

n. 2759-2865 The 'Our Father' (Matthew 6:9-13)

n. 2759 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.

n. 2760 • In the liturgy a doxology was added:

The Didachê (8.2) has 'for thine is the power and the glory for ever.'(prayed 3 times a day). The Apostolic Constitutions (7.2.41) (380AD) quotes the Didachê and adds 'the kingdom'.

1

n. 2778 'We dare to say': 'parrhesia, straightforward simplicity, filial trust, joyous assurance, humble boldness, the certainty of being loved.'

'Our Father'

• Jesus' Father, and our Father. 'We leave all individualism behind' n. 2792

'Because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"(Galatians 4:6).

'You have received a spirit of adoption.

When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God'(Romans 8:15-16).

'If you are to recite the Our Father well, one thing is necessary: you must not leave the side of the Master who taught it to you.'

(Teresa Way of Perfection 24)

n. 2760 'Jesus not only gives us the words of our filial prayer; at the same time he gives us the Spirit by whom these words become in us "spirit and life".'

2

n. 2794-2796 'who are in heaven'

• The 'Father' to whom we pray is the transcendent 'Father', 'the beyond and the heart of everything'(Teilhard de Chardin).

We are not suggesting that God is somewhere in the heavens distant from us. 'Heaven' is a way of speaking of the dimension of all reality that is sacred, suffused with God's presence. This includes the human heart, and the 'heart' (the sacred and intimate depths) of all reality. We are opening our heart to communion with God, knowing that it is in this communion that we find our true homeland (see n. 2794).

n. 2794 "Our Father who art in heaven" is rightly understood to mean that God is in the hearts of the just, as in his holy temple. At the same time, it means that those who pray should desire the one they invoke to dwell in them'(Augustine On the sermon of the Lord on the mountain 2.5.18).

n. 2796 'The Church is professing that we are God's People, already "seated together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus"(Ephesians 2:6), and "hidden with Christ in God"(Colossians 3:3); yet at the same time "here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling"(2Corinthians 5:2).'

3

n. 2807-2815 'hallowed be your name'

- We want everyone to acknowledge the holiness of God by seeing the fulfillment of God's design for creation.
- We want God to be praised everywhere and by everyone in a creation that clearly radiates the beauty of God.
- We pray that God's powerful Spirit will continue to re-create us and our world.
- We long for the final goal of creation when all is purified and re-created and there is nothing to obscure God's glory.

4

Ephesians 1:4-14

'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ chose us in Christ to be holy and blameless before him in love, destining us for adoption as sons for himself through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved ...

'making known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure that he determined in himself as a plan for the fulness of time, to gather up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth, in him in whom we have obtained an inheritance

(or in whom have been chosen as a special possession), having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will ...

We (Jews and Gentiles together) 'have been marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit, the pledge of our inheritance with a view to redemption as those who are God's possession to the praise of God's glory.'

5

n. 2816-1821 'Your kingdom come.'

Matthew sums up the proclamation of John the Baptist and Jesus in the words: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near'^(3:2; 4:17).

The kingdom of heaven is already present in those who are 'poor in spirit'^(5:3). It follows that the more people respond in delight to the revealed glory of God (the more God's 'name' is hallowed), the more God's kingdom will be present in this world.

It is for this that Jesus is giving his life, and he invites his disciples to share this mission n. 2816 and this prayer. God is present in Jesus, 'Emmanuel'^(1:23). God is to be radiantly and obviously present in the community of Jesus' disciples, which is to be the 'light of the world'^(5:14).

The longing expressed in 'your kingdom come' will be fully satisfied only when all live as Jesus lives, when God is 'all in all'^(1Corinthians 15:28).

6

n. 2822-2827 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'

God does not control the world like a machine. God has chosen to make the carrying out of his will dependent on our free and loving acceptance. Nothing is forced. This part of the prayer corresponds to the call for repentance in Jesus' initial proclamation. It is a prayer that the disciples themselves, and ultimately everyone who comes to know God's self-revelation in Jesus, will allow God's loving design to be done through them. It is a prayer, in other words, that everyone will 'enter the kingdom of heaven' by doing 'the will of my Father in heaven' ^(7:21).

