

Consult *Word of the Week* on Prayer

XVI. The Lord's Prayer: Offered on the Sermon on the Mount, Christ pre-empts His teaching on prayer by instructing us how to “become who we are” in our human potentiality by living in the new law—the beatitudes. Therefore, it follows that if we were to live in communion with him on a daily basis he would direct us in the ways of how to be in a deeper interior communion with the Father. As we pray “*in the Spirit*”, our dialogue with God ought to awaken from the heart with our hopes, joys, and sufferings (Rom.8.12-30). Pope Benedict XVI, in *Jesus of Nazareth*, noted that Jesus' ministry was “*awakened and sustained by his prayer*”. Thus, our own catechesis and ministry should be sustained in prayer (Benedict, Pgs.128-135). Remember, to neglect prayer is to neglect ministry.

1. (CCC, 2777-2802) Our Father Who Art in heaven : The incarnation reveals that God is “Father”, “Abba”, “Papa” or “Daddy”, and in this filial title we receive the gift that the Father knows what to give (Mt.7.9; Lk.11.13)—the gift of God as Father! What is the meaning of Father in light of God as Creator, Physician, and Lawgiver? We are sharers of sonship through our Baptism. Our common sonship beckons the petition our in the Pater Noster.

A. Here we begin to realize that prayer is about letting go of our wishes and being conformed to the will of the Father as a child of God (1 Jn.3.1).

B. In Christ's address of “our” Father it demands that we step out of the “I” and seek out salvation through communion with God in his sacramental and mystical body--the Church.

1. The principle of relationality and being other-centered.

2. (CCC, 2807-2815)Hallowed Be Thy Name: The first petition draws the reader to consider more carefully the second commandment: Thou shalt not speak the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

A. God's response to Moses “I am who I am”— “*God is without any qualification*” (Benedict, 143).

1. The Israelite expression of God YHWH is a response to the inexhaustible mystery that is the unutterable. His essence cannot be reduced to finite names or realities.

2. To address a person by name is an invocation and therefore establishes relationship between persons. In the Incarnation, God manifests his name to men (Jn.17.6) (Benedict, 144).

a. He is not holy because we call him holy. He is holy because this is his essential identity (consider sacrifice—the highest demand)—holiness. Fatherhood lived in sacrifice equal holiness! A good father demands of his child more than a boss, teacher, or even a judge could ever demand. He demands sacrifice in all vocations!

3. (CCC, 2816-2821) Thy Kingdom Come: “Seek *the Kingdom of God and righteousness and all these things shall be yours*” (Mt.6.33). The Pope opens up with this statement to reinforce that where God is absent nothing can be good and where God is present therein lays justice and holiness...the identity of all three dimensions (Benedict, 48-51).

A. First dimension: Christological: a person not a thing

B. Second dimension: Interior: God reigning in our hearts (peace): The interior Kingdom begins and ends with the movement of the heart and the capacity to listen.

C. Third dimension: Ecclesiastical: The Church as the Kingdom of God. The Greek *basileia* translates the Hebrew *mulkart*, which means ‘active lordship; regal function’ (122 times in the NT).

1. “*The Kingdom is present invisible and veiled sacramentally*”-PBXVI

4. (CCC, 2822, 2827) Thy Will be done on Earth as It Is in Heaven: When we assimilate our intellect and will with the Father's plan for our lives, we participate in the heavenly Jerusalem here on earth. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: “*The essence of heaven is oneness with God's will*” (Benedict, 147). Our goal here on earth is to give glory to God and transform earth to heaven. We must not resist the mighty force of the Spirit just as we would not resist the mighty force of a great hurricane (remember the dynamua).

A. “Anchored” in the innermost part of our being is the “participation of knowing” God's design for us--we call that conscience. This conscience is dulled due to sin, but because our being is created by God His will resides in our heart (Benedict, 148).

1. God's blueprint for our lives is the Decalogue and the beatitudes.

B. The unity of Jesus will with his Father's will is the “*foundation of his very life and the core of his very being*” (Benedict, 149). This unity defines and shapes who Jesus is and what he is to establish; the Church and its sacramental life.

