

RCIA: SESSION TWENTY THREE
3rd Scrutiny
Catechesis on the Lord's Prayer
Week: 20/03/23 - 27/03/23

Catechism References: #2759-2865

Church Documents

Scripture

Matthew 6:9-13

Luke 11:2-4

Catechesis on the Lord's Prayer

Pope Francis, General Audiences, 5 December 2018 through to 22 May 2019

Pope Francis, General Audience, 9 December 2020

Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus, 25 July 2010

Pope Francis – Our Father – Reflections on the Lord's Prayer, March, 2018

Video Resources

Understanding the 'Our Father – Dr. Scott Hahn – Deep in History

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9UHyePeBxs> (1:10:26)

Bishop Robert Barron on The Lord's Prayer (8mins 33secs)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mmPI-SYBE>

Dr. Brandt Pitre – 'Lead us Not into Temptation'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BEArq_ogftQ (5mins 36secs)

INTRODUCTION

From the early days of the church, the Lord's Prayer has occupied a special place in the life of Christians. The second-century Didache, one of the earliest Christian documents outside the New Testament, commanded that the Our Father should be said by Christians three times a day, an imitation of the Jewish practice of reciting the Shema Israel three times daily.

By the fourth century, the Our Father was included before Communion in the liturgies of both East and West. In the baptismal documents of the fourth and fifth centuries we find that the both the creed and the Lord's Prayer were formally presented to catechumens near the end of their formation, not only because these two texts are foundational prayers of the community, but also to prepare them directly for their baptism and first sharing in Communion. The prayer that Jesus taught his disciples has deep connections to the eucharistic celebration, and still today finds a natural place in the rites not only of Catholics but of nearly all Christian churches.

In summary

- The Lord's Prayer, like the eucharistic liturgy itself, is fundamentally communal, the prayer of brothers and sisters of Jesus, people of common origin who dare to address God as "Abba."
- It looks forward to the "supper of the Lamb." The Eucharist is itself a foretaste of the eternal banquet that awaits us in the coming reign of God. The Lord's Prayer is strongly oriented to the fulfilment of all things and the coming of God's reign as we pray, "Your kingdom come" and "Save us from the time of trial."
- We pray for "daily bread." From early times, Christians connected this petition of the Lord's Prayer not only to ordinary sustenance but to the eucharistic feast. In our prayer for daily bread, we express our utter dependence on God.
- We seek and offer forgiveness. In the Eucharist we remember the Paschal Mystery of Christ, by which he has brought about reconciliation. As we prepare to approach the holy table, we express our need for forgiveness and pledge ourselves to share in the work of reconciliation.

PETITIONS

One of the main reasons the Lord's Prayer holds primacy in our faith and is prayed each week in the liturgy is that Jesus himself taught us the prayer. After the initial address to the Father, the prayer itself is composed of seven petitions. There are three "thy-petitions" (thy name, thy kingdom, thy will) followed by four "us-petitions" (give us, forgive us, lead us not and deliver us). In order to better understand the Lord's Prayer, it is important to briefly examine each petition.

“Our Father, who art in heaven...”

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he did not teach them to pray “My Father,” but rather “Our Father.” This reminds us that we are God’s sons and daughters together in Christ. It is only as the body of Christ that we can pray to God as Father. In teaching us to call God “Father,” Jesus also tells us that we have the privilege to call God by the same name he used in his intimate relationship with the Father.

“Hallowed be thy name...”

In the first petition, we are asking that God’s name would be “hallowed” or sanctified. Objectively speaking, God’s name is already holy, but the prayer is asking that God make his name holy to all people through his works and deeds. (See Ezekiel 36:22-27; Genesis 16:13; Genesis 21:33; Jeremiah 23:6).

“Thy kingdom come...”

The second petition has a twofold meaning. First, we are praying for the coming of the kingdom of God here and now in our everyday lives. At the same time, we are also praying for Christ’s glorious return at the end of time and the final coming of the reign of God. According to Mark, Jesus launches his public ministry by announcing, “The kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news” (Mark 1:14-15).

“Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...”

The third petition asks God that our will be conformed to his divine will. When Jesus was praying to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, he also used the words “thy will be done.” When we pray “thy will be done” (Lk. 22:41-42) we commit ourselves to following Jesus by taking up our cross.

“Give us this day, our daily bread...”

