

how serious those sins are. Developing our conscience enables us to avoid both scruples (seeing sin where there is no sin or exaggerating its seriousness) and permissiveness (not recognizing our sin or minimizing its gravity).

It's important to first take note of those sins that are **serious in nature (mortal)**; these sins break our relationship with God and deprive us of divine life. It can be also helpful to consider other, **more minor (venial) sins**. It is important to bring these sins to Confession also, so that we can receive the grace we need to overcome them and renew our hearts to love God and neighbor more perfectly.

It can also be helpful to **consider why we fall into particular sins**. Am I falling into sins of chastity because I am lonely? Or because I am bored? Or because I am feeling hurt or am jealous of someone else? Uncovering the roots of our sins can help us realize why we fall into them and learn, with the help of God's grace, to overcome these faults.

Next, if you have concerns about how to practically go to Confession, there are many guides available. Find one from a trusted source to guide you in making a great confession.

Finally, **don't allow your excuses or hesitations to prevent you from approaching Confession**. Know that the false reasonings that often pop into our heads—it's not a good time, I'm not ready, it doesn't matter, I can go later—don't come from God. The same can be said about feelings of fear and anxiety. Confession breaks the hold that sin has on our lives. That's why the enemy uses these subtle tactics—he wants to keep us enslaved. Don't give in to these temptations. Come to Christ and be set free.



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## Chapter VI

# Prayer

### UNDERSTANDING

(for your preparation as a leader)  
Pages 132 - 143

### DISCUSSION

(to use with your group)  
Pages 144 - 154

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## UNDERSTANDING

## WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS PASSAGE?

### “Lord, teach us to pray.” - Luke 11:1-4

Can you imagine being face to face with Jesus, looking him in the eye and listening to Him teach you how to pray? As He spoke, you would hang on every word. You would listen with great care and attention. These would be the most important words about prayer that you would ever hear. After listening to Jesus, no other prayer technique, no other devotional, would mean nearly as much as those few, perfect words from Jesus.

That experience isn't just a hypothetical exercise. It is exactly what happens to the Apostles in the passage we are going to study today (Luke 11:1-4). They approach Jesus, saying, “Teach us how to pray,” and, that is precisely what Jesus does. Don't miss the significance of these few short verses—Jesus, God Himself, teaches the Apostles how to pray.

Jesus' teaching isn't just for the Apostles either. It's also for us. And the prayer that He teaches us is known as the “Our Father.” The “Our Father” is not only a prayer that we recite, but it is also a guide for Christian prayer. In a way, it is Jesus' “instruction manual” for

prayer. The Catechism of the Catholic Church calls the “Our Father” a “summary of the whole Gospel” (CCC 2761) and St. Thomas Aquinas calls it “the most perfect of prayers.”<sup>1</sup> Of all the things that Jesus could have said, this is what He wanted to teach us about prayer.

Yet, how often do we think deeply about the “Our Father?” For many of us, it can simply spill out of our mouth. We may have memorized it before we could even understand the words. Because it is so familiar, we can lose sight of its meaning and just say it without thinking. We need to be reminded that this is not just any old prayer. This prayer contains Jesus' instructions for communicating with God.

As Christian disciples, we are called to take in the “deep breath of prayer” every day—it is absolutely vital to our discipleship.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, let us be attentive to the words of the “Our Father,” so that our prayer can truly become what Jesus wants it to be:

### ***Our Father, Who art in Heaven***

The “Our Father” is a *daring* prayer.

At Mass, prior to the recitation of the “Our Father,” the priest says, “At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to say.” But what is so daring about a prayer that even young children have memorized?

In our modern society, we don't always appreciate what it means to approach the all-holy God. The Bible is full of examples of people

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, 83, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, accessed May 16, 2022, Vatican.va, 262.

approaching God in reverence and awe. At the burning bush, God's first instructions to Moses were "do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground" (Ex 3:5). Upon receiving a vision of the Lord, the prophet Isaiah exclaims, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" (Is 6:5). These examples reveal how amazing, staggering, and incredible it is to converse with the living God.

