

The *Our Father*, also referred to as *The Lord's Prayer*

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. Amen

Our Heavenly Father's love for us

Jesus gave us this prayer so that we could know joy in continually praising our Heavenly Father. Jesus also wanted us to experience peace through asking the Father for everything that we need. He knows the most important things in life that will bring us true joy and peace and He is continually faithful. As we speak with Our Heavenly Father each day in prayer, we will come to recognize more and more how much He loves us.

Why do we want to pray the Our Father every day?

- 1) To come to know God as our loving Father.
- 2) To become more aware of how much our Heavenly Father loves us.
- 3) To experience peace by asking Our Heavenly Father for everything that we need.
- 4) To understand the qualities and goodness of fatherhood at its finest. A father should be strong yet gentle, firm but understanding, merciful and forgiving. A father is to provide, protect, guide and teach his children. Above all, a father is called to love each of his children unconditionally and with understanding. And he finds joy in being a father. Our Heavenly Father is all perfect which means that He has all of these qualities.



Meaning of the Words

- There are seven petitions in the *Our Father*. The first three petitions carry our thoughts toward Our Heavenly Father, for His own sake. He desires that we come to Him in prayer. We should think first of the Person of God the Father before asking for what we need.
- **Our Father:** We can call God "Father" because through Jesus' death and Resurrection, our sins have been forgiven and we have become His children through Baptism.
- **Who art in Heaven:** Heaven refers to God's presence in our hearts here on earth, but we will experience the fullness of the perfect love of God in the true homeland toward which we are journeying.
- **Hallowed by Thy Name:** In the first petition we pray that His name will always be held holy by using our Heavenly Father's name with reverence.
- **Thy Kingdom come:** In the second petition we pray for our personal growth in the Kingdom of God through living in accordance with His will; we pray for Christ's return at the end of time.
- **Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven:** In the third petition we ask our Father to unite our will to that of Jesus, so that we may live as children of God.
- The final four petitions present our needs and desires to the Lord: "they ask that our lives be nourished, healed of sin, and made victorious in the struggle of good over evil." (CCC, 2857)

- **Give us our daily bread:** By saying **give us**, we express our trust in our Heavenly Father that He will give us what we need to live now and later with Him in Heaven. **Our daily bread** refers to the food we need, and most especially to the Holy Eucharist – receiving Jesus Himself in Holy Communion.
- **And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us:** In essence, we are asking God to forgive us for our sins and to help us forgive others. Forgiveness is essential in the Christian life.
- **Lead us not into temptation:** We are imploring God to protect us from the temptations of the enemy, Satan – the father of lies – who seeks to lead us away from God, and down the path that leads to misery and sin. This petition seeks the power of the grace of the Holy Spirit for guidance, strength and ongoing vigilance.
- **But deliver us from evil:** In the last petition we are asking God to keep us safe in His love by helping us make good choices.
- **Amen:** We close our prayer with “Amen” that expresses our “yes” concerning the seven petitions. (For further explanation, see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, hereafter CCC paragraphs 2777 – 2802)



Learning the Principles

- Our Heavenly Father created us in His image. He made a part of us that, like Him, will never die. This part is called a soul. Because we have a soul, we have the power to think, the power to choose and the power to love. Further, our earthly parents cooperated with God to bring us into existence.
- When God made us in His image, He opened up many treasures for us. Our greatest treasure is God Himself. He is always with us. He knows everything about us: who we are, what we do, and even our thoughts. He loves us far more than anyone else loves us. He gave each of us a soul so we could love Him in return.
- Our Heavenly Father loves each person completely. God was thinking of you, loving you, and wanting you from all eternity. God our Father only wants what is best for you. In the Bible, He tells us, “I will never forget you. See, upon the palms of My hands I have written your name.” (Isaiah 49:15b-16a)
- The Our Father, also called the Lord’s Prayer, is a prayer recorded in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. It is Jesus’ response to His disciple’s request, “Lord, teach us [how] to pray.”
- “The Lord’s Prayer is truly the Summary of the whole Gospel” – it is the most perfect of prayers, and is at the center of the Scriptures. In it we ask not only for the things we desire, but also in the order in which they should be desired. (See CCC 2761)
- The Lord’s Prayer is important, because it comes to us directly from Christ, and as such is a model for how we are to pray – most especially – to pray with meaning, from the heart.
- Our Heavenly Father is a Divine Person. He is pure Spirit and therefore does not have a body. In Sacred Art God our Father is portrayed as a grandfather to help us think about our Heavenly Father; but He is not a grandfather nor is that what He looks like.
- “Jesus revealed that God is Father in an unheard-of sense: He is Father not only in being Creator; He is eternally Father in relation to His only Son, who is eternally Son only in relation

to His Father: ‘No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.’” (CCC 240; Matthew 11:27)

