



EMBRACING THE DIVINE SPARK:

NOURISHING YOUR PRAYER LIFE

Session 3

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Praying the Lord's Prayer

(Jesus) was praying in a certain place,
and when he had finished, one of his
disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us
to pray..."

Luke 11:1

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name;
Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who
trespass against us;
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from
evil.

Amen

This is the version that we use and it is very close to that found in Matthew 6: 9-13.

Tonight, we are going to take an in depth look at the prayer itself and then look at it as a model for us to create our own personal prayers.

But, first, a Word from our Creator...

'This prayer is truly "of the Lord!"

It comes from the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ – the Word of God made flesh.

As the Word made incarnate, Jesus knows the human heart and, thus, he knows what is necessary for us in our relationship with the Father.

CCC¶ 2765

It is through the Word of God that the Holy Spirit teaches the Children of God to pray to their Father.

CCC¶ 2765

We tend to gloss over a very important aspect of this prayer – It comes from the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ – the Word of God made flesh.

The prayer that comes from Jesus is “of the Lord.” On the one hand, in the words of this prayer, the only Son gives us the words the Father gave him. On the other, as the Word incarnate, he knows in his human heart the needs of his human brothers and sisters and reveals them to us; as the Word incarnate, he is the model of our prayers.

Now, let us examine how Jesus teaches us to pray.

Our

It is of utmost importance that Jesus says, “Our,” not “My” or “Your” or just “Father.”

First, by saying “Our,” he is reinforcing that he has come to be one with us. He is in communion with us as both human and divine. He reinforces the fact that all of humanity are brothers and sisters looking to the one father. In a sense, he is confirming that he has become the second Adam for through him, we can look the “the” Father as “our” father, reestablishing the relationship that God wanted with humanity from the beginning of time. When we pray to “Our” Father, we personally address the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In praying this prayer, we do **not** separate the individual persons of the Trinity, but essentially confess our belief in the Trinity for they are one. Further, in spite of the divisions among Christians, this prayer reaffirms that we all call God “Our” Father.

Jesus does not create a barrier to that relationship by saying, “My” Father. We can have – and are supposed to have – and individual relationship with the Father. Nor does the use of “My” imply that God’s relationship with each human is exclusionary. The Lord teaches us to make prayer in common for all as we make common petitions for the whole Body of Christ. God the Father is father to all; he is always available to those who call upon him as such. When we pray this sincerely, we leave individualism behind; we are all the same in God’s eyes. This excludes no one.

Jesus does not just start with “Father” because that would imply that he is somehow separate from his creation and we believe that there is a divine connection within each of us. God does not call us to be something that we are not; we are his children and as such we can all call him “Our” Father.

By saying, “Our” we recognize and affirm the covenant that he made with humanity, i.e., we have become “his” people and we acknowledge him as “our” God.

Father

The words that the Father has given Jesus and his teaching of those words to us allow us to call him "Father." How else could we presume to call the Father in such an intimate manner? However, we do so in humility because "no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son *and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him,*" that is, "*to little children.*" We can identify the Father through paternal or maternal images stemming from our personal and cultural history and influencing our relationship with God.

To pray to the Father is to enter into his mystery as he is and as the Son has revealed him to us. When Moses asked God who he was, he heard another name. The Father's name has been revealed to us in the Son, for the name "Son" implies the new name, "Father." We can invoke God as "Father" because *he is revealed to us* by his Son become man and because his Spirit makes him known to us. The Spirit of the Son grants us a participation in that very relation born to us who believe that Jesus is the Christ and that we are born of God.

When we pray to the Father, we are in communion with him and with his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us to call him "Our Father." This first phrase is a blessing of adoration *before* it is a supplication.

We can call him "Father" because he has caused us to be reborn to his life by adopting us as his children in his only Son: by baptism. "The new man, reborn and restored to his grace, says first of all 'Father' because he has now begun to be a son. CCC¶ 2782.

Praying to our Father should develop in us two dispositions:

1. The desire to be like him: though created in his image, we are restored to his likeness by grace; and we must respond to this grace.
2. A humble and trusting heart enables us to "turn and become like children," for it is to "little children" that he is revealed. What would he not give to his children who ask, since he has already granted them the gift of being his children?

Who art in heaven,

More than meaning a place, it refers to a way of being. God is not distant; he is not up in the clouds. He transcends all places. He is not “there” or “elsewhere;” he is everywhere. Heaven is where he is and whenever we are truly with him, we are in heaven.