The "Our Father," however, takes us further. In it, the all-powerful, all-holy, omniscient, omnipresent, creator of the universe invites us to speak with Him as a child speaks to their Father. How can this be? Something incredible happens at baptism: we become sharers in God's inner life. We participate in the love of the Father and the Son. We become, "sons in the Son" (see Gal 3:26). The Father says the same words to us that he said of Jesus at His baptism, "This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased" (Mt 3:17). This is the reason we can be so daring as to call God "Father": in Christ, He really is our Father. He is not simply *like* a Father; He *is* our Father, and we *are* His children. This changes *everything* about our prayer. We don't need to try and earn something from a God who is distant and calculating. He is not a taskmaster that demands our servitude. In the words of the Catechism, we can approach God with "straightforward simplicity, filial trust, joyous assurance, humble boldness, the certainty of being loved" (CCC 2778).

Is this how you approach God? Do you approach prayer as a relationship with your loving Father, confident in His care for you? Do you recognize that you are His beloved son or daughter? Or are you trying to impress Him? Trying to earn His love? Or do you hide yourself from Him, afraid or ashamed of what He might see? Do not be afraid.

Our God is a Father who dearly loves us, and we can approach Him confidently as beloved children.

### ***Hallowed be thy name***

God's name is holy. For the Jewish people, God's name was considered so holy that it was only uttered by the High Priest once each year, on the highest Jewish feast day, the Day of Atonement. His name was full of meaning and power—and it wasn't to be uttered lightly.

In the New Testament, a similar reverence is paid to Jesus' name. The Scriptures say, "at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow" (Phil 2:10). To simply speak the name of "Jesus" is to invite him into our lives and our hearts (Mt 18:20), and according to the Church, in his name is contained "God and man and the whole economy of creation and salvation" (CCC 2666).

Today, we don't have to wait for a feast day to speak the name of Jesus, nor is it reserved for priests or religious. We can pray with this most powerful Name every minute of every day. But why does Jesus invite us to "hallow" God's name and what does that mean?

The word "hallow" means to make holy. But Jesus isn't inviting us to *make* God's name holy—it is already holy. Instead, in this petition, we take a moment to pause and recognize God's holiness. This is an important step for our prayer. Our God is worthy of our praise. In fact, He *deserves* our praise. Therefore, "hallowing His name" should be a priority in our prayer. Too often, however, we get it backwards. Instead of hallowing God's name, we come to God concerned more about ourselves—our problems, our needs, what we want Him to do in our lives—rather than giving Him what He deserves. Jesus wants us to re-order our priorities. Make no mistake, petitions are good,

and our Father wants to hear our needs, but these can't come first. The first movement of our prayer should always be to praise, honor, and thank God for Who He is. That's what hallowing God's name is all about.

A good way for us to examine how well we are hallowing God's name is to ask ourselves, "Is my prayer about God or is my prayer simply about me?" If we are honest, we might realize that our prayer is much more selfish than we think—that we are simply asking God to make our lives easier, to bless the things we care about, and to bring our own plans, wants, and desires to fruition. But that's why Jesus gives us this teaching. It is a remedy for our temptation to self-centeredness. He knows how important it is to honor God first and foremost, and He challenges us to prioritize hallowing God's name in our prayer.

### ***Thy kingdom come***

Do you want Christ's Kingdom to come?

At first, we might be inclined to think "Of course I desire the Kingdom." But this petition is more than a vague wish for things to be better. At its deepest level, praying "Thy Kingdom come" is an expression of our desire for Christ to reign in everything. Too often, we pray these words half-heartedly. Instead of Christ's total reign, we simply want to get through another day without difficulty and suffering. We want the kingdom, but only insofar as it doesn't upset our own plans and preferences. But what would it mean to pray this petition with total sincerity?

