

# *"Let Us Pray"*



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# *Why the Knights of Columbus Advertise Catholic Faith*

The reason is simple. We Catholics want our non-Catholic friends and neighbors to know us as we really are and not as we are some times mistakenly represented.

We are confident that when our religious Faith is better understood by those who do not share it, mutual understanding will promote the good-will which is so necessary in a predominantly Christian country whose government is designed to serve all the people—no matter how much their religious convictions may differ.

American Catholics are convinced that as the teachings of Christ widely and firmly take hold of the hearts and conduct of our people, we shall remain free in the sense that Christ promised (John VIII, 31-38), and in the manner planned by the Founding Fathers of this republic.

Despite the plainly stated will of the Good Shepherd that there be "one fold and one shepherd," the differences in the understanding of Christ's teaching are plainly evident. It has rightfully been called "the scandal of a divided Christianity."

If there is anything which will gather together the scattered flock of Christ, it is the nationwide understanding of the Savior, what He did and how He intended mankind to benefit by the Redemption.

To this end, we wish our fellow-Americans to become acquainted with the teachings of Christ as the Catholic Church has faithfully presented them, since the day the apostles invaded the nations of the world in willing and courageous obedience to Christ's command: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations..." (Matt. XXVIII, 19).

**SUPREME COUNCIL  
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS  
Religious Information Bureau  
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# "WITH A LOUD VOICE I CRY TO THE LORD"

LORD,  
TEACH US  
TO PRAY



Have you ever desired an audience with an outstanding personage? Have you ever wished for a few moments alone with a famous athlete, a noted writer, a renowned statesman, a distinguished artist, an eminent clergyman, or an illustrious sovereign? Thousands of people visit civic and religious shrines each year to personally become associated with and to relive for an imaginary moment some historical reality. Throngs will stand for hours to catch but a fleeting glimpse of some passing hero.

Those of great repute are ordinarily too busy to share their lives with persons outside their immediate circle of friends. An interview with a celebrity, a queen, a hero, a president, a pope, must therefore remain but an unrealized dream for the average person.

Though this fact may often escape our notice, there is truly one who is far greater than any earthly personage to whom we have immediate and direct access at all times. This beloved person is our Heavenly Father. The door of His home is always open. He patiently awaits and longs for our coming. He de-

sires our conversation and listens intently to every word. We are His immediate circle of friends because we are His children. He is never too busy, day or night, to spend as much time with any one of us as we choose. Speaking to our Heavenly Father is prayer. Yes, we may give it a definition: the

lifting of the heart and mind to God. But to give it a definition is something like "gilding the lily." For prayer is not a cold matter of form. It is not a mere set of words said properly to a potentate wrapped in cold reserve. It is not a formula to satisfy protocol. Rather it is the opening of a child's heart to a Father. And such a Father.

To whom is it that we pray? God, our Father. God? Who is He? Should we turn to the Old Testament we would find that he is "my God," "my just God," "The Lord, my God," "Lord, my strength, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my rock of refuge, my shield, the horn of my salvation, my stronghold." He is also "my shepherd," "my light and my salvation," "The God of glory," "faithful God," "the Lord whose wondrous kindness he has

shown me;" God is called upon to be merciful "in your goodness, in the greatness of your compassion." He is "the Lord, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity."

### "Who Is He?"

WHO IS THIS GOD? It is He who said: "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee" (Isaias 49:15). He is the one who said: "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jeremias 31:3). He it is who "so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that those who believe in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting" (John 3:16).

We pray then to a God who is all this and more. For He sent His Son into the world to tell us about Himself: "The only-begotten Son ... he has revealed him." What did Jesus Christ, this only-begotten Son tell us about God? That He is a Father, a loving Father, a merciful Father, a forgiving Father. That we should not be anxious about the things we need, "for your Father knows that you need all these things." That He is the shepherd who seeks the lost sheep and rejoices when He has found it. That He is the grieving Father who waits for the return of His prodigal children, and overwhelms them with His love when they return from their sinful ways. That He forgives and forgives, and forgives again.

Our prayers therefore are sent heavenwards to One who is wait-

ing for them. They wing their way to a Father who is yearning to answer His children. No father desires so much news of his children, as God desires the prayers of His, Let us listen to God's own Son: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every-one who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened. Or what man is there among you, who, if his son asks him for a loaf, will hand him a stone; or if he asks for a fish, will hand him a serpent? Therefore, if you, evil as you are, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:7-11).

### An Omnipotent God

This God to whom we pray is the same God who is all-powerful. "Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14). "Our God is in heaven; whatever He wills, He does" (Psalms 113b:3). Listen to the words of our Lord: "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). God then is able to do what we ask of Him. But a father does not always exert all his power, nor use all his strength. When he picks up his infant child, he uses his power with all gentleness. Or when his growing son asks his father to display his power, the father may refuse. He does so not because he is powerless, but to teach his son that a mere display of power is not desirable. Or he may wish to teach

his son that there are things more powerful than power, such as patience or self-control.

Our heavenly Father, omnipotent though He is, uses His power for the eternal salvation of His children. He is as wise as He is powerful. His wisdom directs the use of His power for the welfare of His children. Knowing this, His children can feel secure in their prayers to their Father. They know that while as children they may ask for many things, their Father, being a loving and good Father, will "screen" their prayers and use His power only for their spiritual good.

Hence when prayers are not answered, there is no reason to think that God is not listening, or not concerned. In our childlike way we may repeat with the Psalmist: "Why, O Lord, do you stand aloof? Why hide in times of distress?" (Psalms 9b, 1). But this should not come from the childish thought that God does not care what happens to us. It is His care and concern that causes Him at times to refuse to give us what we ask.

### God Is All-Knowing

For besides being all-powerful and all-wise, God is also all-knowing. He knows us "inside and out." His knowledge of us is not of yesterday. It is a knowledge of the past, the present, and the future. He knows us far better than we know ourselves or than anyone knows us. He knows our thoughts and our innermost secrets. "O Lord, you have probed me and you know me; you know when I sit and when I stand; you understand my thoughts

from afar. My journeys and my rest you scrutinize, with all my ways you are familiar. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know the whole of it. Behind me and before, you hem me in and rest your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your spirit? from your presence where can I flee?" (Psalms 138:1-7).

What a consolation to us as we pray. We know that God knows. We also know that when He uses this knowledge, it will be a loving Father using it. As prayer is the lifting of the mind AND THE HEART, so God's answer to prayer is from His knowledge and HIS LOVE! Into this beautiful picture comes the voice of a skeptic: "God knows it all, so why pray? Why tell Him what He already knows? Why talk to Him? Has He not already made up His mind what He will do? You can't change God's mind, so prayer is useless." If prayer came from man's mind alone to the divine mind alone, then there might be some merit to the skeptic's words. But prayer comes from THE HEART as well as the mind of man; it is directed to THE HEART OF GOD as well as to His knowledge.