Let us not forget that our ability to obey God is itself a gift: everything comes from divine initiative. This third petition is a plea that God's wonderful design for the world (confer Ephesians 1:5-12), a design made manifest in Jesus, will be effected. This will only finally happen when all creation is reconciled (Colossians 1:20), when there is a 'new heaven and a new earth', and all creation joins in celebrating the wedding feast between God and mankind (Revelation 21:1-3).

7

n. 2822 'Our Father "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"^(1Timothy 2:3-4). He "is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish"^(2Peter 3:9; see Matthew 18:14). His commandment is "that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another"^(John 13:34; see Luke 10:25-37). This commandment summarizes all the others and expresses his entire will.'

n. 2823 "He has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ . . . to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will"^(Ephesians 1:9-11).

We ask insistently for this loving plan to be fully realized on earth as it is already in heaven.'

8

n. 2824 'In Christ, and through his human will, the will of the Father has been perfectly fulfilled once for all. Jesus said on entering into this world: "Lo, I have come to do your will, O God"(Hebrews 10:7; Psalm 40:7). Only Jesus can say: "I always do what is pleasing to him"(John 8:29). In the prayer of his agony, he consents totally to this will: "not my will, but yours be done"(Luke 22:42). For this reason Jesus "gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father"(Galatians 1:4). "And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all"(Hebrews 10:10).'

9

n. 2825 "Although he was a Son, Jesus learned obedience through what he suffered"(Hebrews 5:8). How much more reason have we sinful creatures to learn obedience—we who in him have become children of adoption. 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 radically incapable of this, but united with Jesus and with the power of his Holy Spirit, we can surrender our will to him and decide to choose what his Son has always chosen: to do what is pleasing to the Father (see John 8:29).

10

'In committing ourselves to Christ, we can become one spirit with him, and thereby accomplish his will, in such wise that it will be perfect on earth as it is in heaven'(Origen. On Prayer 26).

'Consider how Jesus Christ] teaches us to be humble, by making us see that our virtue does not depend on our work alone but on grace from on high. He commands each of the faithful who prays to do so universally, for the whole world. For he did not say "your will be done in me or in us," but "on earth," the whole earth, so that error may be banished from it, truth take root in it, all vice be destroyed on it, virtue flourish on it, and earth no longer differ from heaven'(John Chrysostom Homily on Matthew 19:5).'

11

So far the heart of Jesus and the hearts of the disciples have been caught up in contemplation of God, longing that what has become obvious to them of the radiant beauty of God may become obvious to all. Jesus, recognising the frailty of his human condition, now pleads with his Father for three things, and invites us to do the same.

12

n. 2828-2837

'Give us this day our daily bread'

Jesus knows that the bread we need is always 'manna from heaven'.

'You of little faith, why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered?'(Matthew 16:8-10).

God alone has the wisdom to know what 'bread' we really need and God will provide this, but only enough to last us from day to day (Matthew 6:25-34).

The fact that, as early as the first century, the 'our Father' was solemnly recited just prior to the reception of the Eucharist is an indication of how the early church understood 'bread' in this context. The bread of life, the manna from heaven, is, before anything else, Jesus himself given to us while we await our participation in the heavenly banquet.

13

n. 2835 'This petition, with the responsibility it involves, also applies to another hunger from which men are perishing: "Man does not live by bread alone, but ... by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"(Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4), that is, by the Word he speaks and the Spirit he breathes forth. Christians must make every effort "to proclaim the good news to the poor." There is a famine on earth, "not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of YHWH"(Amos 8:11). For this reason the specifically Christian sense of this fourth petition concerns the Bread of Life: The Word of God accepted in faith, the Body of Christ received in the Eucharist (see John 6:26-58).'

15

n. 2831 '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 Christians who pray sincerely to exercise responsibility toward their brethren, both in their personal behaviour and in their solidarity with the human family. This petition of the Lord's Prayer cannot be isolated from the parables of the poor man Lazarus (see Luke 16:19-31) and of the Last Judgment (see Matthew 25:31-46).'