First, this petition invites us to change our hearts. The Catechism states, "only a pure soul can boldly say, 'Thy kingdom come'" (CCC

2819). We can't fully desire the Kingdom when we are attached to other things. We must surrender our lives to Christ and allow him to reign in our hearts. Our plans, our preferences, and the sins to which we secretly cling, these cloud our desire for the kingdom. This petition forces us to examine ourselves: What are we holding onto? What is getting in the way of our relationships with God? What is preventing us from seeking first His Kingdom (see Mt. 6:33)? How might we be tempted to build our own kingdom instead of building God's?

Second, praying "Thy Kingdom come" compels us to work to build Christ's kingdom. Instead of sitting on the sidelines and merely hoping for things to get better, praying "Thy Kingdom come" moves us toward action. It convicts us to embrace the method of evangelization that Jesus modeled for us as the best path for reaching souls and extending the Kingdom. The world has so many needs, and God invites us to respond—whether that be serving the poor, sharing the Gospel, or anything else that makes Christ's Kingdom present on this earth. If we want to know how sincerely we are praying this petition, then we need look no further than our commitment to building the Kingdom. Are we laboring diligently for Christ? Are we making radical sacrifices to serve others and bring them into the kingdom? Are we prioritizing God's work over our own plans each and every day? That is what it means to pray "Thy Kingdom come."

### ***Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven***

Have you ever heard someone say, "God's will be done?" When you heard it said, did the person seem to be expressing something profound? Or was it tossed around casually, as a sort of simplistic Christian way of saying, "It is what it is.?"

Seeking God's Will is anything but casual and simplistic. To say, "Thy will be done" has a deep and profound meaning. To uncover the deeper meaning of phrases in the Bible, it can be helpful to look at other contexts in which that phrase is used. And the phrase "thy will be done" appears in a place that gives us great insight:

Imagine the scene. Jesus is with His disciples on the night before He suffered. He is in agony, fully aware of the suffering that awaits. He turns to God in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane and pours out His heart. He prays to the Father saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this chalice from me; nevertheless *not my will, but yours, be done*" (Lk 22:42). His human nature is repulsed by the suffering and death that await Him. Yet, His prayer is clear, "Thy will be done."

This context shows us the true meaning of "Thy will be done." Accepting God's will means accepting whatever God might ask, including what Jesus accepted in the Garden—suffering, hardship, the things we would least prefer, even death.

You have probably said "Thy Will be done" many times, but do you mean it in this way? Are you willing to totally surrender your will to God's Will, no matter the situation, no matter the cost? The next time you pray this petition, imagine Jesus in the Garden. Will you accept God's Will like Jesus did?

### ***Give us this day our daily bread***

As we consider this petition, there is an important word that needs to be highlighted. The word "daily" is *epiousios* in the Greek—and it is a loaded word. It appears only here in the entire New Testament and all extant Greek writings. It is literally "one of a kind." In fact, it's

entirely plausible that this word was invented to capture this unique mystery. If we were to translate *epiousios* in its most literal sense, we might translate it as "super-essential" (CCC 2837).<sup>3</sup> But what is "super-essential" bread? What is Jesus trying to tell us by using this unique word?

Taken in a natural sense, this bread refers to a bread that satisfies all our material needs (CCC 2837). It is "super-essential" in that it provides everything. Such a bread would recall the "daily" manna Israel received in the desert to satisfy the people's hunger (Ex 16:31). It is a miraculous bread that God provides. We have so many needs—food, clothing, shelter, etc. And in this one petition, we ask God to provide for everything.

But even more is contained in this single word. Taken more directly, this "super-essential" bread refers to that bread which satisfies the deepest desires of our hearts. It is a *supernatural* bread that satisfies not only our physical hunger but also our spiritual hunger. This is the bread, that when we eat of it, we will never hunger again (Jn 6:35). Quite simply, the Church and so many of the saints have recognized that this is a petition for the Eucharist.