1. “*My food is to do the Father's will*” (Jn.4.34). Christ as the bread of heaven is the food in which we sustain our will with accordance of God's will (Benedict, 150).

5. (CCC, 2828-2837) Give us this day our Daily Bread: In this fourth petition, Christ calls us to pray for our daily needs and turn our care over to the heavenly Father (Mt.6.25).

A. St. Cyprian makes a few key points to the *our* in “Our bread”. In this *our*, God calls us into the knowing of God through and in relationality. We discover who we are in light of relationships, becoming “spiritual” food for one another. Cyprian also claims that this draws us into a deeper relationship to those who are in need of bread, the material impoverished (religious element) (Benedict, 152)

B. “Daily”, this portion of the petition evokes more of the sacramental piece. The Greek *epiousios*, means, “What is necessary for existence” and speaks to the food of the new world, the new dispensation of grace in the sacramental Church, which is a provision of the heavenly banquet (Rev.19.7).

1. Consider apostolic piece...the journey was daily!

C. “Our...Bread”, we ask for our bread because we pray to our Father. This filial boldness is what the Father calls us to (cf. Mt.7.9).

1. In the ancient world, bread was a sign of kingdom prosperity. When the Kingdom was doing well in its selling of goods, winning battles, the kingdom would receive ample rations of bread. Isaiah highlights how the banquet of the Kingdom of David under the anointed Son of David would supply an even greater mass of bread rations.

2. “Our Bread” in early Christian Christianity meant not only material needs but also the superabundance of spiritual needs. “Our Bread” in common speech was the Eucharist (cf. Acts 2.42). The words of Jesus in the gospel of John were resonating with the people.

6. (CCC, 2838-2845) And Forgive Us Our Trespasses, as We Forgive Those Who trespass Against us: *“The fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer presupposes a world in which there is trespass in relation to God: a violation and injury against God who is absolute Love and Truth...this petition is telling us that we can overcome the guilt of transgression by and through forgiveness”* (Benedict 157).

A. “Forgive them they know not what they do” (Lk.23.34.)...A participation in the love of God. We must recognize forgiveness for what it is! We must realize that “guilt is an objective force” that can be overcome by way of forgiveness.

1. This process of transformation and healing includes both parties and must recognize the mystery of the Cross-and the victory over sin and death. This petition is highly Christological!

7. (CCC 2846-2849) And Lead Us Not into Temptation: *“God does not tempt but the devil”* (Jas.1.13). Jesus was tempted by the devil so that he could aid on our behalf in overcoming evil (Heb.2.18).

A. 1 Cor.10.13: We must be ready to accept and embrace the burden of trials that *“is meted to us...and the object of our petition is not to mete out to us more than we can handle”* (Benedict, 164).

1. This verse from Paul reminds us that even the most severe temptations are bearable when we turn to God for help and look for escape route that he promises to provide for us (St. Francis...Padre Pio). Essentially, Paul leaves no room for excuses!

2. God is love, in eternity this love is the inner life of the Trinity, in time it is sacrificial, life giving! What accompanies freedom is the opportunity

to ascend the heights of Christian perfection but also it can lead to the peril of man—we must decide for Christ. Like gold we shine more brightly when we overcome temptation

8. (CCC, 2850-2854) But Deliver Us from Evil: Closely connected to the last petition that exclaims “*Father, save us!*” St. Cyprian reminds us that the last petition is the finest petition because if we truly pray this petition from the heart than we are under the shelter of his providence...note prudence

A. If we lose sight of God entirely than we become a “*random product of evolution*” (Benedict, 166)—culture of death for illustration! We must see that God is the ultimate Good and that any loss of goods should provoke more prayer and faith not despair (Benedict, 166). Here consider the words of Paul: “...*where sin arises, grace abounds all the more*” (Rom.5.20).

B. Most importantly, the last petition brings us back to the first three and unites us to the Father's will.