

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

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 sulì” 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.