3 Sharp knocks … Silence … 3 more. Our Campus Minister for Faith Formation pushes open the large front doors of the Chapel of Saint Ignatius into the darkening evening

to find familiar, smiling faces peering into the brightly lit chapel.

"Friends, welcome!"

And, in came 5 young adults, expressing great joy, and embraced by their peers in the peace of Christ.

With that, their answer to their prayers, they formally began their journey toward the Easter sacraments.

Just to arrive at the chapel doors that night took years of searching in their daily lives

and asking in prayer for the grace to see more clearly where God called.

As the weeks moved toward Easter, these five young women told thier stories of faith

and how they discerned becoming a Catholic. It was not always straightforward, often circuitous, peppered with some questions, moments of doubts, and even a few surprises along the way.

Yet each of them persevered in their prayer ... kept asking ... seeking for what they most desired.

In today's gospel Jesus teaches his disciples to pray.

And the give away this week? Don't give up on your prayer. Especially if God does not immediately answer; or lack of clarity fogs the horizon; or a temptation teases you that God will never fulfill her promise.

Persist! Cause a ruckus! Keep knocking! God will respond. For behind the door is a friend. A friend who cares, who knows the bigger picture of your life, and understands.

As young Jesuits taught to pray, when making the Spiritual Exercises – the 30 day silent retreat – we were always encouraged: Never cut short your hour meditation just because you “felt desolate or tempted” or if a dark spirit pushed you around. Instead ride it out, add 5 – 10 more minutes to prayer and remember the grace you most wanted. Persistence always paid off.

When our lives get difficult, when we find it hard to believe that anything can change,

or that possibility is dwarfed by impossibility, we are easily tempted to believe the Holy One is asleep behind closed doors.

We can feel very much on the outside. At these times, it is important to remember – the one whose door we knock is a Friend ... Jesus! For he knows and desires every good thing for us …

Who knocks on the door these days? Who wishes to be received by a Friend - Jesus, the Daily Bread that sustains along the way?

Certainly the youth! And they are not only knocking, they are POUNDING at the door of the Church. Disheartened to live in a Church that does not always appear relevant to the times. The young want God to hear their pleas for a just society as well as a church that takes the Gospel into the streets.

So, what’s with all their persistent, loud knocking? What are the young hoping to receive, hoping to find in the Church?

Certainly these World Youth Days the young have come asking … hoping for a more demanding gospel; seeking a more transformative Catholic faith!

And the Pope has heard them! He has heard their incessant knocking. He has pushed open the door. He has welcomed the young as Friends. He certainly offers hope!

Impelling the youth (and really all of us) to live a vibrant and active faith; the very grace they most yearned for. He encourages:

“Never yield to discouragement, do not lose trust, do not allow your hope to be extinguished.”

Then he goes on, imploring them to live the gospel!

“I want you to make yourselves heard in your dioceses, I want the noise to go out, I want the Church to go out onto the streets, I want us to resist everything worldly, everything static, everything comfortable...”

Be persistent! Persevere in your prayer!

One final thought. One of my spiritual directors once said to me, “As you persevere in your prayer, you will grow closer to Christ, and your life will be transformed.”

My friends, if we truly pray as Jesus taught us to pray ...daring to pray with our whole hearts the words he has given us, we take a risk. It will require deep faith to pray "Give us today our daily bread. Your kingdom come; your will be done.

We never know the exact details of that daily bread we will receive and yet we pray for that bread knowing that what we receive in prayer will only move us out toward the good. For God knows and desires every good thing for us. Precisely because he pushes open the door, and welcomes us as friends.

Ask and you will receive.

Seek and you will find.

Knock and the door will be opened to you.

***Mike Bayard, S.J.***

***Christ our Hope***