In the fourth petition, “give us” expresses our trust in our heavenly Father. “Our daily bread” refers to our earthly nourishment that is necessary to physically sustain us throughout the day and the Bread of Life (the Word of God and the Body of Christ) that spiritually nourishes us. As Catholics, we are privileged to receive the “Bread of Life” daily in the Mass.

“Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us...”

All people have sinned against God (Romans 3:23). In the fifth petition, we beg for God’s mercy for the times that we have fallen short of loving God and loving our neighbour. We acknowledge that the Father’s mercy and forgiveness are able to penetrate our hearts to the extent that we are able to forgive our enemies. In confessing our sins to God, we acknowledge this truth with the confidence of those who are assured of God’s gracious forgiveness (1 John 1:8-9).

As we ask God to forgive “us,” collectively asking for the forgiveness of the sin of all people, we confess that we are called to forgive those who sin against us as well. As Christians, we regularly sin against God, and we sin against other people as well. In Matthew 22:37-39, Jesus tells us that the greatest command is to love God, and “a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’” In this verse, we are called to lives of love and forgiveness. As God has forgiven us, so are we to forgive others (Colossians 3:13).

“Lead us not into temptation...”

Some people wonder why we would ask God not to lead us into temptation. The Epistle of James states (1:13), “No one, when tempted, should say, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one.” The letter of St. James clearly says that God does not tempt us with evil. Therefore, in this petition, we are asking that God does not allow us to take the path that leads to sin. We are praying to avoid the near occasion of sin.

“But deliver us from evil...”

Closely tied to the previous prayer, in this final petition, we are asking God to protect us from evil. The Catechism teaches that the “evil” in this petition is not an abstract evil, but actually “refers to a person, Satan, the Evil One, the angel who opposes God” (CCC, 2851). While we acknowledge the reality of the devil, we place our trust in Christ and his definitive victory over evil on the cross.

“Amen!”

After praying all of these petitions, we end by affirming our belief in all that we have prayed by saying “Amen” or “So be it!”

Gospel Reflection: Sunday 26/03/23 is the Fifth Sunday of Lent and the Gospel reading is John 11:1-45. The text of the reading is below. The following format will be used for all Gospel reflections:

- Read the text aloud.
- Pause for a minute’s silence.
- Read the text aloud again.
- Ask everyone to pick a word or a phrase that struck them. They just say the word or phrase without comment or discussion.
- Read the text again.
- Ask those present to comment on their word or phrase. What struck them about it? Why/how is it speaking to them?
- Continue with the discussion. The following questions may be helpful: What does this mean to me? How does it make me feel? Did I find the text disturbing/hopeful/confusing? What images of God emerge for me? What do I think that God is saying in this text? What impact does this have on my life?

GOSPEL READING

Reader: The Lord be with you.

Response: And with your spirit.

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

Response: Glory to you, O Lord.

There was a man named Lazarus who lived in the village of Bethany with the two sisters, Mary and Martha, and he was ill. It was the same Mary, the sister of the sick man Lazarus, who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair. The sisters sent this message to Jesus, ‘Lord, the man you love is ill.’ On receiving the message, Jesus said, ‘This sickness will end not in death but in God’s glory, and through it the Son of God will be glorified.’

Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, yet when he heard that Lazarus was ill he stayed where he was for two more days before saying to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judaea.' The disciples said, 'Rabbi, it is not long since the Jews wanted to stone you; are you going back again?' Jesus replied:

'Are there not twelve hours in the day?
A man can walk in the daytime without stumbling
because he has the light of this world to see by;
but if he walks at night he stumbles,
because there is no light to guide him.'

He said that and then added, 'Our friend Lazarus is resting, I am going to wake him.' The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he is able to rest he is sure to get better.' The phrase Jesus used referred to the death of Lazarus, but they thought that by 'rest' he meant 'sleep', so Jesus put it plainly, 'Lazarus is dead; and for your sake I am glad I was not there because now you will believe. But let us go to him.' Then Thomas – known as the Twin – said to the other disciples, 'Let us go too, and die with him.'

On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days already. Bethany is only about two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to sympathise with them over their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus had come she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the house. Martha said to Jesus, 'If you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know that, even now, whatever you ask of God, he will grant you.' 'Your brother' said Jesus to her 'will rise again.' Martha said, 'I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said:

'I am the resurrection and the life.
If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live,
and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.
Do you believe this?'

'Yes, Lord,' she said 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world.'

