

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

67

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 578-587

THE LORD'S PRAYER – THE OUR FATHER

WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF THE *Our Father* ?

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).

WHAT IS THE PLACE OF THE OUR FATHER IN THE SCRIPTURES ?

The Lord’s Prayer by Harold Copping



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.

WHY IS IT CALLED “THE LORD’S PRAYER” ?

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.

WHAT PLACE DOES THE OUR FATHER HAVE IN THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH ?

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.

WHY CAN WE DARE TO DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN FULL CONFIDENCE ?

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.

HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO ADDRESS GOD AS “FATHER” ?

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.

WHY DO WE SAY “OUR” FATHER ?

“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).

WITH WHAT SPIRIT OF COMMUNION AND MISSION DO WE PRAY TO GOD AS “OUR” FATHER ?

Since praying to “our” Father is a common blessing for the baptised, 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.

WHAT DOES THE PHRASE “WHO ART IN HEAVEN” MEAN ?

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.

WHAT IS THE STRUCTURE OF THE LORD’S PRAYER ?

It contains seven petitions made to God the Father. The first three, more God-centred, 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 fulfilment 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.



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68

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 588 – 598

What does “Hallowed be The Name” mean ?

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.

How is the name of God made holy in us and in the world ?

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 human being.

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

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).

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

The will of the Father is that, “all men be saved” (1 Timothy 2:4). For this Jesus came: to perfectly fulfil 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 realised 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).

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

Asking God with the filial trust of children for the daily nourishment which is necessary for us all we recognise 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.

What is the specifically Christian sense of this petition?

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.

Why do we say, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us” ?

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.

How is forgiveness possible?

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 requirements, 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.

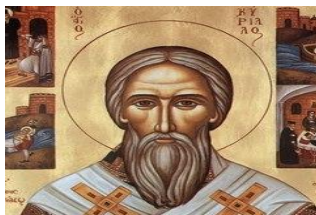
What does “Lead us not into Temptation” mean” ?

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.

Why do we conclude by asking “But deliver us from evil” ?

“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.

What is the meaning of the final Amen ?



“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”: St Cyril of Jerusalem

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69

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 1- 8

WHAT IS THE PLAN OF GOD FOR MAN?

God, infinitely perfect and blessed in Himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in His own blessed life. In the fullness of time, God the Father sent His Son as the Redeemer and Saviour of mankind, fallen into sin, thus calling all into His Church and, through the work of the Holy Spirit, making them adopted children and heirs of His eternal happiness.

MAN'S CAPACITY FOR GOD

WHY DOES MAN HAVE A DESIRE FOR GOD ?

God Himself, in creating man in His own image, has written upon his heart the desire to see Him. Even if this desire is often ignored, God never ceases to draw man to himself because only in God will he find and live the fullness of truth and happiness for which he never stops searching. By nature and by vocation, therefore, man is a religious being, capable of entering into communion with God. This intimate and vital bond with God confers on man his fundamental dignity.



“You are great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised... You have made us for yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in you”. Saint Augustine of Hippo.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO KNOW GOD WITH ONLY THE LIGHT OF HUMAN REASON ?

Starting from creation - that is from the world and from the human person - through reason alone one can know God with certainty as the origin and end of the universe, as the highest good and as infinite truth and beauty.

IS THE LIGHT OF REASON ALONE SUFFICIENT TO KNOW THE MYSTERY OF GOD ?

In coming to a knowledge of God by the light of reason alone man experiences many difficulties. Indeed, on his own he is unable to enter into the intimacy of the divine mystery. This is why he stands in need of being enlightened by God's revelation, not only about those things that exceed this understanding, but also about those religious and moral truths which of themselves are not beyond the grasp of human reason, so that even in the present condition

of the human race, they can be known by all with ease, with firm certainty and with no admixture of error.

HOW CAN WE SPEAK ABOUT GOD ?

