

INSTITUTE FOR LEADERSHIP IN MINISTRY
DIOCESE OF SAN JOSE

SECOND YEAR

THIRD PAPER

COMMENTARY ON THE LORD'S PRAYER

“OUR”

By starting the Lord's prayer with the adjective “our”, it makes me feel that as a baptized Christian I have the privilege of addressing God as my Father. It also sensitizes me to all Christians who surround me and who also call God their Father. “Our” makes me realize we are a community of believers who are brought to knowledge of the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ. It reminds me that I have a responsibility to share fellowship with the other believers, and, not only to be aware of their longings and needs, but to meet them when possible.

“FATHER”

The notion of God as our Father can have both good and bad connotations. In order to understand the meaning of fatherhood, we undoubtedly turn to the experience of our human fathers. If our experience was that of a loving and supporting father, the easier it is to accept God as a father. Conversely, the experience of an unloving or absent father makes a relationship with God as father more difficult. It is only through Jesus that we can expect to understand the relationship more fully. It is Jesus who tells us that God is like a “daddy” to us. It is Jesus who teaches us by his example that God is there to help us in times of trial, temptation, confusion, discouragement etc., as well as when we are happy, joyful and thankful for all His blessings. Again, it is our baptism in Jesus Christ that allows us to share this unique familial relationship with God as our Father.

“WHO ART IN HEAVEN”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that “heaven” here does not mean a place, but a way of being. I'm glad I read that because now it makes this prayer more meaningful to me to realize that God is not “elsewhere”, but present here and now. It makes God's presence more real to me. It makes me want to share more deeply in His covenant of love and to grow in His knowledge. This exercise will also give me some good material for reflection and meditation during the coming season of Lent. It is also my wish that by understanding the Lord's Prayer more deeply myself, I may use it to help others know God and His Son better.

“HALLOWED BY THY NAME”

This phrase reminds me of when Moses asked God what his name was and how he and the Israelites did not dare to mention God’s name. Rather than fearing the holiness of God’s name, we must aspire to become holy ourselves and to respect the holiness that lies in every believer and follower of Jesus Christ. Just as God the Father and Jesus, His Son are holy, we must find ways to make our surroundings holy and sacred. Our attitude must reflect our belief that all life is holy, that of the unborn child, as well as that of the convicted murderer. Hallowed, to me, also means praising God’s name and thanking him for his bountiful blessings.

“THY KINGDOM COME”

The kingdom is not only eschatological, but exists here and now in Jesus Christ. We certainly look to the future second coming of the Lord when God’s Kingdom will be established for all time, but we must also rejoice in the kingdom life that we share through our baptism. We must work to make the Kingdom of God a reality here on earth by fostering justice and peace in our world.

“THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN”

Doing God’s will in heaven I don’t think will be a problem because once surrounded by the vastness of God’s love, our will and His will be one. But, discerning God’s will on earth is a totally different matter. Prayer, I believe, is the key ingredient that not only allows us to know God’s will, but also to be obedient to His will. The history of Christian spirituality, as we learned in Fr. Joyce’s class, shows us the different types of prayer that can be used to communicate with God. Regardless of the method of prayer used, the end result is to know God’s will and to pray for the grace to follow, and help establish his will here on earth.

“GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD”

It takes a lot of faith and trust to believe that God loves us so much that if we ask Him for our daily bread, He will give it to us. He will meet our material and spiritual needs so God wants us to stop worrying and being preoccupied. Conversely, we who have received many gifts from God have a responsibility to share it with the poor, the homeless and the lonely. We can do that by contributing food and money through the community outreach programs in our parishes. We can volunteer at the Second Harvest Food Bank. We can help feed the hungry and homeless by volunteering at the Emergency Housing Consortium. We can send money to the Christian Children’s Fund, as well as countless other ways that we can give of our time and money to help those in need. Ultimately, we must look to the Holy Eucharist as our daily bread to nourish us and to help us nourish others.

“AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE FORGIVE
THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US”

Jesus forgave us all our trespasses by dying on the cross, so we know our sins have been forgiven and are forgiven the minute we ask God for forgiveness and are sorry for our transgressions. But, in accepting God’s forgiveness, we establish a covenant with God that we in turn will forgive others who hurt us. God wants us to be the first to offer our hands in reconciliation whenever we have been hurt by someone. We must be lovers who are ready to forgive seventy times seven times.

“AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION”

We must be vigilant for Satan will tempt us time and time again the more we are committed to the Lord. We must make a distinction between being tempted and giving in to temptation. Being tempted is not sinful, but we must be vigilant to avoid the occasions of temptation less we fall. We must make a decision of the heart to live and walk with Jesus and the Holy Spirit so that their love will protect us from all temptations.

“BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL”

Deliver us from Satan so that the kingdom, the power and the glory may be ours, as well as the Father’s. We call upon God, our Father, to deliver us from the Evil One who is very much alive and well in our world. Satan does exist in many devious shapes and forms and we can overcome his power only through the love of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. We must sincerely pray to be protected from the Evil One; otherwise, we might be lulled into thinking that his presence is not real and that he is not to be feared.

EPILOGUE

This exercise of writing a commentary on the Lord’s Prayer has been a very humbling experience for me. It has forced me to look at many aspects of my Christian life and to assess the level of my commitment and dedication to my baptismal calling.

Empowered with a deeper understanding of the Lord’s prayer, I have a renewed faith that as I pray the Lord’s prayer from now on, that His will be done, not only on earth but also in my every day life. I plan to use my reflections on the Our Father as a source of meditation during Lent.

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