It is true that God knows all things. When we pray, we are not telling God something He does not already know. The purpose of prayer is not to inform God. Rather it is to tell Him that we adore Him, or that we thank Him for what He has given us. Or we tell Him that we need something or that we are

sorrowful because we have offended Him. These are the things that He wants us to tell Him. He never tires of hearing them, because He is our Father. A father never tires of hearing from his son that the son loves him, or that he is grateful. The father knows already that the son loves him and is grateful. Yet the love the father has for the son wants to be fed with the loving and grateful voice of the son. So it is with our loving Father.

### Thy Will Be Done

Nor do we pray with the hope that God will change His mind. We don't pray asking Him not to send us the cross when He has made up His mind to give us the cross. Rather in prayer we are asking that His will be fulfilled. We tell our Father that we adore Him, because He wants us to adore Him. If we ask for something, we ask because He wants us to ask. "Ask and it shall be given you..." Prayer then is in accord with God's will. We are "tuning in" our wills with the will of our heavenly Father. In every prayer are implied, if not explicitly stated, the words of God's Son: "Not as I will, but as thou willest" (Matthew 26:39).

All objections to prayer will be washed away when it is recalled that the basis of prayer is love: God's love for His children, and the

love of His children for Him. Because of this love God wants His children to raise their voices in prayer. Because of this love His children want to talk to their loving Father. The child is barely able to wait to get home to tell his mother all the happenings of the day. And the mother, the good and loving mother, stops all she is doing to give her full attention to her child. There is no need for God to stop what He is doing. He is all attention all the time. The basic reason is that He loves. He is love. "God is love" writes St. John in his first epistle (4:16). Again he writes: "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God" (3:1).

### From The Heart

Prayer then is a lifting up of the mind and heart of a child to the heavenly Father. It is not a cold word cast toward a cold sky. It is not an impersonal sending forth of an appeal to an aloof God. Nor is it a vain and lifeless formula repeated over and over to attract the attention of a Great Magician. It is not a mumble-jumble of words rattled off in haste to a Being who must be trapped into paying attention. Rather prayer comes from the living mind and heart of a beloved child to a more than loving Father.

Prayer is to be commended, for it engenders in the soul a distinct conception of God. And the indwelling of God is this — to hold God ever in memory, His shrine established within us.

St. Basil

# "I WILL... THAT MEN PRAY IN EVERY PLACE"



Men seldom forget their own position when they stand in the presence of royalty. The one sitting on the throne is a man just as those standing in front of him. Yet he has an aura about him that causes the strongest of men to observe a respectful protocol. The motives for doing so may be very high; they may be very low. So one man may stand there out of reverence and love for the one holding the royal position. Another may stand there in abject fear without any reverence or love for the one on the throne.

When man approaches God he must work up from the dust from which he came. Man should not forget who he is and what he is. We have already seen who God is. He is the all-powerful but loving Father of all men. Now let us take a look at the one who prays to this all-powerful but loving Father. If a man must not forget himself and his position when in the presence of his king, neither must he forget himself and his position when praying to his Father. He should not be "like a man looking at his natural face in a mirror: for he

looks at himself and goes away, and presently he forgets what kind of man he is" (James 1:23-24). He should not forget himself and so become arrogant, or proud, or boastful. When a man prays to his Father, he has no cause to be anything but what he is. His Father knows him too well to be impressed by any facade.

Who is man, then, and what is he? Man is most important of all God's creatures. "Let us make mankind in our image and likeness... God created man in his image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them... Then the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being" (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7). Man then came from God. He belongs to God who gave him all he has. God made him with a body (the material part) and a soul (the spiritual part). He made him a living being, a being that had life in himself. God made him in His image and likeness. Man was like God in a way that all other creatures were not. Man then was superior to all

other creatures in this world. God gave man dominion over all other creatures. "...and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, over all the wild animals, and every creature that crawls on the earth" (Genesis 1:26). Man now participated in God's authority over all creatures. In this way he was like unto God.

## Creature and Creator

Yet man was a creature, God the creator. The distance between the two is vast. One creates, the other is created. One always was, and always will be. The other, man, came into existence, and exists only because God brought him into existence. Man depends on God for all that he is. When therefore man gets on his knees or prostrates himself before God, he is using what God has given him. He would not be able to utter a prayer or whisper the name of God, if God did not help him. As a creature man must pay homage to God; he must adore Him. He needs everything from the Creator, hence he must bow in prayer for it. Yet the relationship between Creator and creature is an impersonal one. It is based on divine power, not on divine love; it is founded on creature needs, not the needs of a son.

## Man Is God's Child

Man however is more than God's creature, and God is more than man's creator. In the story of man's creation we read that God placed Man in a garden "to till it and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15). Man was

so close to God that He talked to him, commanded him, dressed him, punished him, yet filled him with hope (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:9-21). All these are but indications that God had raised His creature to a higher relationship with Himself. Is it not a father who commands, who dresses, who punishes, who gives hope? God then is man's Father as well as his creator. Man is God's child as well as His creature.

No one understood this better than God's own Son. When therefore He taught us to pray, He taught us to call God our Father. "In this manner therefore shall you pray: 'OUR FATHER...'" (Matthew 6:9). "But when thou prayest . . . pray to THY FATHER . . . YOUR FATHER in heaven (will) give good things to those who ask him" (Matthew 6:6; 7:11).

## Man Is A Sinner

The picture, however, is not complete. In praying to God we pray as creatures and children. It is chapter three of Genesis that fills out the picture for us. MAN SINNED! This is the story that this chapter tells us. God's creature and God's child disobeyed. How vividly is this told: "...the Lord God called the man and said to him, 'Where are you?' And he said, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid.' Then he said, 'Who told you that you were naked? You have eaten then of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat.'" (Genesis 3:9-11). Yes, man was naked, for he had lost his birthright through sin.



Man was now a sinful creature. He was a disobedient child. When Nathan reproached David with his sins, David said in all simplicity and truth: "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Kings 12:13). Every man can say the same: "I have sinned against the Lord." A third element has now been introduced into man's life and hence into his prayer life. He is now praying as one who has offended a loving Father. He is praying to a forgiving, yet offended Father. He is now a prodigal child.

The word "prodigal" recalls to mind that parable of our Lord usually called the "parable of the prodigal son." When man now prays, he finds himself in the same condition as the prodigal son. Man has squandered his birthright, in this case, sanctifying grace and the right to heaven. A grievous famine has settled in his soul. It is a famine of God and of grace. He tries to satisfy himself with "the pods that the swine were eating" (Luke 15:16), but he has been made to feed upon the loving care of a loving Father. So he must begin his return to God as did the prodigal son. The latter recognized his dismal plight. "I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. I am no longer worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired men'" (Luke 15:18-19). So the sinful child of God must get up and go to his forgiving Father. He must go ever mindful that he is a sinner and that he must beg forgiveness.