By taking as our starting point the perfections of man and of the other creatures which are a reflection, albeit a limited one, of the infinite perfection of God, we are able to speak about God with all people. We must, however, continually purify our language insofar as it is image-bound and imperfect, realising that we can never fully express the infinite mystery of God.

THE REVELATION OF GOD

WHAT DOES GOD REVEAL TO MAN ?

God in His Goodness and Wisdom reveals Himself. With deeds and words, He reveals Himself and His plan of loving goodness which He decreed from all eternity in Christ. According to this plan, all people by the grace of the Holy Spirit are to share in the Divine Life as adopted “sons” in the only begotten Son of God.

WHAT ARE THE FIRST STAGES OF GOD’S REVELATION ?

From the very beginning, God manifested Himself to our first parents, Adam and Eve, and invited them to intimate communion with Himself. After their fall, He did not cease His revelation to them but promised salvation for all their descendants. After the flood, He made a covenant with Noah, a covenant between Himself and all living beings.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STAGES OF GOD’S REVELATION ?



God chose Abram, calling him out of his country, making him “the father of a multitude of nations” (Genesis 17:5), and promising to bless in him “all the nations of the earth” (Genesis 12:3). The people descended from Abraham would be the trustee of the divine promise made to the patriarchs. God formed Israel as His chosen people, freeing them from slavery in Egypt, establishing with them the covenant of Mount Sinai, and, through Moses, giving them His law. The prophets proclaimed a radical redemption of the people and a salvation which would include all nations in a new and everlasting covenant. From the people of Israel and from the house of King David, would be born the Messiah, Jesus.

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70

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 9- 17

WHAT IS THE FULL AND DEFINITIVE STAGE OF GOD'S REVELATION ?

The full and definitive stage of God's Revelation is accomplished in His Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, the mediator and fullness of revelation. He, being the only-begotten Son of God made man, is the perfect and definitive Word of the Father. In the sending of the Son and the gift of the Spirit, Revelation is now fully complete, although the faith of the Church must gradually grasp its full significance over the course of centuries.

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF PRIVATE REVELATIONS ?

While not belonging to the deposit of faith, private revelations may help a person to live the faith as long as they lead us to Christ. The Magisterium of the Church, which has the duty of evaluating such private revelations, cannot accept those which claim to surpass or correct that definitive Revelation which is Christ.

THE TRANSMISSION OF DIVINE REVELATION

WHY AND IN WHAT WAY IS DIVINE REVELATION TRANSMITTED ?

God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4), that is, of Jesus Christ. For this reason, Christ must be proclaimed to all according to His own command, "Go forth and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19). And this is brought about by Apostolic Tradition.



WHAT IS APOSTOLIC TRADITION ?

Apostolic Tradition is the transmission of the message of Christ, brought about from the very beginnings of Christianity by means of preaching, bearing witness, institutions, worship and inspired writings. The apostles transmitted all they received from Christ and learned from the Holy Spirit to their successors, the bishops, and through them to all generations until the end of the world.

IN WHAT WAYS DOES APOSTOLIC TRADITION OCCUR ?

Apostolic Tradition occurs in two ways: through the living transmission of the Word of God (also simply called Tradition) and through Sacred Scripture which is the same proclamation of salvation in written form.

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRADITION AND SACRED SCRIPTURE ?

Tradition and Sacred Scripture are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. Each of them makes present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ. They flow out of the same divine well-spring and together make up one sacred deposit of faith from which the Church derives her certainty about revelation.

TO WHOM IS THE DEPOSIT OF FAITH ENTRUSTED ?

The Apostles entrusted the deposit of faith to the whole of the Church. Thanks to its supernatural sense of faith the people of God as a whole, assisted by the Holy Spirit and guided by the Magisterium of the Church, never ceases to welcome, to penetrate more deeply and to live more fully from the gift of divine revelation.

TO WHOM IS GIVEN THE TASK OF AUTHENTICALLY INTERPRETING THE DEPOSIT OF FAITH ?

