

<b>Toki Pona</b>	<b>English Translation (from Toki Pona)</b>	<b>English Traditional (Matthew 6:9-13)</b>
mama sewi mi o.	O my heavenly parent!	Our Father, who art in heaven,
nimi sina o sewi.	Your name should be holy!	hallowed be thy Name;
ma lawa sina o kama.	Your ruled land should come!	thy kingdom come;
wile sina o kama pali	Your will should become done	thy will be done;
lon ma lon sewi.	on earth and heaven.	on earth as it is in heaven.
o pana e pan lili tawa mi.	Give me a little bread.	Give us this day our daily bread.
o pana sewi tawa mi	Give beyond to me	And forgive us our trespasses,
sama mi pana sewi tawa jan ante.	like I give beyond to other people.	as we forgive those who trespass against us.
o lawa ala e mi tawa nasin ike.	Don't lead me to a bad path.	And lead us not into temptation;
taso o weka e mi tan pakala.	But remove me from disaster.	but deliver us from evil.
sina pana e ma lawa.	You give the ruled land.	For thine is the kingdom,
sina pana e wawa.	You give the power.	the power
sina pana e suno sewi.	You give the Holy Light.	and the glory,
ni li pona lon tenpo ale.	This is good forever.	for ever and ever.
ni o lon.	Let it be.	Amen.

Here are a few arbitrary notes on the translation of the Lord's Prayer:

> mama sewi mi o. [O my heavenly parent!]

This first line is a great example to explain toki pona. The biggest thing most readers will notice is the gender change, and perhaps even a “gender swap” that’s suggested by this. In toki pona, gender is *possible* but it’s not fundamental. There is no word for “father”. There is a word “mama” which means “parent” or “creator”. “Mama” does not mean mother in toki pona, but was chosen to mean “parent” because some languages use it for “mom” and some for “dad”. While “father” could be specified with “mama mije” (male parent), we have to decide if the “male” part of “father” was really so important to the translation that we specify it at the expense of more words.

Similarly, the word “mi” can *either* mean “me/I” or “us/we”. While we could specify that the intention is “collective” (“our father”) rather than singular (“my father”) by adding more words in toki pona, we again have to ask if the specificity of “our” is actually needed and *requires* adding more words. I believe both “my father” and “our father” work quite well for the prayer’s intention, so the ambiguity may actually be a feature.

As for the word “sewi”, this word means “heaven”, “holy”, “beyond”, “above”, or even “God”. By saying “mama sewi mi”, we are adding an adjective to “mama”, saying it’s a parent/creator that is *above* or *heavenly* and even suggests something divine. So rather than say “our father, who is in heaven ...” this is more like saying “our heavenly father” or even “our divine creator”. Since clauses like “who is in heaven” are awkward in toki pona, most prefer to convert these to adjectives or multiple sentences. The final word “o” means it’s

a call. Just like saying “O Tom,” before talking to Tom. In toki pona, we just put it at the end: “Tom O!”

> o pana sewi tawa mi [Give beyond to me]

This is probably the most surprising line of this translation. The goal is to translate the word “forgive”, but there’s no word in toki pona for “forgive”. Some translate forgiveness as “weka e ike” which is “remove the bad”. This is very reasonable, but, for me, it misses something. When forgiving a debt, you do “remove the debt”, so that’s true. But a debt is already a negative, and *removing* a negative really makes a *positive*. Remember math class! So rather than saying “removing bad”, isn’t it the same thing to say “giving good”? In fact, the word “forgive” in English comes from “for” and “give”, with the “for” part meaning “beyond” (think “forefathers” ... or the word “far”). “Forgive” then means “give beyond”. And this makes sense. If you agree to give me 100 donuts for my 100 dollars, and I only give you 50 dollars, I’m 50 dollars “in debt”. I’ve not given as much as the deal required. If you decide to “forgive” my debt, it will be that you gave *beyond* your side of the deal. I think it is a better framing to say you “gave beyond” than to say you’ve “removed my debt”. Now, if you want to say “give beyond” in toki pona, you’ve got to make a choice. The word “give” is “pana”, but “beyond” has a couple reasonable choices. You could say “pana suli” which means “give big”. This is fine, but it doesn’t quite capture the idea that it’s an extension *beyond*. If you want to say “beyond”, you could choose (as I have) “sewi”, which can mean “above”: “to give above”. I think this captures the idea well. It also has an interesting side-effect. The same word, “sewi”, can mean “above”, but it can also mean “heaven”, “holy”, or even “God”. In this way, “pana sewi”, meant as “forgiveness”, also means “give beyond”, “holy-give”, or even “God-give”. The idea of forgiveness as “**God-giving**” also resonates well with the message of the Gospels.