

17. June 2021

## “The Our Father”

*Mt 6:7-15*

*'In your prayers do not babble as the gentiles do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard. Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him. So you should pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be held holy, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us. And do not put us to the test, but save us from the Evil One.*

*'Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours; but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings either.'*

It is not the number of words, but the sincerity of our prayer that reaches God. In fact, a prayer that comes from the depths of our heart has already reached God. Of course, there are also long prayers that are valuable: think, for example, of the Holy Rosary, the various litanies, the prayer of the heart, long chanted psalms, etc... Certainly Jesus, when he spoke of “not much chatter” in our prayer, was not referring to this type of prayer, but to the inner attitude when praying. God cannot be influenced by magic formulas or by a person's spiritual 'performance' (such as how many words they say). Rather, He loves that in our prayer we come to Him full of trust.

The Lord's Prayer is like a synthesis of all the essentials that our relationship with God should contain. First of all, we address God by calling Him "Father". This goes beyond everything! It is an expression of the loving relationship between God and his creature; or, even more, of the closeness that enables us to address him as his children. In this sense, we should not be discouraged if we did not have the grace of a particularly good relationship with our human father. Let us try to understand more deeply the meaning of the name “Father” as it should be: the personification of protection and security; the certainty of being loved and accepted; receiving the necessary training for life, as a good father does, who teaches and helps his child to cope with daily difficulties.

The word “Father” is preceded by “our”: “Our Father”. With this term, we are introduced into a community: the family of God's children. In fact, all humanity is

called to live as children of one Father. All peoples should be united, obeying this Father together, receiving his provident love and finding true peace in him.

Let us remain today with the reflection of God as our Father. In a book I found a beautiful collection of biblical quotations that show us God as Father, and reveal to us the tenderness with which He addresses His children. I am transcribing just a few of them, because it is worth meditating on each one, in order to draw closer to the Father and to let Him enter more deeply into us. Some of the quotations have been slightly modified to make them sound as if God is addressing us directly:

- *“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated” (Jer 1:5).*

- *“Thou hast been wondrously created” (cf. Ps 139:14).*

- *“All your ways are familiar to me” (cf. Ps 139:3).*

- *“I know well the plans I have for you. They are plans of peace, not misfortune, to give you a future full of hope” (cf. Jer 29:11).*

- *“As a shepherd carries his lambs in his arms, so I have carried you in my bosom” (cf. Isa 40:11).*

- *“I am your Father, and I love you no less than I love my Son Jesus” (cf. Jn 17:23).*