

The *Our Father*, also referred to as *The Lord's Prayer*

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,

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. *Amen*

Our Heavenly Father's love for us

Jesus gave us this prayer so that we could know joy in continually praising our Heavenly Father. Jesus also wanted us to experience peace through asking the Father for everything that we need. He knows the most important things in life that will bring us true joy and peace and He is continually faithful. As we speak with Our Heavenly Father each day in prayer, we will come to recognize more and more how much He loves us.

Why do we want to pray the Our Father every day?

- 1) To come to know God as our loving Father.
- 2) To become more aware of how much our Heavenly Father loves us.
- 3) To understand the qualities and goodness of fatherhood at its finest. A father should be strong yet gentle, firm but understanding, merciful and forgiving. A father is to provide, protect, guide and teach his children. Above all, a father is called to love each of his children unconditionally and with understanding. And he finds joy in being a father. Our Heavenly Father is all perfect which means that He has all of these qualities.



Meaning of the Words

- There are seven petitions in the *Our Father*. The first three petitions carry our thoughts toward Our Heavenly Father, for His own sake. He desires that we come to Him in prayer. We should think first of the Person of God the Father before asking for what we need.
- **Our Father:** “We can invoke God as “Father” because He is revealed to us by His Son become man and because His Spirit makes Him known to us” (CCC 2780).
- **Who art in Heaven** refers to God’s majesty and His presence in the hearts of the just. Heaven, the Father’s house, is the true homeland toward which we are heading and to which, already, we belong through the Sacrament of Baptism. (CCC, 2802).
- **Hallowed by Thy Name:** In the first petition we pray that we better understand that His name is holy and that it is to be held holy, by using our Heavenly Father’s name with reverence.
Thy Kingdom come: “In the second petition the Church looks first to Christ’s return and the final coming of the Reign of God. It also prays for the growth of the Kingdom of God in the ‘today’ of our own lives.” (CCC, 2859)
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven: “In the third petition we ask our Father to unite our will to that of His Son, so as to fulfill His plan of salvation in the life of the world.” (CCC, 2860) In essence, the second and third petitions signify that we will try to live as images of God on earth.

- The final four petitions present our needs and desires to the Lord: “they ask that our lives be nourished, healed of sin, and made victorious in the struggle of good over evil.” (CCC, 2857)
- **Give us our daily bread:** “By saying **give us**, we express our trust in our Heavenly Father. Give us what we need to live now and later with You in Heaven. **Our daily bread** refers most especially to the Holy Eucharist – receiving Jesus Himself in Holy Communion.
- **And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us** “begs God’s mercy for our offenses, mercy which can penetrate our hearts only if we have learned to forgive our enemies, with the example and help of Christ.” (CCC, 2862) In essence, we are asking God to forgive us for our sins and help us forgive others.
- **Lead us not into temptation:** We are asking God not to allow us to take the path that leads to sin. This petition implores the Spirit of discernment and strength; it requests the grace of vigilance and final perseverance.” (CCC, 2863).
- **But deliver us from evil:** “In the last petition Christians pray to God with the Church to show forth the victory, already won by Christ, over the ‘ruler of this world,’ Satan, the angel personally opposed to God and to His plan of salvation.” (CCC, 2864) In essence, we are asking God to help us make good choices and keep us safe in His love.
- **Amen:** “The final ‘Amen’ expresses our ‘fiat’ [our yes] concerning the seven petitions: ‘So be it’” (CCC, 2865). (For further explanation, see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, hereafter CCC paragraphs 2777 – 2802)



Learning the Principles

- Our Heavenly Father created us in His image. He made a part of us that, like Him, will never die. This part is called a soul. Because we have a soul, we have the power to think, the power to choose and the power to love. Further, our earthly parents cooperated with God to bring us into existence.
- When God made us in His image, He opened up many treasures for us. Our greatest treasure is God Himself. He is always with us. He knows everything about us: who we are, what we do, and even our thoughts. He loves us far more than anyone else loves us. He gave each of us a soul so we could love Him in return.
- Our Heavenly Father loves each person completely. God was thinking of you, loving you, and wanting you from all eternity. God our Father only wants what is best for you. In the Bible, He tells us, “I will never forget you. See, upon the palms of My hands I have written your name.” (Isaiah 49:15b-16a)
- The Our Father, also called the Lord’s Prayer, is a prayer recorded in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. It is a response to His disciple’s request, “Lord, teach us [how] to pray.”
- “The Lord’s Prayer is truly the Summary of the whole Gospel” – it is the most perfect of prayers, and is at the center of the Scriptures. In it we ask not only for the things we desire, but also in the order in which they should be desired. (See CCC 2761)
- The Lord’s Prayer is important, because it comes to us directly from Christ, and as such is a model for how we are to pray – most especially – to pray with meaning, from the heart.
- Our Heavenly Father is a Divine Person. He is pure Spirit and therefore does not have a body. In Sacred Art God our Father is portrayed as an old man to help us think about our Heavenly Father; but He is not an old man nor is that what He looks like.

