

## Teach Your Children Well

This is the conclusion of reflections based upon the lectures of Fr. Thomas Hopko on the Lord's Prayer. These reflections have as their goal to shed light on the depth of meaning contained within the Lord's Prayer, and hopefully deepen the experience of praying it.

The "paraphrased" version being provided is not meant to replace the accepted version which is universally accepted. For parents instructing their children in the Faith, I would like to provide the following teaching points to assist in explaining the meaning of the Lord's Prayer.

- When we are Baptized, God becomes our Father and we become His Children
- Everything that belongs to our Father is now shared with us.
- Our Father is Holy - we are asking that God share His holiness with us.
- Jesus is the King of the Father's Kingdom and He sends the Holy Spirit to guide our lives.
- God's Kingdom is celebrated at Church in the Liturgy.
- Jesus always obeyed the will of His Father. We are praying that we also may always follow the will of God.
- Just before receiving Communion in Church we say the Lord's Prayer. We are about to receive Jesus in Communion, our daily bread.
- Communion gives us everlasting life. When we receive Communion we also receive the forgiveness of our sins.
- We need to love one another and ask each other for forgiveness before receiving Communion.
- We finally ask that God gives us the strength not to sin and that He will protect us from the evil one.

The fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer is ~ Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

A more accurate translation from the Greek would be ~ Forgive us what we owe as we have already forgiven those who owe us. The emphasis is on the action of forgiving one another prior to asking for the forgiveness of sins from God. In others words, it would be impossible to receive the love of God within us while still living with discord or hatred towards others.

In the Liturgy it is just prior to approaching for Holy Communion that the Lord's Prayer is said. It is inviting us to come forth in a spirit of mutual forgiveness. The priest says to each person as they receive Communion: "The servant of God receives the Body and Blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting." One fruit of Communion is receiving the forgiveness of sins. The deceptive nature of sin is such that we create polite excuses for disunity that exists among us. Ignoring disliked people is an unwarranted fear. Speaking ill of others behind their backs does them no good and only creates inner turmoil. Our Lord did the opposite. If Christ did not love His enemies He

would have failed as the Messiah. Christians have been given the gift of calling God their own Father and are challenged to show forth the same love of Christ as witnessed in the Holy Gospels. St. John offers an explanation of the inter-relational aspects of forgiveness which begin with God's love being shown towards us by His sending of His Son, Who freely offers Himself on the Cross for our salvation.

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another...If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is made perfect in us. In this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit...And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has in us. God is love; and the one abiding in love, abides in God, and God in him. In this has love been made perfect with us...There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has punishment; and the one who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him, because He first loved us. If anyone should say, ‘I love God,’ and be hating his brother, he is a liar; for the one not loving his brother whom he has seen, how is he able to love God Whom he hath not seen?” (1 Jn. 4:11-20) In more practical terms this means, “...to acknowledge our disunity with others, and ... implies an effort to overcome it [disunity] ... forgiveness is a mystical action that restores lost wholeness ... Only mutual forgiveness has this power. If we forgive one another, then, God forgives us ... and the conscience is purified .” (Schmemmann)

The sixth and final petition of the Lord's Prayer is ~ And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

When the Lord's Prayer was first said by early Christians, the returning of Christ was understood as being imminent. The real threat of martyrdom was the condition of daily life. Theologically speaking, the end of this world was inaugurated with the crucifixion of Christ and the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. “Verily I say to you, that in no wise shall this generation pass away, until all shall have taken place.” (Lk. 21:32) The end of this world marks the beginning of God's Kingdom which now reigns on earth in His Church and the people who are members of it. “For as a snare shall it come upon all those sitting upon the face of the whole earth. Be vigilant then, in every season entreating that you might be accounted worthy to escape all these things which are about to come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.” (Lk. 21:35,36)

“Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil,” has a twofold meaning. It is referring to daily tests and trials that strengthen ones' faith and also the enduring of the final tribulation which has begun on earth. “...after Jesus is crucified, raised in glory and the Holy Spirit is given, the content of life in this world is the Tribulation. We are in the Tribulation until He comes again. And the Tribulation is a technical term for the End Time. Because the End Time is characterized by the Tribulation, the temptation, the trial, the affliction ... and in the time of the Tribulation we are also in the Kingdom because we belong to Christ ... So we are in two worlds. Spiritually ... we are in the Kingdom. But we are also still in this history, in the time of Tribulation ... the time when

the children of the Kingdom get nailed by the children of this world. That's what the End Time is all about. And the children of the Kingdom have to stand fast in the Tribulation." (Fr. Hopko)

It is also important to note that, "lead us not" is an Aramaic idiom which means don't let us fall. It means that all things are in the hands of God and all things come from God – even the demons that tempt us. The same idiom is used in the Lenten prayer of St. Ephraim which begins with "grant me not the spirit of spiritual indifference..." The teaching is that we are not to seek escape from temptations or that they should cease, but that when they arise that we may be having victory over them. It is by facing trials, tests and temptations that we overcome them and are sanctified by God and saved. St. Anthony of Egypt said: "Without temptation, no one can be saved ... Whoever has not experienced temptation cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." Fr. Hopko explains that, "lead us not into temptation" means ~ "Don't let us surrender, don't let us give in, 'you can give up and the evil crushes you, give in and become part of the evil yourself or go on and face it and die but you will be victorious in Christ." (Solzhenitsyn, a Russian novelist)

It is also important to know that God does not tempt any one: "Let no one when he is tempted be saying, 'I am tempted of God;' for ... He Himself tempts no one. But each is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own desire. Then after he conceives the desire, it brings forth sin; and sin, after it is fully formed, brings forth death." (James 1:13-15) So, to paraphrase the final petition might be something like this: "Let us stand (do not let us fall) when we are tested and tried in the final tribulation, but deliver us from the evil one. Finally, St. James also teaches that being tempted is part of proving our faith in Christ. "Happy is the man who endures temptation; because having become approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to those who love Him." (James 1:12)

The concluding line of the Lord's Prayer is ~ "and deliver us from the evil one." Evil is not an abstract impersonal force in the universe like the "dark side" but is always personal in nature. A better translation of the Greek would be "the evil one" which is a title for Satan (Mt 13:19,38; 2 Thes 3:3, John 17:15). Evil requires the will of a person in order to become operative. This would include demons, persons and anyone who seeks to deceive believers from the truth. May I also not be found to be such a person.

In the Love of Christ,  
+ Fr. Andrew