There is an important question we need to consider here: Do we really believe that the Eucharist is the answer to our spiritual hungers? We might be tempted to think that we need more to be satisfied, that the Eucharist isn't enough to meet our spiritual needs, that we need some spiritual novelty—a new book, a retreat, a unique spiritual experience—to be truly satisfied. But this would be a great mistake. St. John of the Cross once wrote, "In giving us his Son, his only Word, he spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word—and he has

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<sup>3</sup> The general meaning of the word *epiousios* can be derived from its Greek roots. *Epi-* can mean "upon," "over," "above," "on the basis of," etc. While *-ousia* can mean "being," "essence," or "substance."

no more to say" (CCC 65). Jesus is the answer to every desire of our hearts. He is the One Who truly satisfies. When we pray this petition, we recognize that God has already given us His most perfect solution to our spiritual hungers, the Holy Eucharist.

***And, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us***

Did you notice how this petition is different from all the others?

This is the only petition in the entire prayer that uses conditional language. When we pray this prayer, we actually ask God *not to forgive us* if we don't forgive others. This reveals a key teaching of Scripture: The mercy God grants us depends upon our own forgiveness toward others (1 Jn 4:20, Mt 18:35). We are called to be "merciful even as [our] Father is merciful" (Lk 6:36).

It's important to note that God isn't simply withholding forgiveness to demand that we forgive others. It isn't a divine tactic for obedience. There is a deep, spiritual principle at work here—a principle of the heart. Only when we have forgiven others are we truly open to receive God's forgiveness. It isn't that God *won't* forgive us; it is that He *can't* forgive us, because by our unforgiveness, we prevent Him from working in our hearts.

This has important implications for our prayer life. The Catechism states, "Forgiveness is a high-point of Christian prayer; only hearts attuned to God's compassion can receive the gift of prayer" (CCC 2844). In other words, when we fail to forgive others, our prayer life dries up. Indeed, only hearts open to forgiveness are also open to the gift of prayer.

Are you struggling in prayer? Consider your attitude toward others: Have you forgiven those who have hurt you? Are you harboring grudges? Is there a wound in your heart that you refuse to bring to the Lord? It may be that you aren't noticing God's mercy in your life because you haven't extended mercy to anyone else. Only when we are willing to extend mercy to others can our prayer life truly blossom.

***And, lead us not into temptation***

We need to avoid a possible mistake when understanding this petition: God does not tempt us. The book of James clearly teaches that God "tempts no one" (Jas 1:13). Instead, in this petition, we ask God to help us not *give in* to temptation. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, in this petition, we "ask God not to mete out more than we can bear, not to let us slip from his hands."<sup>4</sup>

And let's be very clear: we can't overcome temptation on our own. Yet, how often do we trust in ourselves, instead of turning to the Lord, believing that somehow by our own strength, intelligence, or ability we will be able to overcome temptation? This petition presents a better path:

First, in these words, we recognize our weakness. We humbly acknowledge our powerlessness against temptation. We admit that left to our own devices, we are sure to fail.

Second, we also recognize that temptations will come. Implicit in this petition is a request for strength from God. Scripture tells us, "God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you

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<sup>4</sup> Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth; From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, Vol 1. Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 2007, p. 164.

may be able to endure it” (1 Cor 10:13). Yes, temptation will come, but sin is not inevitable. Amidst temptation, we ask God for strength, knowing that He can provide a means of escape.

The next time you find yourself struggling with sin, this petition can be your guide. First, acknowledge your weakness and don't try to handle things on your own. Seek out the help you need. Then, spend time in prayer, begging God for His divine assistance. This is our path for overcoming temptation.

### ***But deliver us from evil***

Evil has no power over Jesus Christ. God can and has delivered many, many people. Think of Mary Magdalene from whom seven demons were driven out (Mk 16:9), or the hemorrhaging woman who was healed after twelve years of suffering (Lk 8:44), or the many other suffering people delivered from their maladies by Christ in the Gospels.

Jesus can conquer the evil in our lives as well. This is so important for us to remember. Do you find yourself discouraged? Do you fear that evil is too prevalent in the world? Too powerful? That things are much too bad, and that you can do nothing in response? Don't give in to this deception. By praying, “deliver us from evil,” we recognize that Christ has all the power. He has already won the victory. By His death and resurrection, Christ has conquered the devil. He can conquer any difficulty we might face.

