

## DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

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From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 578-587

### THE LORD'S PRAYER – THE OUR FATHER

#### WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF THE *Our Father* ?

Jesus taught us this Christian prayer for which there is no substitute, the *Our Father*, on the day on which one of His disciples saw Him praying and asked Him, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). The Church’s liturgical tradition has always used the text of Saint Matthew (6:9-13).

#### WHAT IS THE PLACE OF THE OUR FATHER IN THE SCRIPTURES ?

The Lord’s Prayer by Harold Copping



The *Our Father* is the “summary of the whole Gospel” (Tertullian), “the perfect prayer” (Saint Thomas Aquinas). Found in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), it presents in the form of prayer the essential content of the Gospel.

#### WHY IS IT CALLED “THE LORD’S PRAYER” ?

The *Our Father* is called the “Oratio Dominica”, that is, the Lord’s Prayer because it was taught to us by the Lord Jesus Himself.

#### WHAT PLACE DOES THE OUR FATHER HAVE IN THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH ?

The *Lord’s Prayer* is the prayer of the Church *par excellence*. It is “handed on” in Baptism to signify the new birth of the children of God into the divine life. The full meaning of the *Our Father* is revealed in the Eucharist since its petitions are based on the mystery of salvation already accomplished petitions that will be fully heard at the coming of the Lord. The *Our Father* is an integral part of the Liturgy of the Hours.

#### WHY CAN WE DARE TO DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN FULL CONFIDENCE ?

Because Jesus, our Redeemer, brings us into the Father’s presence and His Spirit makes us His children. We are thus able to pray the Our Father with simple and filial trust, with joyful assurance and humble boldness, with the certainty of being loved and heard.

#### HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO ADDRESS GOD AS “FATHER” ?

We can invoke the “Father” because the Son of God made man has revealed Him to us and because His Spirit makes Him known to us. The invocation, Father, lets us enter into His mystery with an ever new sense of wonder and awakens in us the desire to act as His children. When we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we are therefore aware of our being sons of the Father in the Son.

### **WHY DO WE SAY “OUR” FATHER ?**

“Our” expresses a totally new relationship with God. When we pray to the Father, we adore and glorify Him with the Son and the Holy Spirit. In Christ we are “His” people and He is “our” God now and for eternity. In fact, we also say, “our” Father because the Church of Christ is the communion of a multitude of brothers and sisters who have but “one heart and mind” (Acts 4:32).

### **WITH WHAT SPIRIT OF COMMUNION AND MISSION DO WE PRAY TO GOD AS “OUR” FATHER ?**

Since praying to “our” Father is a common blessing for the baptised, we feel an urgent summons to join in Jesus’ prayer for the unity of His disciples. To pray the “Our Father” is to pray with all people and for all people that they may know the one true God and be gathered into unity.

### **WHAT DOES THE PHRASE “WHO ART IN HEAVEN” MEAN ?**

This Biblical expression does not indicate a place but a way of being: God transcends everything. The expression refers to the majesty, the holiness of God, and also to His presence in the hearts of the just. Heaven, or the Father’s house, constitutes our true homeland toward which we are moving in hope while we are still on earth. “Hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3), we live already in this homeland.

### **WHAT IS THE STRUCTURE OF THE LORD’S PRAYER ?**

It contains seven petitions made to God the Father. The first three, more God-centred, draw us toward Him for His glory; it is characteristic of love to think first of the beloved. These petitions suggest in particular what we ought to ask of Him: the sanctification of His Name, the coming of His Kingdom, and the fulfilment of His Will. The last four petitions present to the Father of Mercies our wretchedness and our expectations. They ask Him to feed us, to forgive us, to sustain us in temptations and to free us from the Evil One.



*It is essential that every Catholic has access to good Catechesis to be able to deepen their faith. The Diocese of Plymouth recommends the many Catechetical Workshops from 'Franciscan at Home,' for more information on access to these and online or real group sessions contact [deborah.vankroonenburg@prcdtr.org.uk](mailto:deborah.vankroonenburg@prcdtr.org.uk)*