



Archdiocese of New York + 2011

TAUGHT BY OUR SAVIOR'S COMMAND: THE LORD'S PRAYER

The Prayer Given Us by Jesus: Among all the prayers that are part of our tradition, none holds a higher place than *the prayer Our Savior gave us*, the fundamental, perfect Christian prayer. The Lord's Prayer begins with an address to God the Father, which is followed by a series of seven petitions. The first three petitions take us beyond ourselves, and express not our own needs, but our desire that God may be honored and glorified; the last four ask God in simple, direct language for what we need to live the human life entrusted to us and to live that life as his faithful children.

We Dare to Say: The priest introduces the Lord's Prayer with these words:

At the Savior's command
and formed by divine teaching,
we dare to say:

The Our Father is a prayer so familiar to us that it hardly seems to require courage to pray it. However, when we reflect that in this prayer we address God, our Creator, the all-powerful Lord of heaven and earth with the familiar, loving name of Father, the need for courage becomes clearer. And that courage is given us as we reflect on the instruction about how to pray which Jesus gave to his disciples and on the Word of God we have just heard. God wants us to call him Father and to seek his help.

The Lord's Prayer at Mass: The Lord's Prayer opens the Communion Rite of Mass. The relationship of this prayer to the Eucharist and Communion is found in the petition that we be given our daily bread, the earthly bread that nourishes our bodies, and the spiritual bread that feed our spirits. In it we pray also that our sins may be forgiven and that we may be protected from temptation and evil. Saint Augustine writes of these petitions for forgiveness and protection: *as a result of these words we approach the altar with clean faces; with clean faces we share in the body and blood of Christ.* And our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI describes the fourth petition, the petition for our daily bread, as *the hinge between the three petitions that pertain to the kingdom of God and the three last petitions that have to do with our needs.* He continues: *Through this petition, the prayer that God's*

kingdom will come and earth will become like heaven becomes quite practical: through the Eucharist, heaven comes to earth, and the petitions about deliverance from evil, from guilt, from temptation are practically summed up here: Give us this bread so that my heart may become watchful, so that it will resist the Evil One, be able to distinguish good and evil, so that it may learn to forgive, so that it will remain strong in temptation. (*On the Way to Jesus Christ.* Joseph Ratzinger. 2005, Ignatius Press. pp. 104,105)

A Prayer Belonging to the People: While the invitation to pray the Lord's Prayer is made by the priest-celebrant, the Prayer itself belongs to the people and is sung or recited aloud by all. Because it is a prayer belonging to the people it should never be sung by the choir alone or by a soloist.

The Embolism: At the end of the Our Father, the priest prays an additional prayer known as an "embolism" a term used in liturgy to identify a text which expands a portion of a prayer. The embolism following the Lord's Prayer is an expansion on the petition *deliver us from evil*, and, while it reiterates that prayer, it also introduces a note of peace and hope of the Lord's second coming. The people respond to the embolism with the words of an ancient doxology which dates back to the very early Church and is even found in manuscripts of the Gospel of Matthew:

*For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are yours,
now and forever.*

The translation of the embolism has been altered somewhat in this edition of the *Roman Missal*. One of the more significant of these alterations is the replacing of the word "anxiety" (*that we may be freed from all anxiety*) with the word "distress" so that the embolism now reads: *we may be . . . safe from all distress.* The bishops agreed that because "anxiety" is a term defined today by its use in the contemporary language of psychology, it may have too limited or specific a meaning in today's world. "Distress" was the word selected as a more comprehensive description of human fear and pain of body and mind.