14

n. 2837 "'Daily" (epiousios) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Taken in a temporal sense, this word is a pedagogical repetition of "this day"(see Exodus 16:19-21), to confirm us in trust "without reservation." Taken in the qualitative sense, it signifies what is necessary for life, and more broadly every good thing sufficient for subsistence (see 1 Timothy 6:8). Taken literally (epiousios: "super-essential"), it refers directly to the Bread of Life, the Body of Christ, the "medicine of immortality," without which we have no life within us (see Ignatius of Antioch Letter to the Ephesians 20.2). Finally in this connection, its heavenly meaning is evident: "this day" is the Day of the Lord, the day of the feast of the kingdom, anticipated in the Eucharist that is already the foretaste of the kingdom to come. For this reason it is fitting for the Eucharistic liturgy to be celebrated each day.

16

'The Eucharist is our daily bread. The power belonging to this divine food makes it a bond of union. Its effect is then understood as unity, so that, gathered into his Body and made members of him, we may become what we receive ... This also is our daily bread: the readings you hear each day in church and the hymns you hear and sing. All these are necessities for our pilgrimage'(see Augustine Sermon 57.7).

'The Father in heaven urges us, as children of heaven, to ask for the bread of heaven. Christ himself is the bread who, sown in the Virgin, raised up in the flesh, kneaded in the Passion, baked in the oven of the tomb, reserved in churches, brought to altars, furnishes the faithful each day with food from heaven'(Peter Chrysologus Sermon 67).'

17

Jesus, the sinless one, invites his disciples to make the same request.

This will mean that we have to suffer many injustices (Matthew 5:11)

and continue to give love to those who respond with malice (Matthew 5:44).

God has given us the power to forgive (Matthew 9:8),

and we must exercise it without limit (Matthew 18:22).

This is what is asked of someone who is 'blessed' to be a disciple of Jesus. Only thus, sustained by the daily bread from heaven, can we be instruments to bring about the kingdom of God.

19

n. 2838-2845

'and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us'

It is impossible to repay God for all that God has given us, and so Jesus asks his Father to cast aside the debt. Jesus embraced the human condition. His heart, though beautifully sinless and entirely loving, was still a heart that knew the limitations of the human. In the weakness he shares with all the human race, he asks his Father to keep giving him life, love, the Spirit, and the blessed communion that sustains him, knowing that, as man, he would always be in God's debt. It is this total generosity of God that enables God to not measure the love he offers and to keep giving (keep 'for-giving').

18

n. 2843 'Thus the Lord's words on forgiveness, the love that loves to the end (see John 13:1), become a living reality. The parable of the merciless servant, which crowns the Lord's teaching on ecclesial communion, ends with these words: "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart"(see Matthew 18:23-35). It is there, in fact, "in the depths of the heart," that everything is bound and loosed. It is not in our power not to feel or to forget an offence; but the heart that offers itself to the Holy Spirit turns injury into compassion and purifies the memory in transforming the hurt into intercession.'

20

n. 2846-2854 'and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'

'We ask God not to allow us to take the way that leads to sin'(n. 2846).

This includes a decision of the heart not to go that way (see n. 2848).

The final plea is a cry from the heart that our Father will be powerfully present with his grace, so that when times of trial come we will not fail the test. Jesus remained faithful, and when he was entering the final struggle he warned his disciples once again to pray that they would not enter into evil at the time of trial (Matthew 26:41).

n. 2848

Paul assures us: 'God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it'(1Corinthians 10:13).

We must resist the temptation is to be scandalised in Jesus (Matthew 11:6). If we lose faith in the real Jesus, we will lose faith in the only true God whom he reveals. As Jesus' disciples we are invited to pray, like him, to 'endure to the end'(Matthew 24:13). This can happen only if God 'rescues us from the evil one', as he will rescue Jesus from death by taking him into his eternal embrace in the risen life.

We are reminded of the final words of Paul's last letter: 'The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom'(2Timothy 4:18).

n. 2851 'In this petition, evil is not to an abstraction, but reference to a person, Satan.'