**The Our Father: Introduction**

Last time Fr Michael spoke about how special the Our Father is. Why? Because it is actually given to us by Jesus. Fr Michael described it as the only poem by Jesus.

St. Luke tells us that Jesus taught this beautiful prayer at the request of an unnamed disciple (Lk 11:1). It is the perfect prayer that teaches us how to pray. The Our Father or The Lord’s Prayer, is considered as the summary of the whole Gospel, along with the Creed, the Ten Commandments and the Sacraments formed a basis of Christian catechesis. It is considered to be made up of 7 petitions.

1) Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. ...

2) Thy kingdom come. ...

3) Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ...

4) Give us this day our daily bread. ...

5) Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. ...

6) Lead us not into temptation. ...

7) But deliver us from evil.

The first 3 have “Thy” which means “your”. Using this word shows love as we are not thinking of ourselves but of the other, the Father. In the early Church catechumens were taught how to pray by studying the Lord’s Prayer. The Catechism of the Catholic Church speaks so much about it and goes deep into its profound meaning.

**“Our Father”**

We are able to call God our Father and not just Father, but **Abba’**, which is even more tender, intimate, respectful and affectionate. Yet God’s love is so great that we have a unique family bond formed through and with Jesus who took on our human nature. Through baptism we become adopted sons and daughters of God*. “All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had*. (Acts 4, 32) *“See what love the Father has given us,*” writes the Apostle John, “*that we should be called children of God;*(1 Jn3,1)and so we are. God is not just Father or even my Father, he is **“our”** Father. Because God is “our” Father our relationship with others must be for all races, sexes, cultures, classes, or any other distinctions. This is one reason that so much of Catholic worship is communal worship, together. It celebrates God’s love as the family of God.

**“Who Art In Heaven”**

Heaven is the possession of God, because God is everything worth possessing. When we possess God and nothing else, we have everything. On the other hand, if we possess every earthly good and do not have God, we have nothing*. “What will it profit a man,”* Jesus asked, *“to gain the whole world and to suffer the loss of his soul”* (Mt 16:26) 2 We live on earth, but heaven is our true destiny. We are pilgrims on a journey. Our true home is heaven. This reminder helps us keep that goal in focus, so we will not be distracted by things that will finish in the end. Heaven is for eternity, forever.

**“Hallowed Be Thy Name”**

The Father is holiness. His holiness does not depend on us to honour him as holy. When He reveals himself to us as Father, we discover the great mystery of His being. He is Father, the source of all life In this petition we ask that His most holy name be sanctified and honoured everywhere. May we always honour His name in our thoughts and in our actions. Without His help we are utterly helpless to do so. . It is in God’s intimate **Family name** that we were reborn into His family; for we were baptized in the name of the **Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit**. We are **sealed** with God’s name for all eternity.

**“Thy Kingdom Come”**

God’s fatherhood is the basis for His being a king, because in God His fatherhood and His kingship are one. God is not only our Father, but also our King. In His kingship we discover the full meaning of human fatherhood: self-sacrifice, authority, life, compassion, justice, mercy and love. This is the biblical meaning of fatherhood. This petition shows how much we wish for God’s reign to come, which the Catechism says refers to the return of Christ. So we are looking at our present reality and to our future destiny. We pray that the Father’s kingdom expand into all hearts. But how will this happen? The answer is discovered in the next sentence.

**“Thy Will Be Done On Earth As It Is In Heaven”**

Being ready to do the Father’s will defines what it means to live faithfully in His kingdom. This is how we, His children and His subjects, must live. Obedience to His will is the only way we can show our love. Thus Jesus said*: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments”* (Jn 14:15). It is only when we fully accept the Father’s will that we are truly free and at peace. Humans become truly alive and achieve their destiny only when their free submission to His will is complete “on earth as it is in heaven.” He speaks for our good. We must obey. Always! Everywhere! Father, help us to obey. Teach us to love You like St. Paul who wrote*: “For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him”* (Phil 3:8).

**“Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread”**

The Eucharist is the true daily bread that sustains our spiritual life*. “I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh”* (Jn 6: 50- 51). We ask the Father to give us this bread. Liturgically this great reality can be seen at Mass when we say the Lord’s Prayer before Holy Communion. The Our Father reminds us that we are about to receive the Bread of the great tomorrow when our union with Jesus will be celebrated in heaven. “Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread” also teaches us to be content with having today’s necessities, trusting in His Providence. Doing this we try to live the evangelical virtue of poverty. This detachment from possessions and our focus on the Eucharist also makes us sensitive to the needs of others and true social justice.

**“And Forgive Us Our Trespasses As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us”**

The message here is very clear. We will be forgiven as we forgive others. Thus, we should forgive as we are forgiven. God gives us everything out of His loving mercy. Though we sin the Father extends His merciful forgiveness to us. When our repentance is complete so is His forgiveness. He knows that forgiveness liberates the wounded heart and removes the poison that endangers it. In that process we experience the depth of God’s love and mercy. When we forgive we also reveal the Father’s heart to others. Throughout the Bible God teaches His children to forgive. These lessons of forgiveness continued in the New Testament. Jesus said to Peter in response to how many times he should forgive*: “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times”* (Mt 18:22), meaning always.

**“And Lead Us Not Into Temptation”**

The word temptation literally means tribulation. Tribulation has a special meaning in the Bible. When we see the chosen people of God falling into sin and going against the will of God.

The punishment of pride is temptation, because pride brings the temptations that lead us into sin. Pride leads us to focus on ourselves as the centre of the universe. Sin is always the natural consequence of relying on ourselves and forgetting God. So we ask our Father, “lead us not into temptation.” In other words we ask the Father **to make us humble relying on His strength and protection**. When we are humble in this life the Father can exalt us in eternity. Temptations also test us, but their purpose is to lead us into sin. Jesus said “apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5). 6 Lastly, this petition looks to the final trial of our faith at the end of our life.

**“But Deliver Us From Evil”**

One of the greatest dangers of sin is the pleasure attached to the sin. Sin can become a habit that we will not abandon. Once we become addicted to the power of sinful pleasure Satan will have a hold over us. The distance is short between temptation and the dominance by the evil one. So Jesus taught us to pray, “deliver us from evil,” that is,…. the evil one. The devil can tempt us in so many ways, trying to lead us away from the truth and all that is right. It’s important to consider that our just Father respects the free will that he gave us. God never uses force. God respects our freedom to choose. However, he punishes us the most when we choose evil. Yet he is not a passive bystander. He is always the loving Father guiding his children, us, back to Him, with his loving support and direction.

**“Amen.”**

We end our prayers with the word amen, which has a Hebrew origin. ( It is a transliteration ( of a solemn Hebrew word describing something firm, true, or reliable). At the conclusion of Christian prayer it expresses our complete trust and surrender to God’s will..