## A Forgiving Father

Sinner though he is, man need not approach God in prayer as though he were coming in the presence of his judge. The prodigal son did not find a stern judge waiting for him. Instead he found that "while he was yet a long way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him" (Luke 15:20). The father was not satisfied with the return of his son. His forgiving and loving heart would not be satisfied until his son was restored to his place in the family. He was still the younger son despite his wayward ways. "But the father said to his servants, 'Fetch quickly the best robe and put it on him, and give him a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet; and bring out the fattened calf and kill it, and let us make merry; because this MY SON was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and is found'" (Luke 15:22-25).

As we, sinners every one of us, turn in prayer to our Father, this is what we find. We too find a forgiving and loving Father. We find Him more than willing to forgive us, to restore us to our rightful place as His offending, but forgiven children. We may be sinners, but in the eyes of our Father we are still His children. The father in the parable never forgot that the wayward boy was his son. The elder brother forgot his brotherly ties, but the father never forgot his fatherly ties. So in prayer we should never forget that we are God's children. God will never forget

what we are. Even if there is need to turn to Him "seventy times seven times" He is ready and willing and yearning to forgive us. He wants us to turn to Him in humble and pleading prayer seventy times seven times.

There is never any reason for us to repeat the despair of Cain: "My punishment is too great to bear. You are driving me today from the soil; and from your face I shall be hidden" (Genesis 4:13-14). Nor is there ever cause for us to imitate Judas, who repented of his deed, but instead of turning to a forgiving Father, he turned to "the chief priests and elders...but they said, 'What is that to us? See to it thyself.' And he flung the pieces of silver into the temple, and withdrew; and went away and hanged himself with a halter" (Matthew 27:3-5). Our prayer is not the despairing cry of a drowning man reaching for a straw of living mercy. Our prayer is an echo of the Psalmist: "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord; Lord hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to my voice in supplication. If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, Lord who can stand? But with you is forgiveness, that you may be revered" (Psalms 129:1-3).

### A Sinner's Prayer

Yet we cannot ignore our sins or our sinful condition. Sins are offenses against God; they do separate us from God. Serious or mortal sin drives an "iron curtain" between God and the one sinning. It prevents God's love from reaching the soul. It does not change His

love, it simply chases it from the soul. In such a condition then how can we expect to be heard? Since prayer is a lifting up of the heart and mind to a loving Father, how can we pray when our minds and hearts are weighted down with sin? Favors are granted to friends. Prayers should come from the heart of God's friends, not from a heart blackened by sin.

Let us listen to God's own voice before we answer these words of a timid and wavering sinner. "But if the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed, and keep all my commandments, and do judgment and justice, living he shall live and shall not die. I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done. In his justice which he hath wrought, he shall live. Is it my will that a sinner should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should be converted from his way and live" (Ezekiel 18:21-23)?

God's words are verified by the following story. In the ninth century before Christ the king of the Northern Kingdom (or of Israel as against Juda, in the south) was Achab. He coveted the vineyard of Naboth and obtained it through the scheming of his wife and queen, Jezebel. God sent Elias to tell Achab of the divine punishment that would follow because of his sins. "And when Achab had heard these words, he rent his garments, and put hair-cloth upon his flesh, and fasted and slept in sack-cloth, and walked with his head cast down. And the word of the Lord came to Elias the Thesbite, saying: 'Has thou not seen

Achab humbled before me? Therefore, because he hath humbled himself for my sake, I will not bring the evil in his days..." (3 Kings 21:17-29).

## God Forgives

There is a Latin phrase saying that there are no arguments against facts. The facts are that God does listen to a sinner, that He does accept his repentance, and that He does forgive his sins. Did not Jesus Christ say to the woman who came to Him in the house of Simon the Pharisee: "Thy sins are forgiven..." And to Simon He had said: "Wherefore I say to thee, her sins, many as they are, shall be forgiven her, because she has loved much. But he to whom little is forgiven, loves little" (Luke 7:47-48). Did not this same Christ tell the adulterous woman: "Neither will I condemn thee. Go thy way, and from now on sin no more" (John 8:11)?

What makes this forgiveness all the more God-like is that the entire process of repentance must come from the offended Father. Even the very beginnings must start with His help, His grace. The sinner is not capable on his own to begin the trek back to God. As a runner uses

a starting-block to get started in the race, so the sinner needs a "starting-block" from God. He needs a divine push to start his steps in the direction of repentance and confession. In the case of Achab the warning of God through Elias served as the starting-block. For David it was the admonition of Nathan. With these came a grace for the sinful soul. Even when a sinner is asking for the grace to repent, he is using a divine "booster" to make the request.

## His Children

The sinner has turned from God, not God from the sinner. Yet for the sinner to turn back to God there is required the divine help. This is given not because the sinner deserves it (as a sinner he deserves punishment), but because a loving Father does not will "that a sinner should die," but "that he should be converted from his ways and live." A distracted father seeks his lost son, not because he is lost, but because he is his son. So God seeks our repentance not because we are sinners, but because we are His children. Yes, we are His children despite our sins; sinful children, true, yet His.

He who asks of God in faith things needful for this life is sometimes mercifully heard and sometimes mercifully not heard. For the Physician knows better than the patient what will avail for the sick man.

St. Prosper of Aquitaine

# "ASK AND YOU SHALL RECEIVE"

Prayer stems from the three "I ams." "I am but dust and ashes" (Genesis 18:27); "I am a child" (Jeremias 1:6); "I am a sinful man" (Luke 5:8). Prayer is directed to God, the Supreme Being, the Creator, a loving yet offended Father. The creature must never forget that he is a creature; the child must not forget he is a child; the sinner must not forget that he is a sinner. When this creature-child-sinner turns to God then, it is to pay Him homage: "Hallowed be thy name" (Matthew 6:9). This is called adoration. To no one else is adoration due except God. This belongs to Him because He is what He is: God, the Supreme Being. This belongs to Him as His right and due from those whom He has created and elevated to become His children.

Prayer is not an equal talking to an equal. It is a "lifting up" not only because the one praying is directing his mind and heart heavenward. It is a "lifting up" because the one praying is so far below the one to whom he is praying. There is an infinite distance between the Creator and the creature. Our heavenly Father has stooped down to



bring us up to the stature of His children; He is still God and Creator. But when it is a sinner who is talking to God, then the "lifting up" can be done only because a loving Father wills the life of His child, not his death. Prayer can only begin then with a slide rule. We must measure the distance between God and ourselves, and we must keep ourselves in our place. There can be no demanding of God. There can only be an asking: "Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). What this means is that all prayer must be humble. It must come from a mind and heart ever mindful of the condition of the one praying. For humility is this mindfulness. It keeps us where we belong. Figuratively or literally, we belong on our knees before God. This was the disposition of Abraham when he pleaded with God for the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorra, or rather for the just in these wicked cities. "I have ventured to speak to the Lord though I am but dust and ashes" (Genesis 18:27).

