

About 3 years ago, this same time of year, I was at a retreat. As part of the retreat, you were encouraged to go to prayer teams and ask for prayer. Part of the talks at the retreat was to encourage you to pray, not in general intentions, but in very specific terms. During the prayer time, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed on an altar with what seemed like several thousand candles. When I went up for prayer, I was asked what it was I wanted prayer for. I said, "I want perseverance in my vocation." The leader of the prayer team pointed me at the altar, and said, "Ask Him," indicated Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. So, I did. I said, "I want to be Your priest."

While it may not seem like much more than a grammatical shift, making my petition 'first person' to Jesus Christ on the altar made a serious shift in how I saw what I wanted. Becoming a priest wasn't a third-person affair. Rather, it was becoming a priest of Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest.

Over the past few weeks, St. Paul has been exhorting us to prayer in the readings. Yet today, it is Jesus Christ Himself who is not only telling us to persevere in prayer, but encourages us to ask for whatever it is we desire.

Oftentimes we tend to ask timidly in prayer. It seems that we don't want to be too specific, because we may be disappointed by what God has in store for us. But let me assure you, God has more than we can imagine in store for us – if only we would ask.

If there is anything I can leave you with, let it be this: Ask boldly. That is, don't be afraid to ask in prayer for whatever it is you desire. And don't give up – be persistent.

So often the reason we need to ask over and over in prayer is not to change God's mind, but to change our disposition. I would call this, purification of intentions. That is, we may desire something but may not be prepared spiritually to receive it. By continuing to ask in prayer, and persevering in prayer, our own motives are purified, and we prepare ourselves to receive what it is that God has in store for us.

So let us pray that we can persevere in prayer without being disappointed. Let us be open to purifying our motives. And let us ask boldly, and often, for the things we desire from God, our Loving Father; through his Son, Jesus Christ; in the Power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.