Do you believe this? As you finish reciting the “Our Father,” even amidst the many struggles in this world, don't give in to discouragement. Remember: Jesus is Lord!

### **Conclusion**

Now that you have walked through the entire “Our Father,” take a minute and reflect on the key places in your prayer life where you feel challenged or inspired. The “Our Father” is a demanding prayer. It covers both the basics of Christian prayer and the heights of contemplation. While you may not be able to reflect on every aspect of this prayer each time you say it, this prayer can be a constant source of inspiration for deepening your prayer life. If you were to dedicate yourself to allowing the “Our Father” to shape your prayer life, you would experience profound transformation. As this chapter concludes, consider what could happen if you truly put this prayer into practice.

DISCUSSION

# DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR YOUR BIBLE STUDY

Passage: Luke 11:1-4

## Introduction

1. Launching Question: Who first taught you to pray? What did they teach you?

*Allow the group to discuss.*

*Please read aloud:* Last time we explored the significance and beauty of the sacrament of Confession. Today, we will be considering the “oxygen of the soul”, as St. Padre Pio called it: that is, prayer. Specifically, we will turn to the moment in Scripture when Jesus teaches his disciples word for word how they ought to pray. Line by line, we’ll discover why this prayer is called “summary of the whole Gospel” (CCC 2761) and even “the most perfect of prayers.”<sup>1</sup>

### “Lord, teach us to pray”

Read Luke 11:1-4

2. Most of us have heard the “Our Father” before. We may have even had it memorized for years. Yet this prayer is anything but ordinary. In this passage from Luke, the disciples approach Jesus, saying, “Teach us how to pray,” and, that is precisely what Jesus does. Don’t miss the significance of these few short verses—Jesus, God Himself, teaches the Apostles how to pray. Does this change the way you see the “Our Father” prayer? Why or why not?

*Allow the group to discuss. Note: Because it is so familiar, we can lose sight of the meaning of this prayer and just say it without thinking. Remind your group that this is not just any old prayer. This prayer contains Jesus’ instructions for communicating with God.*

*Note to the Leader: This chapter uses Luke’s version of the “Our Father” because of the immediate context. Feel free to also share Matthew’s version (Matthew 6:7-15).*

## Our Father, Who art in Heaven

3. At Mass, prior to the recitation of the “Our Father,” the priest says, “At the Savior’s command and formed by divine teaching, we **dare** to say.” But what is so daring about a prayer that even young children can memorize? What do you think?

*Answer: In the “Our Father”, the all-powerful, all-holy, omniscient, omnipresent, creator of the universe invites us to speak with Him as a child speaks to their Father.*

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, II-II, 83, 9.

*Please read aloud:* In our modern society, we don't always appreciate what it means to approach the all-holy God. The Bible is full of examples of people approaching God in reverence and awe. Think of Moses approaching the burning bush (God says, "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground" (Ex 3:5)).

But as Christians, through our baptism, we become sharers in God's inner life. We participate in the love of the Father and the Son. We become, "sons in the Son" (see Gal 3:26). This is the reason we can be so daring as to call God "Father": in Christ, He really is our Father. He is not simply *like* a Father; He *is* our Father, and we *are* His children.

4. How does the reality that we are God's children and He is our Father alter the way we can approach Him in prayer? Do you approach Him like a Father, or do you find yourself trying to impress Him, earn His love, or hide from Him?

*Allow the group to discuss.*

*Answer: This changes everything about our prayer. We don't need to try and earn something from a God who is distant and calculating. He is not a taskmaster that demands our servitude. In the words of the Catechism, we can approach God with "straightforward simplicity, filial trust, joyous assurance, humble boldness, the certainty of being loved" (CCC 2778).*

*Please read aloud:* Do not be afraid. Our God is a Father who dearly loves us, and we can approach Him confidently as beloved children.

