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About the Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer (the Our Father) appears in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. We pray the expanded version from Matthew 6:9-13. It is part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus summarizes his proclamation of the gospel, or Good News. In the same way, the Lord's Prayer is at the heart of this sermon because it can be said to summarize the whole gospel.

With this prayer, we enter into communion with the Father and with Jesus, who has revealed him to us. Praying this prayer helps us to develop the will to become as humble and trusting as Jesus.

In the Lord's Prayer, we praise and glorify God and petition for what we need. There are seven petitions. The first three are addressed to God and draw us to him for his own sake: thy name, thy kingdom, thy will! The last four concern us and our needs that the Father fulfills: give us, forgive us, lead us not, deliver us.

Our Daily Bread

The petition in the Lord's Prayer to give us our daily bread has several layers of meaning. The most obvious is to express our need for food. There is no point in asking for anything else if we do not have the food that will keep us alive, so we ask for food before we ask for anything else. This is a petition, to be rescued from hunger, and since hunger itself has many layers of meaning, the petition is a rich one. We hunger for food, but we also hunger for peace, we hunger for equality, we hunger for justice for all. To ask for our daily bread is to ask that our hungers be satisfied—all of them. Another layer of meaning is added on to the petition by requesting not food but bread. Bread is the most basic of foods, so that in asking for bread, we are asking that our most basic needs be provided. To ask for bread, then, can be understood as a request that all our basic needs be met—the needs for shelter, food, clothing, and health care. It is a petition for human dignity.

Forgiving and Forgiven

There is a difference in wording between the Lord's Prayer in Matthew's Gospel and the Lord's Prayer in Luke's Gospel. The text in Matthew reads: "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." The text in Luke reads: "forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us." Both texts include the two aspects of forgiveness. Both Matthew and Luke



understand that God has forgiven us our debts in Jesus Christ. Having thus been restored to good relationship with God, we have received the grace to forgive others. Therefore, we are called to forgive the debts of others as we have received this same forgiveness from God.

Teaching on Prayer in the Sermon on the Mount

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus provides us with guidelines for prayer. He warns us not to babble on endlessly in our prayers and gives us the Lord's Prayer as an example of the proper use of words. The key to prayer, he teaches, is faith in God's power and trust in God's love. Jesus warns us not to use prayer as a means of placing ourselves above others, and suggests that we might best pray when we are behind closed doors and alone with God. He teaches us that we cannot use prayers to cover up evil living, that good deeds must accompany our prayers.

To this day, the Lord's Prayer is the consummate prayer of the Church and is a significant part of the Church's rites—the Divine Office, the Sacraments of Christian Initiation, and the Mass.

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