

The Lord's Prayer: "Our Father"

Our Father

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.

578. What is the origin of the *Our Father*?

2759-2760, 2773

Jesus taught us this Christian prayer for which there is no substitute, the *Our Father*, on the day on which one of his disciples saw him praying and asked him, "Lord, teach us to pray" (*Luke* 11:1). The Church's liturgical tradition has always used the text of Saint Matthew (6:9-13).

"THE SUMMARY OF THE WHOLE GOSPEL"

579. What is the place of the *Our Father* in the Scriptures?

2761-2764, 2774

The *Our Father* is the "summary of the whole Gospel" (Tertullian), "the perfect prayer" (Saint Thomas Aquinas). Found in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount (*Matthew* 5-7), it presents in the form of prayer the essential content of the Gospel.

580. Why is it called the "Lord's Prayer"?

2765-2766, 2775

The *Our Father* is called the "Oratio Dominica", that is, the Lord's Prayer because it was taught to us by the Lord Jesus himself.

581. What place does the *Our Father* have in the prayer of the Church?

2767-2772, 2776

The *Lord's Prayer* is the prayer of the Church *par excellence*. It is "handed on" in Baptism to signify the new birth of the children of God into the divine life. The full meaning of the *Our Father* is revealed in the eucharist since its petitions are based on the mystery of salvation already accomplished, petitions that will be fully heard at the coming of the Lord. The *Our Father* is an integral part of the Liturgy of the Hours.

"OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN"

582. Why can we dare to draw near to God in full confidence?

2777-2778, 2797

Because Jesus, our Redeemer, brings us into the Father's presence and his Spirit makes us his children. We are thus able to pray the *Our Father* with simple and filial trust, with joyful assurance and humble boldness, with the certainty of being loved and heard.

583. How is it possible to address God as "Father"?

2779-2785, 2789, 2798-2800

We can invoke the "Father" because the Son of God made man has revealed him to us and because his Spirit makes him known to us. The invocation, Father, lets us enter into his mystery with an ever-new sense of wonder and awakens in us the desire to act as his children. When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we are therefore aware of our being sons of the Father in the Son.

584. Why do we say "our" Father?

2786-2790, 2801

"Our" expresses a totally new relationship with God. When we pray to the Father, we adore and glorify him with the Son and the Holy Spirit. In Christ we are "his" people and he is "our" God now and for eternity. In fact, we also say "our" Father because the Church of Christ is the communion of a multitude of brothers and sisters who have but "one heart and mind" (Acts 4:32).

585. With what spirit of communion and mission do we pray to God as "our" Father?

2791-2793, 2801

Since praying to "our" Father is a common blessing for the baptized, we feel an urgent summons to join in Jesus' prayer for the unity of his disciples. To pray the "Our Father" is to pray with all people and for all people that they may know the one true God and be gathered into unity.

586. What does the phrase "Who art in heaven" mean?

2794-2796, 2802

This biblical expression does not indicate a place but a way of being: God transcends everything. The expression refers to the majesty, the holiness of God, and also to his presence in the hearts of the just. Heaven, or the Father's house, constitutes our true homeland toward which we are moving in hope while we are still on earth. "Hidden with Christ in God" (*Colossians* 3:3), we live already in this homeland.

THE SEVEN PETITIONS

587. What is the structure of the Lord's Prayer?

2803-2806, 2857

It contains seven petitions made to God the Father. The first three, more God-centered, draw us toward him for his glory; it is characteristic of love to think first of the beloved. These petitions suggest in particular what we ought to ask of him: the sanctification of his Name, the coming of his Kingdom, and the fulfillment of his will. The last four petitions present to the Father of mercies our

wretchedness and our expectations. They ask him to feed us, to forgive us, to sustain us in temptations, and to free us from the Evil One.