- “Jesus revealed that God is Father in an unheard-of sense: He is Father not only in being Creator; He is eternally Father in relation to His only Son, who is eternally Son only in relation to His Father: ‘No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.’” (CCC 240; Matthew 11:27)
- Prayer is a vital necessity. Prayer and the Christian life are inseparable. (CCC 2744-2745) In other words, when we pray with our heart, we come to know Jesus Christ, personally and deeply. As this friendship with Him grows, we recognize more and more how much He loves us and how much we love Him. From this love, received and given, we respond from a natural desire to be one with Him in all things, and live our lives in a way that is reflective of His own. This brings much peace and joy to ourselves and those around us.
- Teach the children how to pray with their heart; not just rattling words. “Prayer is internalized to the extent that we become aware of Him ‘to whom we speak.’ In the case of the Our Father, we are speaking with the person of Our Heavenly Father (CCC 2700, 2704)
- The Lord’s Prayer is the title that early Christians gave to the prayer which Jesus entrusted to His disciples and to the Church. (*Catechism Glossary*, p. 886)

Activities

- Pray the Our Father every day at home and at every religion session.
- Echo prayer– have children repeat each phrase after you.
- Make flash cards with a phrase of the prayer on each card.
- Explain one phrase at a time for better understanding.
- Fill in the blanks of key words of the prayer / write out the prayer.
- Encourage parents to pray with their children at home.
- Make a booklet of the Our Father prayer, with a phrase on each page and draw a picture that depicts each phrase – what it means to the children.
- Have the prayer printed out on poster board. Cut out in sections and have the boys and girls match the strips into the right order to make the prayer.
- Sing the Our Father to music / video YouTube: “Only boys aloud – The Lord’s Prayer” (3 min. 10 sec.) YouTube – The Lord’s Prayer – Susan Boyle with Lyrics and Pictures (3 min., 45 sec.)
- Read Matthew 6:5-15. As you talk about Jesus teaching the *Our Father* to His Apostles, include Sacred Art pictures that portray each phrase. Google the picture that you want and then click on Images. Click on Advanced Searches for free to use even commercially.
- Have the children act out a skit where one person prays the prayer and another person portrays our Heavenly Father who answers to each phrase of the prayer. Google “Our Father skit” to see an example.
- Place the one-page prayer commitment into a plastic sleeve and tie a small loop of yarn to the top loop. Parents may place the prayer commitment on the child’s bedroom door knob or other convenient place in order to use it for prayer times (so it won’t be misplaced). Prayer commitments at the beginning of the academic year, and during Advent and Lent are especially welcomed. A gift, such as a medal and chain could be given for being committed.
- Encourage children to make a request of our Heavenly Father for a specific need. Give an example from your own life, such as help on a test, for a sick grandmother, rain for the farmers, safe travel in a storm. When a prayer is answered, it makes faith come alive for them and will



help the students to develop a relationship with our Heavenly Father. At a time when students have a specific prayer that was answered, it is most helpful for them to share it with the class. Children might keep a journal of their requests or the class might keep a list of answered requests. Our Heavenly Father desires a relationship with each of us. We don't want to just ask for good things from Him with no desire to speak with Him and develop a friendship with Him.

Spiritual Comprehension – Do they understand?

- Ask questions to ensure that young people understand the meaning of the words and how to pronounce the words.
- **This one prayer is the prayer the children should know by heart and with good understanding before they advance to the next grade level. Therefore, it should be prayed at every opportunity.** Please continue to teach the other prayers as listed in the Diocesan Religion Curriculum that are to be introduced and reviewed at this age level.

Encountering Our Heavenly Father in Prayer

- Pray the Our Father aloud and have the children listen, preferably with their eyes closed. Have them take notice of a word or phrase that stood out for them. Allow some time of silence for the girls and boys to think about why the word or phrase stood out for them. Allowing the children quiet time to reflect on the phrases of the Our Father, after they have received explanation of each part, takes it to the next level of a deep personal encounter. As a further progression, provide silence so that they may have a “heart-to-Heart” conversation with Our Heavenly Father.

Scriptural References about Our Heavenly Father

- Jesus said, "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' "The unbelievers are always running after these things. **Your Heavenly Father** knows that you need all these things" (Matthew 6:31-32).
- Jesus said, "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, **your Heavenly Father** will also forgive you. "But if you do not forgive others, then **your Father** will not forgive your transgressions. (Matthew 6:14-15)
- Jesus said, "For whoever does the will of **My Father who is in Heaven**, he is My brother and sister and mother." (Matthew 12:50)
- Jesus said, "If you really knew Me, you would know **My Father** also" (John 14:7).
- Jesus said, "Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will **your Father** who is in Heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:9-11)
- For this reason, I bow my knees before **the Father**, from whom every family in Heaven and on earth derives its name." (Ephesians 3:14-15)

