

I wonder if you remember your first prayer. Perhaps you had a prayer someone taught you as a child that you said at bedtime. Or perhaps, it was a special prayer you used to repeat, that meant something to you. Something you could relate to so closely, that it felt special enough to say to God. Perhaps that was the Lord's Prayer. The first prayers we make, take a great level of faith in the fact that God is on the other side. Else, we would never begin praying, it would be totally pointless. Often our first prayers are ones we repeat over and over again, until we learn them by heart. They become part of us in some ways, and sometimes we recall them in later life.

Today's Bible passage is Jesus' final prayer that he prayed in the presence of his disciples before he was arrested to be crucified. All his teaching were taught and all the encouragement, hope and promises were made. His work on earth, as a physical man, had been wrapped up. And now, Jesus lifted his eyes to heaven and prayed to the Father to glorify him and bless his disciples.

Even though he was the Messiah whom God sent; even though He had all the authority over all the creation God had made Jesus referred everything back to God and prayed to him.

This prayer is indeed a very special one. Yet, why did he pray so ardently to God, when he was God himself, one in Trinity, the Son of God: He had all the power to do everything in his own way and he certainly knew what God wanted and would do. Surely, it couldn't be to demonstrate faith... in himself? But as Jesus' last prayer, perhaps this was the point. In his final prayer in human form, he demonstrated how so closely bound he was with God, through the very act of prayer. Not only was this Jesus's special prayer ( a special request, a special plea) to God, a special prayer of great faith, it demonstrated something so special in and of itself. Jesus was one with God in unity.

Our repeated prayers to God become so much part of us, prayers such as the Lord's Prayer are learned by heart, the language we use to speak to God often becomes more familiar every time we pray, but it's not just the act of prayer that becomes increasingly familiar, it is God himself. Jesus' unity with God, demonstrated through prayer, shows us how God is in union with us every time we pray and turn our attention to him. Prayer is not just an arbitrary act of increasing our faith, but the very faithful act of coming into union with God. It takes great faith to say our first prayer, to begin praying, but it doesn't end at the act of prayer - it is the faith of knowing God is with us; with me, with you, with all of us.

God has blessed us, here in Wimbledon with great faith. Over my time here, I have certainly witnessed the love and care shown to others both within and outside of our community, and the prayers offered for ourselves and others - prayers of gratitude, of sorrow, of fear and faith. So many special prayers have been spoken within the Church of St Mary's, within our team churches, and in our own homes. And this Sunday, may we make it our special prayer that with every prayer, we will truly recognise that we are **with** God, that he dwells among us, and we are unified with him as well as one another wherever we may be. And may this be a prayer we will learn **not** just **by** heart, but learn **within** our heart. Our own final prayer.

Amen.