This humility is not the cower-

ing fear of a slave, for it is not a slave who is speaking. It is a child of God who is pleading with his Father. If he is a loving child, and when praying he is certainly that, he fears to offend his Father. But this fear comes from his love, not from his sins. This is the fear of reverence, reverence for his Father. Every prayer must have this fear. Sometimes it is called reverential fear. At other times it is called filial fear. So often the word "fear" is connected with abject fear, or with fear that comes from our sins. It is perhaps better then to speak of reverence rather than of fear. Reverence for God, for our Father, must be found in the mind and heart of him who prays. This is the reason that when we picture some one praying, we think of him kneeling with his hands folded. Or else we depict him with a look of reverence directed upward or toward the altar. There should be as much reverence in the mind and heart as there is in external appearance. Otherwise it is not prayer, for there is no prayer unless it comes from the mind and the heart.

### Confidence In Prayer

Yet we are sinners who are praying. And we are told that we must pray with confidence, with hope that our Father will answer our prayers. It would be an insult to our heavenly Father to turn to Him, and at the same time think within our hearts that He will not listen to us. We go to a doctor because we are sick, not despite the fact we are sick. We go with confidence; if not, we are wasting his as well

as our own time. No one needs God more than sinners. Hence no one should turn to Him more than sinners. To no one has our Father manifested so much love as toward sinners; hence no one should pray with greater confidence. For "God commends his charity towards us, because when as yet we were sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

### He Died For Us

Our Lord tells us that "greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Then what must be the love of God who asked His Son to die for those who were sinners? It was because God wanted all of us to be His friends that He sent His son to His death on the cross. For if God loved us when we were sinners, then what is His love for us now that we are friends. "Much more now that we are justified by his blood, shall we be saved through him from the wrath. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved by His life" (Romans 5:9-10).

In no way did our Lord manifest Himself so much as God's Son than when He was dealing with sinners. He defended the woman who anointed Him, even though her sins were many (Luke 7:36-50). He would not condemn the woman taken in adultery; in fact he calls her "Woman," the very same word He used for His own Mother at Cana (John 8:10; John 2:4). He allows Judas to kiss Him and calls

him "friend." He pursued the soul of Judas to the bitter end, but Judas would not turn to God to ask forgiveness.

As sinners, then, we have reason for confidence when we pray. This certainly sounds paradoxical, yet God's actions speak louder than any paradox. The reason of reasons, however, for confidence is to be found in what we are in the eyes of our Father. We are children and we shall always be His children. And He is our Father. If there is any trait that we find in childhood, it is confidence in a father. The child expects everything from him. He expects it without wavering, without thought, with simplicity and with utter faith. It never seems to dawn on him that his father cannot or will not fulfill what he asks.

David has given us in several Psalms, a beautiful and perfect example of confidence in prayer. In Psalm 3 we hear David praying to God:

"When I call out to the Lord, he answers me from His holy mountain.

When I lie down in sleep, I wake again, for the Lord sustains me.

I fear not the myriads of people arrayed against me on every side.

Rise up, O Lord! Save me, my God!"

*Psalms 3:5-8)*

Or again this same confidence is found in Psalm 4:

"When I call, answer me, O my just God, you who relieve me when I am in distress; have pity on me, and hear my prayer!

Men of rank, how long will you be dull of heart?

Why do you love what is vain and seek after falsehood?

Know that the Lord does wonders for his faithful one; the Lord will hear me when I call upon him.

O Lord, let the light of your countenance shine upon us! You put gladness into my heart, more than when grain and wheat abound.

As soon as I lie down, I fall peacefully asleep, for you alone, O Lord, bring security to my dwelling."

*(Psalms 4:1-9)*

### Unanswered Prayer

The human heart is not always too patient. A request repeated over and over again soon grows tiresome. The praying heart becomes faint. Confidence begins to lag and there is the temptation to say: "What is the use of praying? God won't listen to my prayers." And if the fainthearted is told that our Lord said "ask and you shall receive" the answer comes back: "But I have asked, and I have not received!" It does not do much good to tell such a heart that God will answer in His own good time. "But He certainly should have answered: I have been praying for so long!" To this plaint there is an answer that goes to the very heart of the matter, the heart of what we may call "unanswered prayer."

First, all prayer is answered. We have the word of our Lord for it. "Ask, and it shall be given you... your Father in heaven (will) give good things to those who ask him" (Matthew 7:7, 11). Prayer, then, will always be answered. BUT, yes

there is a "but" to it. It is not said that our Father will give us what we ask. It is said that He will give us an answer to our prayer. Our Lord Himself asked in His agony: "Father if it is possible let this cup pass away from me; yet not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). The prayer of our Lord was that His sufferings might not come upon Him. The answer was given that they should come upon Him, because it was His Father's will. So our Lord received an answer, but it was not the answer for which He was asking.

In this prayer of our Lord we have the key to understanding the attitude of all those who pray. Prayer is to bring about the fulfillment of God's will. It is His will that we pray to Him. It is also His will that is to be fulfilled in and through prayer. Any time we pray, we are asking our loving Father "if it is your will, do this or that, give me this or that." If it is not His will, then He will not give it. But He will answer the prayer. As the lad said to his father when asked if he had prayed to God for something he wanted: "Yes, I prayed and the answer was NO!" We should never say that God does not answer our prayers. He may not give us what we want, and in fact many times He does not, but He will always give an answer when we pray.

This should make us all the more confident in our Father. If He gave us everything we asked, we might soon lose our confidence in Him. For we would soon discover that in giving us what we ask, our Father is giving in to our own desires,

which are not always for our own good. Once more the ghost of sin haunts us. If we did not have this haunting element of sin, then when we asked for something, we would be sure that it would be for our good, especially for our eternal good. But as it is, our sinful tendencies often lead us to ask for what we think is good for us, but it is only good for our earthly happiness or for the satisfaction of our own whims.

### God's Answer Will Come

No father gives his son everything he asks. And our heavenly Father will give us "good things," but certainly nothing that will harm us, especially something that might harm our souls. Our confidence in God then is not based on the fact that He answers all our requests. It is, or should be, based on the fact that He is a good Father, a loving Father, one who knows what is good for us, one who looks into the future and sees there what would harm us and what would help us. From such a Father even a "NO" is a good answer.

"But," says one objector, "I have prayed for the conversion of my husband for years." Or another voice is heard: "I have prayed and prayed that my wife would come into the Church." Or again: "How I have prayed for the return of this one or that to the faith or the sacraments." Does not the heavenly Father of these children desire more than you do these conversions and these returns? Does He not love their souls more than you? Has He not sent His Son to die for them? But...

why?? Has it not come to your mind that He may have given them these graces? Our Father will never force anyone to come to Him. He invites, cajoles, pleads: He may send a sorrow or misfortune to bring them to Him. But He will never bend their wills against their wills. In the meantime you have been praying and praying. Good! How many prayers have you said that you would otherwise not have said? How much grace have you merited for yourself that you would otherwise not have merited? And who knows? Did not St. Monica pray for nineteen years for her wayward Augustine? Did not St. Theresa of

Avila pray for almost as long to be relieved of temptation? How many of us have prayed as long?