### **Hallowed be thy name**

5. Does anyone know what "hallowed" means? Why do we call God's name hallowed at the beginning of this prayer?

*Answer: God's name is holy. For the Jewish people, God's name was considered so holy that it was only uttered by the High Priest once each year, on the highest Jewish feast day, the Day of Atonement. In the New Testament, a similar reverence is paid to Jesus' name. The word "hallow" means to make holy. But Jesus isn't inviting us to make God's name holy—it is already holy. Instead, in this petition, we take a moment to pause and recognize God's holiness. Sometimes we can come to God concerned more about ourselves and our lives and fail to give him what he deserves: honor, praise, thanksgiving, adoration. Offering God our petitions is good and he wants to receive them! But the first movement of our prayer should always be to praise, honor, and thank God for Who He is. That's what hallowing God's name is all about.*

6. A good way for us to examine how well we are hallowing God's name is to ask ourselves, "Is my prayer about God or is my prayer simply about me?" What would you say in response to that question? What would change if we approached God consistently with a desire to honor and praise him above all else?

*Allow the group to discuss.*

### **Thy kingdom come**

7. What does it mean for Christ's Kingdom to come? And what would it mean for you to pray this petition with sincerity? What would have to change in you?

*Allow the group to discuss.*

*Answer: This petition is more than a vague wish for things to be better. At its deepest level, praying "Thy Kingdom come" is an expression of our desire for Christ to reign in everything. Too often, we pray these words half-heartedly. Instead of Christ's total reign, we simply want to get through another day without difficulty and suffering. We want the kingdom, but only insofar as it doesn't upset our own plans and preferences.*

*This petition invites us to change our hearts. We can't fully desire the Kingdom when we are attached to other things. We must surrender our lives to Christ and allow him to reign in our hearts. Additionally, praying "Thy Kingdom come" compels us to work to build Christ's kingdom. Instead of sitting on the sidelines and merely hoping for things to get better, praying "Thy Kingdom come" moves us toward action. The world has so many needs, and God invites us to respond—whether that be serving the poor, sharing the Gospel, or anything else that makes Christ's Kingdom present on this earth.*

#### *Optional questions for further discussion*

- a. What are we holding onto? What is getting in the way of our relationships with God? What is preventing us from seeking

first His Kingdom (see Mt. 6:33)? How might we be tempted to build our own kingdom instead of building God's?

- b. If we want to know how sincerely we are praying this petition, then we need look no further than our commitment to building the Kingdom. Are we laboring diligently for Christ? Are we making radical sacrifices to serve others and bring them into the kingdom? Are we prioritizing God's work over our own plans each and every day?

### **Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven**

8. What do you think of when you hear "Thy will be done"?

*Allow the group to discuss.*

*Answer: Sometimes we can toss this phrase around casually, and even say to some degree, "It is what it is." Seeking God's Will is anything but casual and simplistic. To say, "Thy will be done" has a deep and profound meaning.*

*Please read aloud:* To uncover the deeper meaning of this phrase, it is helpful to look at other places it is used. And the phrase "thy will be done" appears in a place that gives us great insight: the Agony in the Garden.

Imagine the scene. Jesus is with His disciples on the night before He suffered. He is in agony, fully aware of the suffering that awaits. He turns to God in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane and pours out His heart. He prays to the Father saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this chalice from me; nevertheless, *not my will, but yours, be*

done" (Lk 22:42). His human nature is repulsed by the suffering and death that await Him. Yet, His prayer is clear, "Thy will be done."

This context shows us the true meaning of "Thy will be done." Accepting God's will means accepting whatever God might ask, including what Jesus accepted in the Garden—suffering, hardship, the things we would least prefer, even death.

9. You have probably said "Thy Will be done" many times, but do you mean it in this way? Are you willing to totally surrender your will to God's Will, no matter the situation, no matter the cost?

