

ANL 8: The Lord's Prayer

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And Jesus said to them,
“For your Creator knows what you need before you ask.
Pray then in this way:”

Our Father in Heaven
Hallowed is Your name
May Your will be done,
May Your Kingdom come
As earth as in Heaven.

Give us our daily bread, Lord.
And forgive our sin
As we forgive those who sin against us,
Forgive them.

Lead us not into trouble
Save us from evil's hand.
For Yours is the kingdom,
And the glory and the power
Amen.

Let us enter into this prayer, word by word, line by line.
Holy Spirit, please guide us as we pray...

“Our Father in Heaven”

Eugene Peterson wrote “With the ‘our’, Jesus puts himself in our company. With the ‘our’, we place ourselves in the company of Jesus and of all who pray.”

The Creator is not just my God or of my group. God is the Maker and Lover of every single person on earth—past, present, and future. And when we pray, we join a motley, global, diverse, historic family.

The name “Father” invites us into a relationship. God is LOVE, and wants to relate, in love, with each one of us. We should note that God is Spirit, not gendered, so the masculine word “Father” can be unhelpful for some. Especially for those who have been wounded by our earthly fathers. But even within the limits of language, the intimacy of the invitation is the point. We are deeply loved children of God.

What language best help you pray to the Creator of us all? Take a moment to articulate the words you will use today to address the God Jesus called “Our Father”...

(SPACE—15 sec)

“Our Father in Heaven”

Some scholars believe that a better translation of “Our Father, who art in Heaven” is actually “Our Father, in the Heavens.” Not far off in the distance, but fully and completely here. “Our Creator, who fills every molecule from the farthest solar system to the inside of my lungs.” Our Father, who is closer than the air we breathe.

Let us open up to God’s nearness through a practice called “breath prayer”. Please place both feet on the floor, and if you are able, open both hands. Say to God with your body what you are saying with your heart: I am here...I am open...and I believe You are here too, as close as the air I breathe.

Become aware of your breathing. Noticing the air filling and exiting your lungs. Every breath is a gift. Thank God for that gift.

And with each breath in, pray your words for “Our Father”. And with each exhale, offer an intention to God. Maybe you breathe in while saying “Loving Maker”...and breath out to say “I’m yours”. Maybe you breath in to say “Eternal Mother”...and breath out to say “Open my heart”. As my spiritual director, Fr Michael teaches, “Let your prayer be as simple as your breathing”...

(SPACE—60 sec)

“Our Father in Heaven, hallowed is your name”

The first request of this great prayer is not for daily bread or for our advancement, but for God’s name to be honored and lifted up. As loved as we are, you and I are not at the center of the universe. God is. The One who created everything is worthy of everything. The Love who holds this world together, is worthy of our love. Worthy of our honor. Worthy to hold at the very center of our lives. Would you sing this with me...

Hallelujah
Hallelujah
Hallelujah!

Hallelujah
Hallelujah
Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!

And so with God rightly at the center, we are bold to pray:

*“May Your Kingdom come,
may Your will be done,
on Earth as Heaven”*

One of the most subversive aspects of Jesus’ life was that he only did what he saw his Father in Heaven doing. He didn’t generate a plan and ask God to bless it, as we often do. But instead he watched for the ways God was moving in the world, and joined it. He paid attention to the flow of the Eternal Current, and then humbly learned how to swim with that healing river. The invitation is participation.

Two questions for us for prayer and reflection...

First, where do you see God already working to bring the Kingdom to earth? Where do you see and long to see good news for the poor, freedom for the captives, sight for the blind, and justice for the oppressed? Try to be as specific as possible.

(SPACE—20 sec)

Second, to join this good work, is there anything you need to let go of, to decenter your will and participate in God’s will? Or maybe the invitation for you is to step up into a new boldness and into humble action?

What is the next right step you sense the Spirit inviting you to take with God, for the sake of the world, as it is in Heaven?

(SPACE—20 sec)

“Give us our daily bread, Lord”

Jesus’ words to us, according to Matthew:

“Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!
(Matt 7:7-11)

Take the next 60 seconds to ask your good, heavenly parent for exactly what you need today. Not for tomorrow or next year, but for today. Ask, seek, and knock...

(SPACE—60 sec)

O Gracious God, thank You for hearing us.

*“And forgive our sin,
As we forgive those who sin against us,
forgive them.”*

Let us embody the practice of receiving and offering forgiveness.

Please open your right hand. Invite God to gently guide your memory to a sin that you committed this week. A way that you fell short of love with a family member, neighbor, or with yourself. Let the Spirit mercifully turn the lights on so you can see more and more of reality.

(SPACE—10 sec)

Now imagine that you are holding that sin in your right hand. What does it look like? What does it feel like? Take a moment to humbly hold this reality in God’s loving presence.

(SPACE—20 sec)

Keeping your right hand open, please also open your left hand. And invite God to gently guide your memory to one person who has sinned against you. Maybe it was a small slight; maybe it was a devastating violation. Allow the Spirit to mercifully direct your attention and bring one specific person to mind.

(SPACE—10 sec)

Now imagine that you are gently holding this person who hurt you in your left hand. What is their name? What emotion do they evoke in you? Let yourself feel it. Take a moment to humbly hold this person in God’s loving presence.

(SPACE—30 sec)

Finally, bring both hands together, in front of your heart. Both your sin and your neighbors. Feel the weight of the ways we have all fallen short of love. And if you're willing, repeat after me:

Most Merciful God,
Forgive me
Forgive them.
Most Merciful God,
Forgive me
As I forgive them.
May your mercies flow down upon me,
And upon them.
Thank you for grace.
Amen and Amen.

"Lead us not into trouble, save us from evil's hand."

While this prayer begins with the power and mercy of God, it ends by naming our frailty and dependence. We are finite beings who don't have the power and control that we wish we had over our lives. But rather than crush us to shame, this realization lifts us to trust. With the Psalmist we cry "O Lord, lead me to the rock that is higher than I!" For we know that our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against the powers, principalities, and systemic evils of this world. We cannot stand alone. But thankfully, through Christ, we don't have to.

Would you place both hands over your heart, in a gesture of dependence and trust in God alone. Loving Creator, we need You...

(20 sec)

I need Thee every hour
O Gracious Lord
No tender voice like Thine
Can peace afford

I need Thee, O I need Thee
Every hour I need Thee
O bless me now my Savior
I come to Thee

I need Thee, O I need Thee
Every hour I need Thee
O bless me now my Savior
I come to Thee

Our Father in Heaven
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Forgive them.

Lead us not into trouble
Save us from evil's hand.
For Yours is the kingdom,
And the glory and the power
Amen.

****A New Liturgy No 8: The Lord's Prayer available, along with resources and extras,
at www.anewliturgy.com.**