Prayer is not made to bend God's will to our own. It is rather made to bend our will to His infinite and loving will. "Not my will, but thine be done" is the basis of all prayer. The more you pray the more your will becomes attuned to the divine will. More and more you will realize that your prayers are being answered. For you have found out what to ask for and how to pray. And you have discovered there is Someone who has taught you how to pray!

### Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace —

Where there is hatred, let me bring love;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
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 unto eternal life.

Amen.



## "OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN"



A good and innocent child is never tongue-tied in the presence of his father. Such a child has no stammering to overcome when something is wanted. But when the child has been disobedient, then the tongue won't move; "the cat has its tongue." As children we may not have too much trouble talking to God, but once we have become conscious of our sinful state, then we find that we are tongue-tied in His presence. It is a great consolation to know that there is a Child of God Who is Innocence Itself, and Who knows the Father far better than we do or ever will. The Apostles felt the same way we do. They too felt that it was not too easy to pray to God. And at hand, right at their elbows, they had SOMEONE Who knew how to pray to God. So in all simplicity and with complete confidence, they asked our Lord: "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).

Our Lord's answer has been enshrined in what is often called "the perfect prayer." This is the OUR FATHER, THE PATER NOSTER. We say it so often and in the way we find it coming from the lips

of our Lord, that we tend to forget that it is more than a prayer. It is a model of how we should pray. After all God does not mind set prayers coming from His children (for prayer is prayer whether according to a form or in our own simple words). No one minds hearing the age-old and set form of love: "I love you." While we enjoy personal letters, no one objects to the cards with their set verses or greetings which we receive at Christmas or on our birthday. On the cross our Lord turned to a psalm and used at least the first verse, perhaps more. No, we need never worry that our Father will tire of our set formula of prayer. He will never tire of hearing His children say: "Our Father who art in heaven, etc."

The OUR FATHER is more than a set prayer. By studying it, we learn how to pray. This prayer comes from God's own Son, and we could have no better teacher. "...no one knows the Son except the Father: nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and him to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27). In the

OUR FATHER the Son has chosen to reveal to us how the Father wants His children to pray to Him.

### Our Father, Not My Father

First when we pray we are to address our Father. Not *my* Father, but *our* Father, for we are praying to the common Father of all. We are praying as a child among many children. This becomes all the more significant when we recall that our Lord has told us to ask in His name. God is OUR Father: Christ's Father and the child's Father. This does not mean that we can't address God, as Lord, or as Lord God, or as Almighty God. When we do, however, it is to God, as our Father, that we are speaking, not to the Creator, or the All-Powerful One. Nor does this mean that we can't pray *to* Jesus Christ or *to* the Holy Spirit, for they are God as well as the Father. A glance at many prayers will show that they are addressed to God the Father; and very often we are praying through Jesus Christ. This will be taken up later.

What are we to ask our Father? Better, what does our Lord indicate is the way we should pray to Him? He indicates that He is in heaven, so we lift up our heart and mind to Him. We are to pray "Hallowed be thy name." Our prayer is: may our Father, Who is God, be honored, revered, adored. We are honoring Him, revering Him, adoring Him by our prayer: we want Him to be honored and revered and adored. The phrase "hallowed be thy name" is consecrated by years of usage. God's English-speaking children have used it for so long that they

would not want any other. Yet its meaning is more important than the words. From our heart we are asking that our Father be given the homage, the worship that is His due.

Our Lord is telling us that in our prayer we should always adore our Father, revere and honor Him. It would be in accord with this thought to begin all our prayers with: Father, I adore you! Father, may you be adored everywhere and by all! Every prayer should be an adoration of our Father. This is why Christ placed it first. There is nothing that He, as the Son, wants so much as the proper respect and homage due His Father. There is nothing that any child wants so much as the recognition of his father as his father: "This is my father" are words that call for the due respect of such a personage. So too when we pray, there is nothing that we should give so much as adoration; there is nothing that we should want and pray for so much as this same adoration; this "hallowing of his name."

### Thy Kingdom Come

A child wants nothing so much as to have his father honored. God's children want their Father to be honored by every one. Their Father is a king who is to rule over the hearts of all men. They know that His Son came into the world to establish this rule. They know that this Son desires nothing more than that all men accept His Father as their Father and their King. So in imitation of this Son and from the desire of their hearts, they pray, they beg: "Thy kingdom come."

The first place for this kingdom to come or this rule to prevail, of course, is in the heart of the one praying. How is this rule to be established in the heart? The next phrase of the Our Father tells us: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." God's rule over nature is perfect, for nature obeys His will. So too is God's rule in heaven. There it is perfect for all in heaven obey Him joyously and happily. It is only on earth that the will of God is not always obeyed as it should be. This hurts the heart of a loving and obedient child, as it hurt the heart of the sinless Son of God. This hurt in the heart of the child is all the more searing, for he finds disobedience in himself. Yet he can pray and ask for perfect obedience to his Father's will. This he does in this part of the Our Father: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

### Our Daily Bread

The child's thoughts cannot always be on the homage and obedience due his father. A child knows that he has to think of himself once in a while. In fact he thinks of himself quite a bit of the time! He has needs, he gets hungry and thirsty. He needs clothes, he needs care and education. He needs a home. So many things he needs and so many things he expects from his father. God's child knows needs too. He knows that he has a loving and bountiful Father who supplies these needs. His Father "knows that you need all these things" (Matthew 6:32). Yet He likes to know that His

child realizes this. He wants His child to ask for them. A loving child is always ready to do what His father wants. So God's loving child prays: "Give us this day our daily bread."

Note that this prayer is said for "us." We are not selfish in this prayer. We are asking for all of God's children; we are asking Him to give them and ourselves what they need for today. "Daily bread" means whatever we need for today's life. We need material things; we need spiritual favors and blessings and graces from our Father. All these needs are summed up when we pray for "daily bread." The word "today" is interesting. Our Lord said that we were "not (to) be anxious about tomorrow; for tomorrow will have anxieties of its own" (Matthew 6:34). By praying for today's needs we are telling our Father that we trust Him and that we are His children. A child seldom thinks of tomorrow; it is too far away. Many a father has rued the day when he said he would take his child to the circus tomorrow! A child thinks of today and is satisfied with what is given him today. "Give us today our daily bread."

If we had spoken the Our Father, we probably would have placed the next petition first: "And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors." But our Lord is not one to put second things first. Prayer derives its value from God before it has any value coming from His children. Adoration of God, the fulfillment of His will, His Providence whereby He gives to His children

their daily needs: these are more important than forgiveness. For us it is very important that we receive forgiveness of our sins, so our Lord tells us to ask for this grace. To ask this forgiveness is one way to fulfill God's will, and to have His rule established in our hearts. Sin is God's enemy; it estranges the Father from His child. The child commits it; God forgives it, provided the child asks for forgiveness.