- Prayer is a vital necessity. Prayer and the Christian life are inseparable. (CCC 2744-2745) In other words, when we pray with our heart, we come to know our Heavenly Father, personally and deeply. As this friendship with Him grows, we recognize more and more how much He loves us and how much we love Him. From this love, received and given, we respond from a natural desire to be one with Him in all things, and live our lives in a way that is reflective of His own. This brings much peace and joy to ourselves and those around us.
- *The Lord’s Prayer* is the title that early Christians gave to the prayer which Jesus entrusted to His disciples and to the Church. (*Catechism Glossary*, p. 886)

Activities

- Pray the *Our Father* every day and at every opportunity.
- Pray with your heart; not just rattling words. “Prayer is internalized to the extent that you become aware of Him ‘to whom we speak.’” (CCC 2700, 2704) In the case of the *Our Father*, you are speaking with the Person of our Heavenly Father. If you become aware that you are distracted and not really addressing the words of the prayer to the Person of our Father, simply re-focus and then continue. Don’t waste time getting frustrated; simply re-focus and continue.
- Make a request of our Father for a specific need, such as healing for a sick child, help to find a good job, rain for the farmers, safe travel in a storm, etc. When a prayer is answered, it makes faith come alive and will help you to deepen your relationship with Him. At a time when you have a specific prayer that was answered, it is most helpful for you to write it down, in order to remember it in the future, and then possibly relate it to a trusted friend.
 - One thing you can be sure of is that God always answers every prayer. The answer might be “yes”, the answer could be “no”, or the answer could be “not yet” because God knows there is a “right timing” involved and that timing has not yet come. Sometimes the answer is “yes” because God knows that what you are praying for is for your good. Sometimes, the answer to your prayer might be “no” because sometimes you pray for something that you think will be the best thing for you, while indeed, you are wrong. Thank goodness the answer from God is sometimes ‘no,’ if what you are asking for is not good for you. And sometimes the answer to your prayer is “not yet” because God’s timing is always perfect. For example: He knows that you need a more mature disposition of heart in order to receive the answer. Further, this could also include the hearts of other persons as well as circumstances surrounding the situation. When you seemingly don’t receive an answer because of God’s perfect timing, you need to remember the importance of patience.
 - The answer to prayer may also come in the form of silence, which is also guidance for you from the Lord. A lesson to learn from this situation – feeling like God is not responding over a long period of time – is to grow in your trust of our Father; that He always wants what is best for you. God is always good even when the circumstances around you are seemingly difficult and last much longer than you want them to. The “Good News” is that “God is shaping all things together for good for those who love



Him.” (Romans 8:28) It is the very nature of Who He is. Nothing in the world can change that; you want to hold onto this truth with your whole heart for the duration.

- God our Father desires a relationship with you. You don't want to just ask for good things from God with no desire to speak with Him and develop a friendship with Him.

Spiritual Comprehension – Do they understand?

- The *Our Father* is the prayer that you will want to know by heart and with good understanding before you decide to go deeper with another prayer. Plan to spend an entire year praying it every day.

Encountering Our Heavenly Father in Prayer

- Take some time to quiet down interiorly. Slowly pray the *Our Father*. Pick out a phrase or two from the Prayer. For example: “hallowed be Thy Name.” Repeat these words over and over again slowly. Think about how these words relate to our Father and His love and care for you. Have a heart-to-Heart conversation with Him about something that is weighing on your heart. This takes prayer to the next level of a deep personal encounter. Another helpful step is to write down some notes about the prayer experience for future reference.
- Sometimes, after praying the *Our Father*, allow time for journaling your thoughts or feelings or desires or problems or intentions etc.
- Since the *Our Father* is focused on our Heavenly Father, you will want to pray this prayer with deep respect and love for Him, which will lead to deeper friendship with Him and adoration of Him each time you recite it.
- Ponder the words of the *Our Father*, repeating them slowly, over and over again, quietly, with a listening heart. In this peaceful, slow repetition, you will be drawn deeper and deeper into the love of our Heavenly Father.

Scriptural References about Our Heavenly Father

- Jesus said, "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' "The unbelievers are always running after these things. **Your Heavenly Father** knows that you need all these things” (Matthew 6:31-32).
- Jesus said, "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, **your Heavenly Father** will also forgive you. "But if you do not forgive others, then **your Father** will not forgive your transgressions. (Matthew 6:14-15)
- Jesus said, "For whoever does the will of **My Father who is in Heaven**, he is My brother and sister and mother." (Matthew 12:50)
- Jesus said, “If you really knew Me, you would know **My Father** also” (John 14:7).
- Jesus said, "Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will **your Father** who is in Heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:9-11)
- For this reason, I bow my knees before **the Father**, from whom every family in Heaven and on earth derives its name.” (Ephesians 3:14-15)