The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the deposit of faith has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone, that is, to the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome, and to the bishops in communion with him. To this Magisterium, which in the service of the Word of God enjoys the certain charism of truth, belongs also the task of defining dogmas which are formations of the truth contained in Divine Revelation. This authority of the magisterium also extends to those truths necessarily connected with Revelation.

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCRIPTURE, TRADITION AND THE MAGISTERIUM ?

Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium are so closely united with each other that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.

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71

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 18- 24

SACRED SCRIPTURE

WHY DOES SACRED SCRIPTURE TEACH THE TRUTH ?

Because God Himself is the author of Sacred Scripture. For this reason it is said to be inspired and to teach without error those truths which are necessary for our salvation. The Holy Spirit inspired the human authors who wrote what He wanted to teach us. The Christian faith, however, is not a “religion of the Book,” but of the Word of God – “not a written and mute word, but incarnate and living” (Saint Bernard of Clairvaux).



HOW IS SACRED SCRIPTURE TO BE READ ?

Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted with the help of the Holy Spirit and under the guidance of the Magisterium of the Church according to three criteria:

1. It must be read with attention to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture;
2. It must be read within the living Tradition of the Church;
3. It must be read with attention to the analogy of faith, that is, the inner harmony which exists among the truths of the faith themselves.

WHAT IS THE *CANON* OF SCRIPTURE ?

The Canon of Scripture is the complete list of the sacred writings which the Church has come to recognise through Apostolic Tradition. The Canon consists of 46 books of the Old Testament and 27 of the New.

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT FOR CHRISTIANS ?

Christians venerate the Old Testament as the true Word of God. All of the books of the Old Testament are divinely inspired and retain a permanent value. They bear witness to the Divine Pedagogy (teaching) of God's saving love. They are written, above all, to prepare for the coming of Christ the Saviour of the universe.

WHAT IMPORTANCE DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT HAVE FOR CHRISTIANS ?

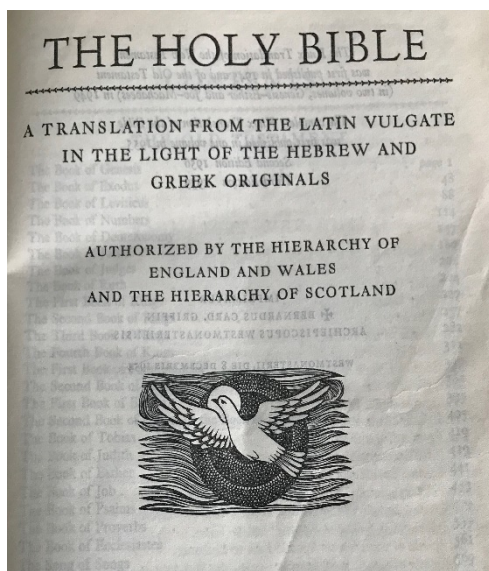
The New Testament, whose central object is Jesus Christ, conveys to us the ultimate truth of Divine Revelation. Within the New Testament the four Gospels of Mathew, Mark, Luke and John are the heart of all the Scriptures because they are the principle witness to the life and teaching of Jesus. As such, they hold a unique place in the Church.

WHAT IS THE UNITY THAT EXISTS BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW TESTAMENTS ?

Scripture is ONE insofar as the Word of God is ONE. God's plan of salvation is ONE, and the divine inspiration of both Testaments is ONE. The Old Testament prepares for the New and the New Testament fulfils the Old; the two shed light on each other.

WHAT ROLE DOES SACRED SCRIPTURE PLAY IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH ?

Sacred Scripture gives support and vigour to the life of the Church. For the children of the Church, it is a confirmation of the faith, food for the soul and the fount of the spiritual life. Sacred Scripture is the soul of theology and of pastoral preaching. The Psalmist says that it is "a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). The Church, therefore, exhorts all to read Sacred Scripture frequently because "ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ" (Saint Jerome).



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