588. What does “Hallowed be thy Name” mean?

2807-2812, 2858

To hallow or make holy the Name of God is above all a prayer of praise that acknowledges God as holy. In fact, God revealed his holy Name to Moses and wanted *his* people to be consecrated for him as a holy nation in which he would dwell.

589. How is the Name of God made holy in us and in the world?

2813-2815

To make holy the Name of God, who calls us “to holiness” (*1 Thessalonians* 4:7) is to desire that our baptismal consecration animate our whole life. In addition, it is to ask –with our lives and our prayers – that the Name of God be known and blessed by every man.

590. What does the Church ask for when she prays “Thy Kingdom come”?

2816-2821, 2859

The Church prays for the final coming of the Kingdom of God through Christ’s return in glory. The Church prays also that the Kingdom of God increase from now on through people’s sanctification in the Spirit and through their commitment to the service of justice and peace in keeping with the Beatitudes. This petition is the cry of the Spirit and the Bride: “Come, Lord Jesus” (*Revelation* 22:20).

591. Why pray “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”?

2822-2827, 2860

The will of the Father is that “all men be saved” (*1 Timothy* 2:4). For this Jesus came: to perfectly fulfill the saving will of his Father. We pray God our Father to unite our will to that of his Son after the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints. We ask that this loving plan be fully realized on earth as it is already in heaven. It is through prayer that we can discern “what is the will of God” (*Romans* 12:2) and have the “steadfastness to do it” (*Hebrews* 10:36).

592. What is the sense of the petition “Give us this day our daily bread”?

2828-2834, 2861

Asking God with the filial trust of children for the daily nourishment which is necessary for us all we recognize how good God is, beyond all goodness. We ask also for the grace to know how to act so that justice and solidarity may allow the abundance of some to remedy the needs of others.

593. What is the specifically Christian sense of this petition?

2835-2837, 2861

Since “man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (*Matthew* 4:4), this petition equally applies to hunger for the *Word of God* and for the *Body of Christ* received in the Eucharist as well as hunger for the Holy Spirit. We ask this with complete

confidence for *this day* – God’s “today” – and this is given to us above all in the Eucharist which anticipates the banquet of the Kingdom to come.

594. Why do we say “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”?
2838-2839, 2862

By asking God the Father to pardon us, we acknowledge before him that we are sinners. At the same time we proclaim his mercy because in his Son and through the sacraments “we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (*Colossians* 1:14). Still our petition will be answered only if we for our part have forgiven first.

595. How is forgiveness possible?
2840-2845, 2862

Mercy can penetrate our hearts only if we ourselves learn how to forgive – even our enemies. Now even if it seems impossible for us to satisfy this requirement, the heart that offers itself to the Holy Spirit can, like Christ, love even to love’s extreme; it can turn injury into compassion and transform hurt into intercession. Forgiveness participates in the divine mercy and is a high-point of Christian prayer.

596. What does “Lead us not into temptation” mean?
2846-2849, 2863

We ask God our Father not to leave us alone and in the power of temptation. We ask the Holy Spirit to help us know how to discern, on the one hand, between a *trial* that makes us grow in goodness and a *temptation* that leads to sin and death and, on the other hand, between *being tempted* and *consenting* to temptation. This petition unites us to Jesus who overcame temptation by his prayer. It requests the grace of vigilance and of final perseverance.

597. Why do we conclude by asking “But deliver us from evil”?
2850-2854, 2864

“Evil” indicates the person of Satan who opposes God and is “the deceiver of the whole world” (*Revelation* 12:9). Victory over the devil has already been won by Christ. We pray, however, that the human family be freed from Satan and his works. We also ask for the precious gift of peace and the grace of perseverance as we wait for the coming of Christ who will free us definitively from the Evil One.

598. What is the meaning of the final *Amen*?
2855-2856, 2865

“At the end of the prayer, you say ‘Amen’ and thus you ratify by this word that means ‘so be it’ all that is contained in this prayer that God has taught us.” (Saint Cyril of Jerusalem)