The Our Father

Learning to Pray Like Jesus

When the disciples asked Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray," He gave them a gift that has been handed on to every generation. It is the *Our Father* prayer. This prayer is not just something to memorize; the specific words reflect Jesus' own life of prayer. Jesus invites us to call the one, true God "Father," which is remarkable because it signifies that we have the privilege of sharing in Christ's divine union with the Father.

When we pray the *Our Father*, we are not speaking words that float away in the air; we are speaking to Someone who truly listens, cares, and responds. We are not merely individuals; rather we are adopted sons and daughters of the living God through Jesus' costly sacrifice of His death and Resurrection. Our Heavenly Father knows us completely, loves us deeply, and desires a relationship with each one of us. The Lord's Prayer is a way to enter into a living relationship with God, who is not distant, but our loving Father.

The prayer begins by turning our attention to *Our Father*, *Who art in Heaven*. Before we ask for anything, we are reminded who God is – the Creator of the Universe. We are to keep God's name holy – as set apart above everything – ensuring all other earthly desires are in their proper place, with the Father as the center of our life. We pray for the Kingdom of God's reign, which Jesus began in His Person to set things right, who reunited divinity and humanity. We seek the Father's will because He is infinitely generous, loving, and worthy of our trust. These words reorient our hearts. It teaches us that prayer is not just about asking, but also about belonging to the family of God.

Then, Jesus invites us to bring our needs before the Father. We ask for our daily bread and this refers, above all, to our request for "supersubstantial bread," spiritual nourishment for our souls through the incredible gift of the Holy Eucharist – Jesus Himself. We ask for forgiveness, and at the same time, we commit ourselves to forgive others. This is not always easy, but it is essential. A heart that receives mercy must also show mercy toward others.

We also ask for strength: *lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.* Due to the effects of original sin, we should expect that interiorly, we will experience resistance to God's good and holy will. And we cannot reject this resistance on our own. We need God's grace to guide, protect, and strengthen us to choose what is good.

One of the most important lessons of the *Our Father* is trust. God always answers our prayers, but not always in the way or the timing we expect. Sometimes the answer is "yes," sometimes "no" because God knows that what we are asking for will not be good for us, and sometimes "not yet." Even in silence, God is at work, shaping our hearts and drawing us closer to Him.

Jesus did not give us this prayer simply to repeat words, but to form our hearts. When we pray this beautiful prayer, slowly and with intention, we begin to see the Father differently and our lives differently. We grow in peace, trust, and charity because of the Father's unconditional love for each one of us.

This week, take time to pray the *Our Father* more deliberately. Speak it from your heart. Pause on a phrase. Let these compelling words become a conversation, not just a routine, because in this prayer, we are not just saying words; we are speaking with our eternal Father and realigning our heart with Him.

If you would like to download a prayer card of the *Our Father* with a simple format that fosters a more personal way to pray it, and/or additional resources, visit diolc.org/catechesis/going-deeper-in-prayer

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