### We Must Forgive

Our Lord knows our hearts better than we know them ourselves. Yet in asking Him to forgive us, our own hearts are denying forgiveness to others who have offended us. In our asking God for forgiveness, we would like to cover up our lack of forgiveness. But deep in our hearts we hear a refrain: you are asking for forgiveness, but you have not forgiven. If we have not forgiven, we ought to stumble when we say these words of the Our Father: "...as we forgive our debtors." In fact, we have no right to say them at all. For the lack of forgiveness is an offense against the Father of one to whom we are saying: "I'll never forgive!" "Oh, I'll never talk to that one again!" Our Lord must have considered this attitude somewhat too common among men. Having finished the Our Father he returns to it: "For if you forgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you your offenses. But if you do not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offenses" (Matthew 6:14-15). He also used a parable to illustrate the same

point. He pointed up the tremendous debt we owe God, yet He forgives, in contrast to the miserly debt owed us by one of our brothers, yet we won't forgive (Matthew 18:21 ff).

It is a travesty for us to beg forgiveness when we are so unforgiving. It is a mockery of God's own forgiveness to ask Him for this when we are so hardhearted toward others of His children. We are asking Him for something we will not give ourselves. Our Lord's words cut off any objections we might have. If we expect to obtain forgiveness we must forgive! "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

### Lead Us Not Into Temptation

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." How often we have said this without catching what at first glance seems so contradictory to our loving Father. He would not "lead us into temptation." No, he would not. Yet His children will play around with temptation and with what leads to sin, the way a moth will wing around the flame. We often walk in "where angels fear to tread." What we are asking our Father then is that He will keep us from entering the path that leads to sin. That path is temptation. Children do not always heed the warnings of their parents. They are told not to venture into the woods or onto the frozen lake, or to keep off the road. But when the anxious father walks out to see where his children are, he usually finds them "in the midst of the lions." So too God's children

often walk into the midst of evil, as if they could not be harmed by it. They know the devil is going around like a roaring lion seeking souls to ruin, yet they walk with unseeing conscience into his clutches.

We need then, and need very greatly, our Father's protection. So we plead with Him to deliver us from evil. Evil is anything that has the stench of sin about it. Since the devil is the advocate of, and the tempter to sin, he is the first from whom we ask to be delivered. So ends the Our Father.

No, some one says: there is another phrase: "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." After much study, scholars both in and out of the Church, recognize that this phrase is not part of the Our Father as

given by our Lord and recorded by St. Matthew. The Revised Standard Version, for example, places it in a footnote with the remark that "many authorities, some ancient, add in some form..." Yet these words are found in a number of scriptural manuscripts, and in this way they came into the King James version and into the Protestant tradition. It is an ending, however, that recognizes the rule, the power, and the glory of God. No one should fail to recognize these things, and to add them to the Our Father is a good way to recognize them often. Yet Catholics do not have the tradition of reciting the Our Father with this ending. So let both Catholics and Protestants follow their traditional Our Father, for thus the Father is honored and glorified.

### Thoughts on Prayer

It is lawful to pray for what it is lawful to desire.

*St. Augustine*

He knows how to live well who knows how to pray well.

*St. Augustine*

He causes his prayers to be of more avail to himself, who offers them also for others.

*Pope St. Gregory I*

All that should be sought for in the exercise of prayer is conformity of our will with the divine will, in which consists the highest perfection.

*St. Teresa of Jesus*

He that flees from prayer flees from all that is good.

*St. John of the Cross*

Pray as you can and do not try to pray as you can't.

*Dom Chapman*

# “ . . . ASK THE FATHER ANYTHING IN MY NAME ”



Only in imagination are we able to picture a man trying to pull himself up by his own bootstraps. The very attempt to imagine it brings a chuckle, for what could be more futile? There is no chuckle, rather there is dismay, when we consider the great, the awful distance there is between God and ourselves. Even when we say "Father," we are aware that He is far and away above us. The more we pray, the more we become aware of this. For the more we pray, the more we realize the holiness of God, and our own sinfulness. It sounds strange to say that the closer we get to God, the more we realize how far we are from Him. No one will deny that St. Paul loved Jesus Christ. Yet shortly before he died, he wrote to Timothy: "This saying is true and worthy of entire acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am the chief" (I Timothy 1:15). Notice that St. Paul did not say "I was" but "I am" the chief. Paul's love made him realize all the more his sinfulness and his distance from his beloved Master.

Talking to friends should bring

closeness. Constant companionship and living together bring the father and the child to understanding of each other. Prayer should bring us close to our Father; it should give us an understanding of Him as well as of ourselves. Prayer does this. Because it does and as our prayer life grows, we come to know our Father better and better. We also come to know ourselves better and better. Then it is that we want to say to God as the Israelites did at Mount Sinai: "... let not God speak to us, or we shall die" (Exodus 20:19). And we echo the cry of Peter: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8).

How can we in prayer bridge this gap? We are familiar with this situation from daily life. At times a "gap" appears between friends, between husbands and wives, between nations. When a rift takes place we call in a mutual friend, or a neutral nation, or a counsellor. From our knowledge of management and labor in our country, we are familiar with "mediators." There was a time when a permanent rift had taken place between God and man;

in fact, it is still present in the souls of all who come into the world. The sin of our first father, Adam, split wide open the friendship between God and man. Original sin is the result of this split, and through it all souls are turned away from God at the time of conception and birth.

St. Paul has expressed in his usual forthright way, the situation and the remedy: "Unhappy man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 7:24-25). Jesus Christ is the one to bridge the gap. He is the mediator between God and man: "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 2:5).

### "In My Name"

It is our Lord, then, who will lift us up to our Father and present our prayers to His Father. "Amen, amen I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you. Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:23-24). In a family the favorite child (and what family does not have such a favorite?) is the go-between. A father's favored and favorite daughter is asked to get something from the father; the mother's favorite son is begged to intervene. Our Lord is God's Son. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him" (Matthew 17:5). He is close to us because "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). In fact the author of the epistle to the Hebrews says that "He (Jesus)

(was) like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest before God... For in that He Himself has suffered and has been tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted" (Hebrews 2:17-18). He goes on to say that Jesus "is able to have compassion on the ignorant and erring," "because he was tried as we are in all things except sin" (Hebrews 5:2; 4:15).

### Jesus Prayed

God's Son knows what it is to pray, "for Jesus, in the days of his earthly life, with a loud cry and tears, offered up prayers and supplications to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His reverent submission" (Hebrews 5:7). Time and again it is recorded of Jesus that He spent the night in prayer. All of us remember the agonizing prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from me; yet not as I will, but as thou willest" (Matthew 26:39). Over and over again, as if to teach us to pray and not to faint, He repeated this same prayer.

Jesus has told us to use His name in prayer. Therefore, when we are praying, we might think of ourselves as "pygmies" in the sight of God. But with us is a "Giant" whose head reaches to the heavens, nay to the very throne of God. When we pray "through Jesus Christ, our Lord" we are not alone. Our prayers are no longer ours alone "since He lives always to make intercession for them (those who come to God through him)" (Hebrews 7:25).

