

LESSONS 45 & 46: THE LORD'S PRAYER

Instruction for Faith Educators

For Basic Level / Age 9	:	Cover points 1 to 39
For Intermediate Level / Age 12	:	Cover points 1 to 39
For Advanced Level / Age 15	:	Cover points 1 to 39

Revision from previous lesson:

In the previous lessons, we have learned about what Sacraments and sacramentals are. Living a sacramental life also involves the discipline of regular prayer. From this lesson onwards, we will be spending the next few lessons discussing prayer. We will begin, in this lesson, discussing the most important and excellent prayer, which was given by Jesus Himself.

Current lesson:

1. Prayer is a form of communication through which we talk to God or to the saints, in the same way that we talk to our family and friends. Whether it is expressed through “words or gestures”, “it is the *heart* that prays” (CCC 2562). When we pray, our hearts must be sincere and focused on God; otherwise, our words and gestures are not truly prayers.

St John Damascene: “Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.”

2. We can pray only because we have a covenant relationship with God in Christ (CCC 2564). When we pray, it means that we have a living relationship with God as His children (CCC 2565).
3. Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition reveal that there are five different forms of Christian prayer:
 - A) *Blessing and Adoration* (CCC 2626-8). In this form of prayer, we exalt God’s greatness and acknowledge that we depend on Him in all things. The Mass is full of expressions of blessing and adoration. The *Gloria* that is chanted in the Mass is a good example of this.
 - B) *Petition* (CCC 2629-33). In this form of prayer, we ask God for things that we need, whether these are spiritual or physical needs. In asking God to provide for what we need, we must always submit to His will for us.
 - C) *Intercession* (CCC 2634-6). In this form of prayer, we are also asking God to fulfil needs, but the needs of others rather than our own. In Scripture, Jesus constantly prays in this form, asking the Father to supply for the needs of others.
 - D) *Thanksgiving* (CCC 2637-8). In this form of prayer, we lift our hearts in gratitude for all that God has done for us. This is perhaps one of the most neglected forms of prayer today. When we make it a point to thank God for all he has done for us and all He has given to us, our hearts are contented and happy.

E) *Praise* (CCC 2639-43). Praise is an acknowledgement of what God is. We glorify Him simply because He is God, not just because He has done good things for us. The focus of praise is to “[laud] God for his own sake and [give] him glory, quite beyond what he does, but simply because HE IS”.

4. The Lord’s prayer (CCC 2759) is the perfect prayer given to us by Jesus:

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.

5. The Gospels have two records of Jesus teaching this prayer. The first record is found in Matthew 6:9-13, where Jesus was preaching His Sermon on the Mount. There, He taught the people to pray. The second record is found in Luke 11:1-4, where “Jesus was praying at a certain place, and when He ceased, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.’ In response to this request the Lord entrusts to His disciples and to His Church the fundamental Christian prayer.” (CCC 2759)
6. The Lord’s prayer is the most basic prayer that every Christian should know. There are many prayers that we can pray, but this is the only prayer that was handed down to us from the Lord Jesus Himself, word for word. It is the prayer which the Son of God Himself taught us to pray to the Father, and this is why the prayer is truly unique among other prayers (CCC 2765). For this reason, it is called “The Lord’s Prayer” (*Oratio Dominica*).
7. At the same time, because Jesus is also fully human, He knows in His human heart the needs of His human brothers and sisters and reveals to us through this prayer how to ask for these needs from the Father. He is therefore the model of our prayer.
8. The Lord’s Prayer contains everything that a Christian should say to God. It summarises our Christian faith perfectly.

Tertullian (2nd & 3rd centuries) said that the Lord’s prayer is “truly the summary of the whole Gospel” (CCC 2761).

St Augustine of Hippo (4th century) said, “Run through all the words of the holy prayers [in Scripture], and I do not think that you will find anything in them that is not contained and included in the Lord’s Prayer” (CCC 2762).

St Thomas Aquinas (13th century) taught that “The Lord’s Prayer is the most perfect of prayers. In it we ask, not only for all the things we can rightly desire, but also in the

sequence that they should be desired. This prayer not only teaches us to ask for things, but also in what order we should desire them” (CCC 2763).

9. The Lord’s Prayer contains seven petitions made to God the Father.

The first three, which are centred on God, draw us towards Him for His glory. We think of Him first above all else, because it is God that we love first. These petitions contain what we should ask of him: the honour due to His Name, the coming of His Kingdom, and the fulfilment of His will.

The last four petitions present to the Father our weakness and our needs. They ask him to feed us, to forgive us, to sustain us in temptations, and to free us from the Evil One.

10. **First Petition: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.** This prayer begins by turning our hearts from the idols of this world to the rightful Ruler. In our baptism and in this prayer, we have renounced the work of the devil and his cause to harm all of creation, and we have voluntarily submitted ourselves to the lordship of God over us.

