

## Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time C - The Lord's Prayer in Luke

July 24, 2022.

This Sunday is the Second **World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly** throughout the universal Church. The theme chosen by the Holy Father for the occasion is **"In old age they will still bear fruit" (Psalm 92: 15), emphasizing how grandparents and the elderly are a gift of great value to our families, our parish communities and our society.**

This Sunday's Gospel presents the Lord's Prayer but it's not the Our Father that we learned as children nor that we pray during Mass. It's different. Luke presents the teaching of Jesus concerning prayer having in mind converts like himself. Christians coming from a Jewish background were accustomed to a tradition of daily prayer; Gentile converts, on the other hand, had to acquire a habit of regular prayer. Luke, therefore, stresses perseverance. This gospel may have something to say to us - as the pressures of daily life make regular prayer more difficult. **'Teach us to pray'. The disciples are not merely asking how to pray; they want to know what their prayer should be like to make them true followers of Jesus.** The Lord's Prayer, as it came to be called, soon had a central place in the Church's life. **In the early Church, those preparing for Baptism learned the Lord's Prayer, but they did not join in public recitation until they shared in the celebration of the Eucharist.**

The Our Father we pray at Mass is the Lord's Prayer found in the Gospel of Matthew (6:9-13). As said before, the one found in the Gospel of Luke (11-1:13) is different: **"Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread and forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us, and do not subject us to the final test."** So, why the difference? First of all, the Holy Spirit, the ultimate author of Sacred Scripture, used the evangelists, the writers of the Gospels, to present the teachings of Jesus to various groups of people and to incorporate into these presentations an inspired understanding of the Lord's words. **Matthew was addressing to Christians of Jewish origin. It emphasized that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Scripture. Scripture was Jewish. Luke was addressing to Christians of Gentile origin who knew little to nothing of Jewish scripture but they did have a deep understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. They believed that the Holy Spirit called them to faith and sustained them just as he called the people of all different nations to faith on Pentecost Sunday. The Lord's Prayer in Luke is given during the journey narrative. It is the prayer for the journey.** John the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray for the coming of the Kingdom. Did Jesus have a prayer for them? At the beginning of the Gospel, they experienced Jesus at prayer. **The disciples wanted to pray like He prayed. They wanted to have union with the Father, not just recite words.**

After the Lord's prayer is presented, Luke records two parables of the Lord to demonstrate the goodness of God. The first one is about a father waking up in the middle of the night to hear a friend calling to him from outside asking for some bread. The father does not want to open the door, but he's worried his friend might wake up his whole family so he *gives it to him just to keep him quiet*. **If that is how a mundane father would react to a petition, how much more would our Heavenly Father who really loves us listen to our prayers. So, ask, seek, knock. God is listening.** The second parable is similar. If earthly fathers know how to provide good things for their children, how much more will our Heavenly Father know what to provide for the children he loves. Then we have a phrase unique to Luke: **Ask the Heavenly Father, and he will give you the Holy Spirit. The Lord's Prayer in Luke is a petition for all our needs, the greatest of which is the Holy Spirit.**

Now let's go deeper into the Lord's Prayer in Luke. It begins by saying that God's name is hallowed. **Hallow means holy. When we say Hallowed be thy name, we are saying, "May all people realized the holiness of your name."** God's name was revealed to Moses from the

burning bush. He said, "I am who am." The sacred name, Yahweh. The Gentiles that Luke wrote to may not have known about Moses, but they knew that a person's name was a unique expression of the whole of the person. May we live in the knowledge of who the Father is. May we recognize his uniqueness, his holiness. May his name be hallowed. The Lord's Prayer in Luke next asks that the Father's kingdom may come. Rome had done its best to subject the entire world to its empire. It allowed the various people it conquered to keep a local government and continue local traditions, it even allowed them to continue worshiping their gods as long as they also worshiped the Roman gods, particularly the emperors. The glory that was Rome was really a materialistic and militaristic empire that kept others in place through trade and religion as well as force. **When these Gentiles who had become Christians prayed, "Thy Kingdom come," they were praying that the world order be changed. They were praying for the defeat of all that Rome stood for. They were praying for a very different world which would value sacrificial love rather than the accumulation of material goods. 2000+ years later today, we still need to pray for that world. We need to pray that we might take steps away from materialism and into love.**

Luke then goes right on to present the petition: **Give us our daily bread.** In the Gospel of Luke and in The Acts of the Apostles, the second book that Luke wrote, bread is always associated with prayer as a reference to the Eucharist. **The prayer for daily bread in The Gospel of Luke is not merely a prayer for physical sustenance. It is a prayer for the Eucharist. We who come and receive communion every week can easily forget the tremendous gift we receive.** This is Jesus, really present right here right now, nourishing us, sustaining us. We should not take this gift for granted. We pray for this gift. And then **we ask for forgiveness as we have forgiven others. The Christian norm for forgiving is the compassion and forgiveness of the Father. The Gospel of Luke is often called the Gospel of God's compassion.** In this Gospel Jesus instructs us to be compassionate as the Heavenly Father is compassionate. This is the Gospel that gives us the parable of the Prodigal Son and the thief who was told, when crucified with Jesus, that he would be in Paradise.

Finally the Lord's prayer in Luke concludes with, ***"Do not subject us to the trial."*** The Gospel of Luke often focuses in on the end of the world. It considers that as the world comes to a conclusion, many people throughout the world will have pseudo answers to the problems of life. We continually experience this. The girl is pregnant and some say "Have an abortion." A marriage hits a rough point and some say "Get a divorce." A teenager becomes difficult and some say, "Get out of the house." A grandparent is terminally ill and some say, "Euthanasia is the answer. It will end his pain and save the inheritance for us." These and other so-called solutions of our world are part of the test, the trial the Lord gives us to see if we really want to be standing for him when the end comes, whether it be the end of the world or the end of our own personal worlds.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, as said in the beginning, **the Lord's Prayer in the Gospel of Luke is the prayer of the gentile disciple of Jesus, you and I, who recognizes that true power is not to be found in an empire and that true happiness is not to be found in possessions. The Lord's Prayer in Luke is ultimately a prayer to the Holy Spirit to empower us to live in the holiness of God's name, to receive worthily the Eucharist, to forgive those who hurt us and to choose God before any other solution to the problems of life.** Like Jesus, when we pray to our Father, we are talking to a family member, paying loving attention to his presence and deepening our relationship with him. The success of Jesus' daily activity flowed from prayer. Prayer makes us realize how much we need God and deepens our sense of dependence on his saving help. As St. John Paul II says, (*Novo Millennio Ineunte, paragraph 32*), ***"a life of holiness requires training...in the art of prayer"***. We are encouraged to pray for 'our daily bread – 'in the ups and downs of life, we can place all our trust in the Father who watches over us. And the prayer ends on a realistic note. We acknowledge our sinfulness, confident that we shall be forgiven - because we have learned the Father's ways, and are ready ourselves to forgive. Finally, whatever lies ahead, we put ourselves in God's care. God bless you all.