No prayer is made with the hands or the lips alone. Prayer is from the head and the heart as well as from the hands and lips. Jesus Christ is our head and heart, we "are the body of Christ, member for member" (I Corinthians 12:27). Our Father can never turn a deaf ear to the prayers of His beloved Son. The Son Himself said this at the tomb of Lazarus: "Father, I give Thee thanks that Thou hast heard Me. Yet I know that Thou always hearest Me" (John 11:41-42). It is no wonder then that our Mother, the Church, prays so often "through Jesus Christ, our Lord." We can do no better than to imitate our wise Mother.

### We Must Do Our Part

With such a "Giant" as our mediator and intercessor, we can breathe a sigh of relief on the subject of prayer. But we can't be lazy. Even though our Lord prayed for His Apostles at the Last Supper (John 17:9 ff), He told them at the Agony in the Garden: "Pray, lest you enter into temptation" (Matthew 26:41). If our Lord would do all the praying, He would not have taught the Apostles and us to pray. If we drag ourselves along without prayer, then our Head will find Himself handicapped. Through our prayers we give to Him what He needs to offer His Father. While on earth He waited for an expression of desire and faith before working miracles. We are told that on His visit to Nazareth He "did not work many miracles there" (Matthew 13:58). The reason was "because of their unbelief." We

must manifest our will to our Head and this is done through prayer. Our Lord will not push us along the path of prayer; He expects us to follow that path on our own account. He will give us the grace to pray. We must take up the grace from there; otherwise no fruit will result.

### Are We Devout?

Despite all our Lord has done, despite all His graces, despite His example, we still drag our feet where prayer is concerned. We know its importance. We know its value. We know our needs. Yet... as St. James wrote to some of the early Christians: "You quarrel and wrangle, and you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss..." (4:2-3). Our Lord has done all He can. He is a perfect man of prayer. But we are weak and crawling along at a snail's pace. We need to be prodded along. The examples of so many devout men and women down through the ages should be a goad that will excite us to action. The Sacred Scriptures are filled with glowing examples of men and women of prayer. Towering above all, however, is the example of our Lord Himself.

Yet we still hold back. We are like children in the presence of a great personage, a Bishop, or a President, or a Queen. We feel the need of others to bolster our morale, if not our sagging knees. It is instinctive for us to turn to others for help, when we begin to pray. The centurion whose servant was sick felt too unworthy to come



into our Lord's presence. "And the centurion, hearing of Jesus, sent to Him elders of the Jews, beseeching Him to come and save his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they entreated Him earnestly, saying to Him. 'He is worthy that Thou shouldst do this for him . . .'" (Luke 7:3-4).

### Seek The Help of Others

In the Old Testament we find Moses interceding with God to save the Israelites. In fact God told Moses: "Let me alone, then, that my wrath may blaze up against them to consume them." But Moses persisted and "the Lord relented in the punishment He had threatened to inflict on his people" (Exodus 32:10-14). Abraham prayed for Abimelech at God's own request (Genesis 20:7 ff). In the New Testament we read in the epistles of St. Paul that he prayed "always for you" (Philippians 1:3-4; Colossians 1:3, 9-10; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:3).

If we ask others to help us in our prayers, or beg their intercession, it is not because we do not have confidence in Christ's power. Rather it is because we are not confident of our own worth and power before God. We feel that all the help we can get in prayer is all to the good. God has a host of friends, who are also our friends. So we turn to them and ask them to turn in prayer to the heavenly Father. In particular do we turn to the saints, those "elite" who are now with God. We are so far from our Father, in distance and in holiness. They are so close to Him, in distance and in

holiness. It is so much more comfortable and comforting to be close to the Father, than to have to "long-distance" Him. And since we have friends near Him, why not let them whisper our prayers into His ear?

A mother always has a special place in the heart of her children. So all of the children of Christ's Mother, Mary, reserve a very particular place for her. This special reserved place is never so manifest as in the prayers begging her intercession. The Hail Mary is on the lips of her and the Father's children thousands of times throughout the day. God's children are only imitating their Father and His Son in showing special honor to their Mother. No other woman was chosen except Mary to be the Mother of God's Son. Since she is unique in God's heart, it is no wonder that she is unique in the hearts of His children.

No king feels dishonored when his mother is honored. No son feels slighted because his mother is asked to use her power over him. God's Son is not dishonored when His Mother is honored. Nor does He feel slighted because we ask her to intercede for us with Him. He is not going to take it amiss because we beg her to talk to her Son on our behalf. At the marriage feast of Cana, Christ listened to her and worked His first miracle. He listens to her now as He did then.

The term "Co-Mediatrix" given to Mary does not put her on an equal plane with Jesus. He alone is the Mediator. Co-Mediatrix does not mean co-equal. The Son and

Mary are poles apart, when we look at His divine work of our Redemption. But in this work, Mary was not only the Mother who brought the Redeemer into the world. She was also the woman who worked with her Son for the redemption of the world. As Eve led Adam into the path of sin, so Mary led her Son along the path of deliverance from sin. He alone redeemed us (and Mary, too, for she needed redemption

as did the rest of us). But Mary was there working with Him. It is no wonder that those redeemed by her Son should turn to her who gave Him for our salvation. It would be base ingratitude if we did not turn to her, and if we did not honor her. Her heart of love would be wounded if her children did not come to her. For she is our Mother, as she is the Mother of our Father's Son, Jesus Christ.

### My Daily Prayer

I BELIEVE in one God. I believe that God rewards the good, and punishes the wicked.

I BELIEVE that in God there are three Divine Persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

I BELIEVE that God the Son became Man, without ceasing to be God. I believe that He is my Lord and my Saviour Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the human race, Who died on the Cross for the salvation of all men, Who died also for me.

I BELIEVE, on God's authority, everything that He has taught and revealed.

O MY GOD, give me strong faith, O my God, help me to believe with lively faith.

O MY GOD, relying on Thy almighty power and infinite mercy and promises, I sincerely hope to be saved. Help me to do all that is necessary for my salvation.

I HAVE committed many sins in my life, but now I turn away from them, and hate them. I am sorry, truly sorry for all of them, because I have offended Thee, my God, Who art all-good, all-perfect, all-holy, all-merciful—my kind and loving Father.

I LOVE Thee, O my God, with all my heart. Forgive me, I implore Thee, for having offended Thee.

I PROMISE, O God, that with Thy help I will never offend Thee again.

MY GOD, HAVE MERCY ON ME.

# "I PRAY... THAT ALL MAY BE ONE..."

OUR  
FATHER,  
WHO ART  
IN  
HEAVEN



In any home there are times of talking and times of silent communion. The same is true between friends. Words are not the only means of communication. Signs are means of conveying our ideas to others. So at times is silence. Who has not heard the expression: silence speaks louder than words? There were times when our Lord turned to His Father in prayer and He expressed Himself in words. So for example in Chapter 17 of St. John: "Father, the hour has come... Father I will that where I am, they also... may be with me..." On other occasions we are told that our Lord spent nights in prayer. These were hours of silent prayer with His Father.