*Allow the group to discuss.*

### **Give us this day our daily bread**

*Please read aloud:* As we consider this petition, there is an important word that needs to be highlighted. The word "daily" is *epiousios* in the Greek—and it is a loaded word. It appears only here in the entire New Testament and all extant Greek writings. It is literally "one of a kind." In fact, it's entirely plausible that this word was invented to capture this unique mystery. If we were to translate *epiousios* in its most literal sense, we might translate it as "super-essential" (CCC 2837).

10. What is "super-essential" bread? What might that mean in a natural sense? In a supernatural sense?

*Answer:* Taken in a natural sense, this bread refers to a bread that satisfies all our material needs (CCC 2837). It is "super-essential" in that it provides everything. We have so many needs and in this one petition, we ask God to provide for everything.

*Taken more directly, this "super-essential" bread refers to that bread which satisfies the deepest desires of our hearts. It is a supernatural bread that satisfies not only our physical hunger but also our spiritual hunger. This is the bread, that when we eat of it, we will never hunger again (Jn 6:35). This is a petition for the Eucharist.*

11. Do we really believe that the Eucharist is the answer to our spiritual hungers? Do we believe Jesus is the One Who truly satisfies?

*Allow the group to discuss.*

### **And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us**

*Please read aloud:* This is the only petition in the entire prayer that uses conditional language. When we pray this prayer, we actually ask God *not to forgive us* if we don't forgive others.

12. Is God withholding forgiveness so that we might behave obediently to his commandment to forgive? If not, what is going on here?

*Answer:* This reveals a key teaching of Scripture: The mercy God grants us depends upon our own forgiveness toward others (1 Jn 4:20, Mt 18:35). God isn't simply withholding forgiveness to demand that we forgive others. It isn't that God won't forgive us; it is that He can't forgive us, because by our unforgiveness, we prevent Him from working in our hearts.

*Please read aloud:* This has important implications for our prayer life. The Catechism states, "Forgiveness is a high-point of Christian

prayer; only hearts attuned to God's compassion can receive the gift of prayer" (CCC 2844). In other words, when we fail to forgive others, our prayer life dries up. Indeed, only hearts open to forgiveness are also open to the gift of prayer.

*Optional question for further discussion:*

- a. Are you struggling in prayer? Consider your attitude toward others: Have you forgiven those who have hurt you? Are you harboring grudges? Is there a wound in your heart that you refuse to bring to the Lord?

### ***And, lead us not into temptation***

13. It is important to note that God does not tempt us (see James 1:13). In this petition we ask God to help us not *give in* to temptation. What do we need from God in order to not fall into temptation?

*Answer: First, the gift of humble self-awareness, knowledge that we are weak and cannot by our own power overcome temptation. Also, we must ask for strength from God, recognizing that temptations will come. Sin is not inevitable so we must ask God to preserve us and strengthen us in the face of temptations.*

### ***But deliver us from evil***

*Please read aloud:* Evil has no power over Jesus Christ. Think of the woman delivered from seven demons (Mk 16:9) or the hemorrhaging woman who bled for twelve years (Lk 8:44).

14. Jesus can conquer evil in our lives as well. Do you believe this? Or do you fear that evil is too prevalent in the world? Or that it is all up to you to deal with evil?

*Allow the group to discuss.*

*Answer: Don't give in to this deception. By praying, "deliver us from evil," we recognize that Christ has all the power. He has already won the victory. By His death and resurrection, Christ has conquered the devil. He can conquer any difficulty we might face.*

### **Conclusion**

15. (Optional) We've just walked through Jesus' own teaching on prayer. What stands out to you most? Where do you feel challenged or inspired? How will this change how you pray the "Our Father?"

*Allow the group to discuss.*

*Please read aloud:* The "Our Father" is a demanding prayer. It covers both the basics of Christian prayer and the heights of contemplation. While you may not be able to reflect on every aspect of this prayer each time you say it, this prayer can be a constant source of inspiration for deepening your prayer life.

If you were to dedicate yourself to allowing the "Our Father" to shape your prayer life, you would experience profound transformation. As this chapter concludes, consider what could happen if you truly put this prayer into practice.

