thanks for the blessings we have received and for prayers which have been answered. And finally prayers of Supplication, also known as prayers of Intercession. These are prayers where we ask something of God. Probably most of the prayers in the prayer book are these sorts of prayers.

In fact most people's prayers tend to be prayers of Supplication. Asking things of God. But if we want a healthy relationship with God, we need to have a balanced prayer life, which includes all these four areas: Adoration; Confession; Thanksgiving and Supplication.

Many prayers are a mixture of one or more of these areas, but still, mankind tends to be a needy creature and we tend to ask things of God more than telling God how wonderful he is, more than confessing to God the things we have done wrong and more than thanking God for all that we have.

So the second form wrote prayers and petitions and chose to write them under one or more of these four headings, and those prayers are still being used at the lunch time Eucharists and as they are used they are placed on the Prayer Board in our College Chapel. It is worth reminding you now that at any time you can write and leave a prayer request on that board and it will be remembered by me at the Eucharist.

Fourteen years ago, in the year 2000, a film was made about a woman called Erin Brokovich. It is a true story about a former beauty pageant winner, with no formal education in law who built a legal case against a large power company concerning contaminated drinking water. It ended up as the largest settlement ever paid in a direct-action lawsuit in US history. She went on to lead other cases and travels the world speaking and consulting on personal injury claims.

In the clip I am going to show now, which comes at the end of the film, she is given a bonus cheque in the legal office where she ended up working. She quickly becomes angry when her boss tells her that it is not the amount which she had asked for.

Erin's thanks disappear into a whisper as she becomes embarrassed by her outburst as well as overwhelmed by the actual amount of her bonus. Sometimes we get so caught up in asking

things of God, that we forget to stand back and to look at what we do have, and to thank God for that.

The Greek word εὐχαριστία (Eucharistia) means “Thanksgiving”. It is, of course, where we get the word Eucharist from. For the Eucharist is a thanksgiving meal in which we take bread and wine and give thanks over them for the saving acts of Jesus Christ and remember the words which he said at his Last Supper. Thanksgiving, then, is a very central part of Christian faith and worship. Our worship is filled with prayers and hymns of Adoration, Confession, Supplication and of Eucharistia: Thanksgiving. Central to that thanksgiving is for the gift of Christ Jesus, his passion, death and resurrection which have set us free and restored the broken relationship between mankind and God.

If you seek a healthy and spiritual life and relationship with God, it needs to have a balanced prayer life – just like a healthy mind and body needs a balanced diet. Your College Prayer Book is a good starting place, for it includes all these four areas.

Prayer is not just asking for things of God – it is talking with God. Adoring God, Confessing to God, Asking of God and so essentially Thanking God.