11. Although we are living in this world, we are waiting for the return of the rightful King of creation, Jesus Christ. This is why we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King at the end of every liturgical year, to remind us that we are nothing more than “aliens and strangers in a foreign land” (1 Peter 2:11). We long for the day when we will no longer have to be threatened by the values of this world that contradict the values of God’s kingdom.

12. We are reminded in this prayer that we belong to a kingdom whose Ruler is kind and good and loving, who cares for His subjects and has made us His children. For all the times that we have forgotten that we belong to Him, we are reminded in this prayer to return to Him and make Him Lord over our lives again. We come back to Him and call Him “Our Father”.

13. In calling Him “Father”, we also acknowledge that He is sovereign and all-powerful. Sometimes, the events of the world take place as if God was not in control of anything. But this prayer reminds us that because God is so sovereign, He is able to allow many things to happen (outside of His will) and still ensure that His will takes place in the end. Even the work of the Evil One himself can be used by God to fulfil His will. We cannot really understand how it works, because God’s ways are higher than our ways (refer to Isaiah 55:8-9). When the world seems to be out of control, we can trust that we have our Father who is in perfect control of everything. He does this for “those who love him, those who have been called in accordance with his purpose, and turns everything to their good” (Romans 8:28).

CCC 760: “The Church is the goal of all things, and God permitted such painful upheavals as the angels’ fall and man’s sin only as occasions and means for displaying all the power of his arm and the whole measure of the love he wanted to give the world.”

14. **Second Petition: Thy kingdom come.** God is the Source of creation which He placed under the dominion of humanity when He first created our First Parents. This dominion was handed over to Satan when Adam and Eve were deceived into a willful rebellion

against the sole authority and lordship of God. For this reason, the Gospel of John records that Jesus – for at least three times – identifies Satan as the prince of this world (refer to John 12:31-32, 14:30-31, 16:7-11). In the fall of humanity, creation had now come under the legal dominion of the devil. Of course, this did not mean that God had lost control, for He had plans that the devil knew nothing about (since the adversary can only know what God permits him to know).

15. In God's plan, the restoration of the kingdom that had been taken over by the dominion of Satan became the mission of His Son, Jesus Christ. In other words, Jesus came to announce the kingdom of God or the kingdom of Heaven. References to the "kingdom of God" are found 72 times in the New Testament, and the "kingdom of heaven" found 32 times (all in the Gospel of Matthew). Both terms are used interchangeably by New Testament writers.

Evidently, the presence and coming of the kingdom of God or heaven was the central message of Jesus. All His teachings were designed to show people how they might enter into the kingdom of God. His mighty works were intended to prove to His audience that heaven had come upon them. All His parables illustrated truths about this.

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray during His Sermon on the Mount (recorded in Matthew 5-7), at the heart of their petitions were the words, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). In this modern world, we might perhaps find the use of the word "kingdom" a rather strange expression, since there are few absolute monarchies left in modern governments. Perhaps, a more familiar word for us to express what Jesus taught is *government*. He was teaching the people about the government of God that was coming to take over from the dominion of the devil.

16. In the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus, He had already paid the spiritual ransom to restore His authority and dominion, His *government*, over creation and every human heart. His painful sacrifice was going to be the price for the restoration of God's rightful dominion over creation (refer to Matthew 26:17-30). This is why the main emphasis of His message all throughout His public ministry was that "the kingdom of God is at hand" (Matthew 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:15), for the moment His work on earth was done, this dominion of His Godly kingdom had now taken over (refer to John 19:30).
17. In praying "Thy kingdom come", we are expressly recognising the legitimate Ruler of creation and over humanity. We recognise that it is only in Jesus Christ that humanity can find the true meaning and purpose of our existence. We confess that it is only under God's governance that justice and peace can once again be fully restored in order to bring humanity to a state of total peace (Hebrew, *shalom*).
18. **Third Petition: Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.** As people who are fully devoted to the lordship of God and the purpose of His government, our greatest purpose must be for His will to be done on earth with accordance to His design for creation. Although opposing forces are always trying to attack God's plans, they will be stopped when Jesus Christ returns as the rightful King over creation.

CCC 671: “Though already present in his Church, Christ’s reign is nevertheless yet to be fulfilled ‘with power and great glory’ by the King’s return to earth. This reign is still under attack by the evil powers, even though they have been defeated definitively by Christ’s Passover. Until everything is subject to him, ‘until there be realised new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells, the pilgrim Church, in her sacraments and institutions, which belong to this present age, carries the mark of this world which will pass, and she herself takes her place among the creatures which groan and travail yet and await the revelation of the sons of God.’ That is why Christians pray, above all in the Eucharist, to hasten Christ’s return by saying to him: *Maranatha!* ‘Our Lord, come!’”