Another way of looking at this is that God is in the hearts of the just as in his holy temple. Those who pray should desire the one they invoke to dwell in them. We want heaven in our hearts for where God is, there is heaven. For example, let’s look at the Mass. St. Pope John Paul II has called the Mass “heaven on Earth,” explaining that the liturgy we celebrate – that is, the prayer that is the Mass – is a mysterious participation in the heavenly liturgy. God is present in the Mass – in the prayers, in the Eucharist, in the priest – and, thus, heaven is here on Earth within the liturgy. Thus, when we prayerfully call upon the Father, we are acknowledging that where he is, heaven also is.

Furthermore, in Christ heaven and earth are reconciled for the Son alone descended from heaven, and causes us to ascend there with him, by his Cross, Resurrection, and Ascension. Reiterating something that Father Jason said in last Sunday’s homily. “We are in the flesh and spend our lives on the Earth, but our citizenship is in heaven.” When we pray, we acknowledge that citizenship.

Hallowed be thy name;

By this statement, we acknowledge that not only is the Father holy, but that we are to treat him in a holy manner – it is understood that we give him praise and thanksgiving. It also acknowledges that we call upon him to make us holy as Jesus has called us to be – “Be holy as your Father in heaven is holy.”

In making man in his image and likeness, God “crowned him with glory and honor,” but by sinning, man fell short of the glory of God. From that time on, God was to manifest his holiness by revealing and giving his name, in order to restore man to the image of his Creator.

In the promise to Abraham and the oath that accompanied it (God swears, but since one would swear by someone greater than the person swearing, God merely swears) God commits himself but without disclosing his name. He begins to reveal it to Moses and makes it known clearly before the eyes of the whole people when he saves them from the Egyptians. *Read the last sentence in ¶2810 – p. 673.*

Next, read ¶2812. Then, go to ¶¶2814 & 2815

Thy kingdom come;

The Kingdom of God can also be read as the “reign” of God, where God’s word shall reign in the land. The Kingdom of God lies ahead of us. It is brought near by the Word incarnate, it is proclaimed throughout the whole Gospel, and it has come in Christ’s death and resurrection. **The Kingdom of God has been coming since the Last Supper and, in the Eucharist, it is in our midst. The Kingdom will come in glory when Christ hands it over to his Father.**

It may even be that the “kingdom come” is Christ himself, whom we daily desire to come and whose coming we wish to be manifest in ourselves.

It refers primarily to the final coming of the reign through Christ’s return. *Read the remainder of ¶2818.*

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

In this, we recognize that submission to the Father's will, rather than to our own wants, is essential to establishing and maintaining a relationship with Him. Jesus himself, in the prayer in Gethsemane, submits totally to the Father's will – "not my will, but yours be done."

We ask our Father to unite our will to his Son's, in order to fulfill his will, his plan of salvation for the life of the world. We are incapable of doing this on our own, but united with Jesus and with the power of the Holy Spirit, we can surrender our will to him and decide to choose what his Son has always chosen: to do the will of his Father. We need the grace from God to have any hope of accomplishing this. He commands each of the faithful who pray to do so universally, for the whole world. For he did not say, "thy will be done in me or in us," but "on earth," referencing all of creation.

BY prayer we can discern "what is the will of God" and obtain the endurance to do it. One enters the kingdom of heaven not by speaking words, but by doing the will of my Father in heaven." "Done" is an action verb and we pray to be able to do that action.

Give us this day our daily bread;

The message here is one of trust. Think of the trust of children who look to their Father for everything that is good and beautiful – for what they need (as opposed to what they want or think that they need).

“Give us” also expresses the covenant between God and his people. We are his and he is ours. This “us” also recognizes him as the Father of all humanity and we pray to him for all, in solidarity of their needs and sufferings.

“Our bread” refers to all that we need – the material and spiritual needs that we need to survive. This is especially poignant when one thinks of Jesus teaching us this as he becomes the very Bread of life in the Eucharist. The Father has given us this Bread of Life to meet those spiritual and material needs. Furthermore, since everything belongs to God, he who possesses God wants for nothing, if he himself is not found wanting before God.

Yet, God is not inviting us to idleness, we can’t just lie around and say “Feed me.” We have an active part in this relationship. We have to live the lives that the Father has called us to. No, this refers to allowing us not to become too preoccupied by nagging worry, but to have complete trust in Him.

Additionally, the presence of those who hunger because they lack bread opens up another profound meaning of this petition. The drama of hunger in the world calls all Christians who pray sincerely to exercise responsibility toward their brethren. Look at the Letter of James calling for acts stemming from our faith because faith without those acts is dead. Furthermore, consider the parable of the poor man Lazarus and of the Last Judgment. “Pray as if everything depended upon God and work as though everything depended upon you.”