When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in a low voice, 'The Master is here and wants to see you.' Hearing this, Mary got up quickly and went to him. Jesus had not yet come into the village; he was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were in the house sympathising with Mary saw her get up so quickly and go out, they followed her, thinking that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

Mary went to Jesus, and as soon as she saw him she threw herself at his feet, saying, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' At the sight of her tears, and those of the Jews who followed her, Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart, 'Where have you put him?' They said, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept; and the Jews said, 'See how much he loved him!' But there were some who remarked, 'He opened the eyes of the blind man, could he not have prevented this man's death?' Still sighing, Jesus reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. Jesus said, 'Take the stone away.' Martha said to him, 'Lord, by now he will smell; this is the fourth day.' Jesus replied, 'Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said:

'Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer.
I knew indeed that you always hear me,
but I speak for the sake of all these who stand round me,
so that they may believe it was you who sent me.'

When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, here! Come out!' The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound with bands of stuff and a cloth round his face. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, let him go free.'

Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and had seen what he did believed in him.

Appendix 1

The Presentation of the Lord's Prayer

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Readings

HOMILY

INVITATION TO SILENT PRAYER FOR ELECT

After the homily, the elect with their godparents come forward and stand before the celebrant. The celebrant first addresses the assembly of the faithful, inviting them to pray in silence and to ask that the elect will be given a spirit of repentance, a sense of sin, and the true freedom of the children of God:

Celebrant: Today the Church calls the Elect to conversion.
To deepen their resolve to hold fast to Christ
and to carry out the decision to love God above all.
Let us all pray at this time in silence for them
to be given a spirit of repentance,
a sense of sin
and strength of will to live in true freedom as children of
God.

The celebrant then addresses the elect, inviting them also to pray in silence and suggesting that as a sign of their inner spirit of repentance they bow their heads or kneel; he concludes his remarks with the following or similar words:

Celebrant: My dear Elect,
I invite you to join your prayers to this community of faith,
and to bow your heads [kneel] as we intercede to God on
your behalf.

The elect bow their heads [kneel], and all pray for some time in silence. After the period of silent prayer, the community and the elect stand for the intercessions.

INTERCESSIONS FOR THE ELECT

Celebrant: Let us pray for these elect whom God has chosen.
May the grace of the sacraments conform them to Christ in his passion and resurrection and enable them to triumph over the bitter fate of death.

Deacon, Lector, or another minister:

That faith may strengthen them against worldly deceits of every kind.

Lord, hear us.

That they may always thank God, who has chosen to rescue them from their ignorance of eternal life and to set them on the way of salvation.

Lord, hear us.

That the example and prayers of catechumens who have shed their blood for Christ may encourage these elect in their hope of eternal life.

Lord, hear us.

That they may all have a horror of sin, which distorts life. **Lord, hear us.**

That those who are saddened by the death of family or friends may find comfort in Christ. **Lord, hear us.**

That we, too, at Easter may again be confirmed in our hope of rising to life with Christ. **Lord, hear us.**

That the whole world, which God has created in love, may flower in faith and charity and so receive new life. **Lord, hear us.**

EXORCISM

After the intercessions, the Celebrant faces the elect and, with hands joined, says:

Celebrant: Father of life and God not of the dead but of the living,
you sent your Son to proclaim life,
to snatch us from the realm of death,

and to lead us to the resurrection.

Free these elect
from the death-dealing power of the spirit of evil,
so that they may bear witness
to their new life in the risen Christ,
for he lives and reigns for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Here, if this can be done conveniently, the celebrant lays hands on each one of the elect.

Then, with hands outstretched over all the elect, he continues:

Celebrant: Lord Jesus,
by raising Lazarus from the dead
you showed that you came that we might have life
and have it more abundantly.

Free from the grasp of death
those who await your life-giving sacraments
and deliver them from the spirit of corruption.

Through your Spirit, who gives life,
fill them with faith, hope, and charity,
that they may live with you always
in the glory of your resurrection,
for you are Lord for ever and ever.

All: Amen

DISMISSAL OF THE ELECT

The celebrant dismisses the elect in these or similar words.

Celebrant: My dear Elect, go in peace,
and may the Lord remain with you always.

Elect: **Amen.**

OR

Celebrant: **Although you cannot yet participate fully in the Lord's eucharist, stay with us as a sign of our hope that all God's children will eat and drink with the Lord and work with his Spirit to re-create the face of the earth.**

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The liturgy of the eucharist then begins as usual with the preparation of the gifts.