19. But as we pray and continue to await the return of Christ the King, part of our prayer must consist in our action of cooperating proactively with His work in building His reign on earth. There is no point paying God only lip service. In our baptism, it has become our responsibility to cooperate with God in preparing this world for Christ’s return by trying to make the world a more holy place. When people encounter us, they must encounter the kingdom of God; they must experience the love of this glorious and benevolent King; they must find themselves attracted to His government.
20. **Fourth Petition: Give us this day our daily bread.** After the first three petitions, this fourth petition allows us to turn to our own needs. God our Creator knows that we as human beings have basic needs. We need to eat in order to live, clothing to cover our bare bodies, and physical shelter to protect us from the elements of nature. But in the fallenness of humanity, our work for the fulfilment of these basic needs has often become a race for material abundance and greed. Materialism has become a culture today.
21. We recognise that everything that we have comes from God. In this petition, we acknowledge that we depend on Him for our daily nourishment. At the same time, we also ask for God to help us be aware of others around us who may have material needs, so that God can meet their material needs through us.
22. Since “human beings live not on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4), this petition also means that we should hunger for the Word of God and for the Body of Christ received in the Eucharist. In the same way that God provides for our physical nourishment, we trust that it is He who will provide for our spiritual nourishment.
23. During the recent Covid-19 pandemic, many people around the world became much poorer. In fact, many Catholics around the world were also deprived of the privilege of receiving Christ in the Holy Eucharist because Masses could not be celebrated with many people participating in them. During such times of deprivation, we must pray for God to provide for our physical and spiritual needs, and the needs of others. And as we pray, we also trust Him.
24. Trusting God to provide for everything that we need does not mean that we do not need to work. St Ignatius of Loyola (16th century) counsels us to “pray as if everything depended on God and work as if everything depended on you”.

25. Fifth Petition: Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

We acknowledge that even though we have received the sacrament of baptism and have been cleansed of Original Sin, we are still prone to doing wrong in our lives. Because of this, we need God's mercy. Therefore, we ask Him to forgive us for our wrongs.

26. Our trespasses do not necessarily mean only things that we have done wrong. It also includes right things that we should have done which we failed to do for our own good as well as the good of other people.

27. Asking mercy from God is an act of humility. We recognise that we cannot become holy without the help of God. We also recognise that without being humble, God cannot forgive us because there can be no true repentance (change of mind and change of life) without humility.

28. God's forgiveness towards us comes with a condition: we must also forgive others who have done wrong to us. The point of God's forgiveness is so that relationships can be healed and all humanity can enjoy perfect love in His kingdom. If God forgives us for our trespasses, and yet we refuse to forgive other people of their trespasses towards us, relationships are still not restored.

29. Receiving forgiveness from God may be easier than forgiving other people who have done wrong towards us. Forgiveness is not an emotion. Forgiving others means no longer wanting them to be punished for the hurt that they have caused us, even if their trespasses still hurt us emotionally. Very often, forgiving others takes time and many repeated decisions to "let go". But in this way, we also come to realise just how God loves us so much that He is willing to forgive us of our own trespasses. In gratitude, we also must do likewise for other people; because loving God and loving our neighbour are two sides of a same coin.

30. Remember that God's kingdom is about relationships of perfect love and communion. We cannot be a part of that kingdom if we do not set right our relationships that are injured or broken.

31. Sixth Petition: Lead us not into temptation. This petition does not mean that God is the one who tempts us to sin. What it means is that we are prone to feeling tempted because of our sinful desires and also the temptations of the devil. We are asking God to protect us from such temptations.

32. Being tempted is not in itself wrong. Being tempted means having a desire to sin, whether that desire comes from within ourselves or from Satan. Jesus Himself too was tempted in every way but did not fall into sin (Hebrews 4:15). He is able to understand the weakness of humanity. He helps us to overcome the power of temptation.

33. There is no way for temptations to always be removed from us, because temptations are actually good in the sense that they give us an opportunity to learn how to be strong and to overcome them. Without temptation in our lives, we will have no idea how strong or weak we are.

34. Jesus overcame temptation through prayer, and we must do the same. This petition reminds us that we should always pray that God will give us the strength to overcome temptation.
35. **Seventh Petition: Deliver us from evil.** We ask God to expel the influence of evil over our lives.
36. Evil is not just a “force”. Evil is a “person”. It exists in the form of Satan and all the fallen angels (also called devils or demons) who are working against God’s will. They are always trying to tempt man to fight against God’s plan.
37. Satan constantly sets out to trap us so that we will knowingly or unknowingly return to our old life of sin. We ask God for help to be aware of the devil’s schemes in our lives so that we have the power to resist him.
38. When Jesus returns one day, He will vanquish the power of Satan and all his evil cooperators. But while we are awaiting His glorious return, we have to fight against the temptations that are brought by these fallen angels. We are not alone in our fight, however, because God is with us and will strengthen us to fight the battle successfully.
39. Our final deliverance from work of the evil forces will take place at the return of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Therefore, in asking for Him to deliver us from evil, we are also asking Him to return as quickly as possible so that the power of evil is vanquished forever.



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