We are also reminded that man does not live by bread alone, but by the Word of God – another reference to Jesus. Now consider that there is a famine on earth, not a famine of bread or thirst of water, but of hearing the Words of the Lord. Are we not also called

to evangelize, that is to spread the Good News to all that can hear it?

“This day” means NOW, not some time in the future when we have the time and inclination. It is a command of urgency.

“Daily” means that we constantly rely upon the that which the Father gives us – and may very well refer to the daily receipt of the Eucharist as a means to keep God at the forefront of our daily lives.

And forgive us our trespasses

We began praying to the Father acknowledging that he is holy and asking him to make us holy. But, we also realize that although we were cleansed from sin at baptism, we do not cease to sin. We can and do Turn away from God. In this petition we return like the prodigal son and like the tax collector we acknowledge that we are sinners. This petition begins with a “confession” of that sinfulness and a plea for God’s mercy. (We receive the fullness of that mercy with an effective confession and penance.)

But here’s where it gets sticky...

as we forgive
those who trespass
against us;

God's outpouring of mercy cannot penetrate our hearts as long as we have not forgiven those who have trespassed against us. Think about this, "We cannot love the God we cannot see if we do not love the brother and sister that we do see." In refusing to forgive, our hearts are closed and that will make them impervious to the Father's merciful love. This crucial requirement of the covenant mystery is impossible for man alone, but with God, all things are possible.

The term "as" unites these two clauses, making the interdependent.

It impossible to keep the Lord's commandment by imitating the divine model *from the outside*; there has to be a vital participation, coming from the depths of the heart, in the holiness and mercy and the love of our God. The unity of forgiveness becomes possible and we find ourselves "forgiving on another, *as* God in Christ forgave" us. CCC ¶2842.

And lead us not into temptation,

First, it is awkwardly worded for modern English usage. One can read this as “Do not lead us” or “Lead us, not into...” Regardless, the meaning is the same. i.e., we are asking God’s help not to fall into the temptation to things not from God – the things that we **want** instead of the things that we need from God.

This petition flows from the previous one as our sins result from succumbing to temptation. Thus, we ask our Father not to lead us into temptation. But that is really almost a non sequitur because our Father tempts no one. In fact, he wants to set us free from evil. In a very real sense this petition is one for discernment – discernment between trials (which are necessary for growth) and temptation which leads to sin and temptation. We must also discern between being tempted and consenting to temptation. *God does not want to impose the good, but wants free beings...*

“Lead us not into temptation” also implies a decision of the heart. (*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also... No one can serve two masters.*)

God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, so that you will be able to endure it. **Such a battle and such a victory become possible only through prayer.** God’s relationship with us, established, nourished, and exhibited through prayer provides us the grace to resist temptation and remain in his love.

But deliver us from evil.

In this petition, we join in Jesus's prayer, "...not asking (the Father) to take them out of the world, but... to protect them from the evil one." John 17:15.

In this petition, evil is not an abstraction, but refers to the Evil One – Satan – who opposes God. Through Satan, sin and death entered into the world and by his definitive defeat all creation will be freed from the corruption of sin and death. When we ask to be delivered from the Evil One, we pray as well to be free of all evils, present, past, and future, of which Satan is the author or instigator.

In this final petition, the Church brings before the Father all the distress of the world. Along with deliverance from the evils which overwhelm humanity, she implores the precious gift of peace and grace of perseverance in expectation of Christ's return.



Amen.

This is the most personal affirmation: "I believe!"

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name;
Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who
trespass against us;
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from
evil.

Amen

In sum, the object of the first three petitions is the glory of the Father via:

1. The sanctification of his name,
2. The coming of His kingdom, and
3. The fulfillment of His will.

The next present our wants to him:

1. They ask that our lives be nourished,
2. They ask us to be healed from sin, and
3. To be victorious in the struggle of good over evil.

The Lord's Prayer as Model

1. Acknowledge our respective roles -He is God and I am his child.
2. Give praise to the Father - All good things come from Him.
3. We ask that His will be done - As we present our petitions/wants, we acknowledge that we submit to His will.
4. Then we can focus upon our petitions, focusing upon needs rather than wants.
5. Ask for the graces to do His will.
6. Enlist the assistance/intercessions of Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
7. Amen.

If one wishes to pray to another intercessor, e.g., the Blessed Mother or one of the saints, start with addressing the intercessor and ask for their intercessions before the Father and then follow your heart (if not this model).

Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

And where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.