There are times too when a child should speak, and when he should be seen and not heard. In prayer there are times for vocal prayer, and there are times for prayer that is not heard except by our Father in heaven. This latter is called meditation. Mental prayer is another way to speak of it. For it is in the mind and the heart, while vocal prayer is *in and from* the mind and heart. Vocal prayer is spoken prayer, at

least spoken to oneself with the movement of the lips and tongue. There is no such thing as prayer not from the heart and mind. So there is a certain amount of mental prayer connected with all vocal prayer. For prayer must come from us as human beings, not from talking parrots or tape recorders.

When we recite the Our Father, our mind and heart should be on our Father in heaven, as we say vocally (and devoutly, with reverence, and slowly): "Our Father, who art in heaven." When we meditate upon this phrase, our mind and heart will think within themselves, and without set words: Our Father, I am thinking of our Father in heaven. He is not only my Father, but "our" Father. So I am thinking of Him as my Father and the Father of all His children. He is in heaven. That is His home. That is my home, too, for as a child should be with his father, so I should be with my Father. Please, Father in heaven, help me to reach my home and so be with you forever. This is meditation. It is thinking over, a wondering, a considering in the depths of my soul.

## Meditation

To think things over is familiar to all of us. Meditation is this and more. For meditation is a thinking over with God and about Him. It is baring the soul and its needs and yearnings before Him and to Him who knows the soul and its needs and yearnings better than the one meditating. But above all meditation is the revealing of one's self to God and to one's own gaze. This would seem to make meditation a one sided affair. That is not true. For God comes in turn to the soul and reveals Himself to it.

This brings us to a point in prayer that is often not thought of or considered. We think of prayer in terms of *our* talking to our Father. Prayer is beyond this. Prayer is a conversation. Now, in conversations we reveal ourselves. This is a two-way street, or should be, and will be where there is perfect friendship.

When we begin to pray and to turn to God in all sincerity, we find it difficult to talk to Him. So we use set formulae. We use set words. But God wants more than this from us. He is ever seeking our entire heart and our whole being. It is for this reason that we should meditate, for then the stammering of our hearts in ordinary prayer soon gives way or should give way to the intimate communings of the heart with God. In turn He begins to manifest Himself to the soul. The Father is calling to His child for more and more prayer, more and more meditation, for He has much to give.

The story of the Samaritan

woman illustrates this gradual manifestation. Our Lord first spoke to her in simple terms: "Give me a drink." Then He spoke to her of "the gift of God and who it is who says to thee: 'Give me a drink.'" He reveals to the woman that He knows her life, and finally when she says that the Messiah "will tell us all things," Jesus reveals Himself to her: "I who speak with thee am He" (John 4:7-26). This is an excellent picture of prayer, of meditation, of the final purpose of all prayer and meditation.

"I am He." I am your Father and your God. I am waiting for you to come to me in order that I might come to you. Such are the words of our Father. They can be fulfilled through prayer and meditation. For the heart is opened up to God through prayer; the heart is centered on God through meditation. In His own way, mysterious yet sweet, God draws the soul to Himself and reveals Himself to the soul. Then the highest form of prayer is found in the soul. This is contemplation, where the soul looks at God and God looks into the soul, where the soul finds itself taken over by the loving embrace of a loving Father.

## Prayer's Conversation

How different prayer is when we realize that it is more than a mere recitation of prayerful words, when we come to know that prayer is the intimate and loving conversation of one who loves, the Father, and one who is beloved, the soul. In His discourse at the Last Supper our Lord spoke several times

of the Father and of Himself coming to those who love and making their abode within the soul. "If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). This is the beginning of that union of God and the soul that ends in eternal beatitude in heaven.

It is the Father who seeks the child. It is the Father who is constantly and persistently knocking at the heart of the child. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man listens to me, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me" (Apocalypse 3:20). It is the invitation of Jesus Christ all over again; "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). The Father refuses to be an uninvited Guest. He comes and enters only when He is invited and where He is wanted. We must hunger and thirst for Him as He hungers and thirsts for our hearts and our souls. "I thirst" is the cry of the Father: "I thirst" should be the cry of the child yearning for close union with the Father.

We are a far cry from the timid approach to God with which we began this subject of prayer. A child is not to remain a child forever; it is to grow into an adult, capable of taking its place in society. So God's child, while remaining a child in virtue, in innocence, in disposition, is to grow into the adult stage of prayer. We are not to spend our lives reciting prayers of petition, or of reparation, or of thanksgiving. Rather we are to pass on to medita-

tion, and even to contemplation. There is life where there is growth. If the life of prayer does not grow, it is a feeble life indeed. Our Lord advanced "in wisdom, and age and grace before God and men" (Luke 2:52). We too are to advance in grace, that is, in union with God. It is prayer that makes this advance possible.

### "Holy Spirit! Enlighten Us"

We look *up* the road of life, we do not look *down*. At the end is our Father, beckoning us on to eternal union with Him. But He is also along the road inviting us to union with Him now. Our spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. We need a booster for our spirit that it might overcome the weakness of the flesh, "...the Spirit also helps our weakness. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself pleads for us with unutterable groanings" (Romans 8:26). This is the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity, of whom our elder Brother spoke: "I will ask the Father and He will give you another Advocate, to dwell with you forever, the Spirit of truth...He will dwell with you, and be in you...But when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will teach you all the truth..." (John 14:16-17; 16:13).

In our climb toward God we have, first of all, Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who is the way, the truth, the life. Through Him and with Him we pray and we grow in prayer. But just as He in His own life was led by the Holy

Spirit, so too are we, or so too should we be led by the Holy Spirit. We all know the necessity of spirit in a game or in work, even in life itself. Spirit gives that "extra something" to the winner or the successful man. The Holy Spirit gives us that "extra someone" we need to help us pray. He lifts our prayers out of the doldrums and puts them on the same plane as God Himself. "For the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the things of a man save the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so, the things of God no one knows but the Spirit of God" (I Corinthians 2:11).

In Baptism we received the Holy Spirit when the grace of our Father came to us through His Son. He is in us to work out our salvation and our sanctification. He it is who is to push us upward and outward to our Father. Without the Holy Spirit working in and through us,

we are like the Apostles cooped up in the upper chamber. They saw only the four walls. Without the Holy Spirit breathing His divine life into our prayers, we would see only the four walls of our own needs and our sins. Our prayers would not be prayers of adoration, nor bring us closer to our Father.

Our prayers must begin with a prayer to the Holy Spirit. Before each prayer, before we begin to pray, we should turn to Him dwelling within us and ask Him for His help. We could say:

O Holy Spirit, help me to pray through Jesus Christ for the glory of the Father.

Come, Holy Spirit, enlighten my heart and lift my mind to the Father through the Son.

O Holy Spirit, make my tongue and lips the instruments of my heart and mind; and make my heart and mind your instruments for prayer to my Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ah! dearest Lord! I cannot pray,  
My fancy is not free;  
Unmannerly distractions come,  
And force my thoughts from Thee.

The world that looks so dull all day  
Glow's bright on me at prayer,  
And plans that ask no thought but then  
Wake up and meet me there.

*F. Faber: Distractions of Prayer*

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