

24. The Lord's Prayer & The Beatitudes

The Lord's Prayer is the perfect prayer of the Christian. It puts God, our Father first. It asks only for what we need, and calls us to forgive others, so that we may have the hope of forgiveness by God.

Key terms:

Hallow:	To recognise the holiness of God in mind and action.
Prayer:	A relationship of love in which we lift our minds and hearts to God.
Temptation:	The occasion of sin or something that, when given into and acted upon, becomes sin; not sinful in itself.
Discernment:	The process of learning through prayer and counsel the will of God in one's life.
Righteousness:	The quality of being morally right or justifiable. To live justly, honestly and faithfully according to God's instruction.
Persecution:	Hostility and ill-treatment. The systematic oppression of an individual or group as a response to their religious beliefs.

THE LORD'S PRAYER – A MODEL FOR PRAYER

- Taught by Jesus Himself – a model for His disciples. (Mt. 6:9-13; Lk. 11:2-4).
- A template of how to pray – praise, confession, gratitude and petition.
- A universal prayer – unifies all believers to ONE Father.
- Reminds us of who God is – “Our Father” - emphasises His holiness, power and our deep desire for His will to be fulfilled on earth as it is in heaven.
- Acknowledges our daily dependence – humble expression of our dependence on God for guidance and provision.
- Forgiveness and Reconciliation – we ask God to forgive us as we forgive others.....a call to live in grace and reconciliation.
- A vision of God's Kingdom – Our ultimate hope in God's redemptive plan and the coming of His kingdom on earth.

THE ORIGIN AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LORD'S PRAYER AND GOD'S FATHERHOOD (Lk. 11:1-4)

- Inspired by Jesus at prayer, a disciple asks that he teach all of them how to pray.
- Jesus, Son by nature, emphasises the unity of all his followers in prayer to our common Father (Eph. 4:4-6)
- We have become the adopted children of God, and we pray to the Father as his sons and daughters.
- In the unity of the Holy Spirit we call God “Abba” with the firm hope of his desire for total intimacy with us.
- The “our”, the “us”, the “we” in the Lord's Prayer is all-inclusive; it is the Mystical Body praying.
- Jesus teaches us the order of priority in prayer, and what to ask for.

THE FIRST THREE PETITION: focused on the Father (Jn. 12:28 and Jn. 15:8)

There are three “thy-petitions” (thy name, thy kingdom, thy will)

- “Hallowed be thy name” (Ex. 36:22-27; Gen. 16:13; Gen 21:33; Jer. 23:6)
 - We cannot hallow God ourselves, because he is God and is all-holy.
 - We desire that God be recognised, honoured, and loved as holy by all men and women.
- “Thy Kingdom come” (Mk. 1:14-25)
 - We pray for the coming of God’s kingdom in the here and now.
 - We pray for Christ’s glorious return at the end of time and the reign of God.
 - Jesus launches his public ministry by announcing, “The kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news”.
- “Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven” (Lk. 22:41-42)
 - Our will is conformed to God’s divine will. We seek to discern his will in our lives through earnest prayer.
 - In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus takes up His cross with the words: “thy will be done”.
 - Total abandonment to the will of God is the heart of sanctity, and is possible only in the Holy Spirit.

THE LAST FOUR PETITIONS: asking God for what we need (Mt. 6:25-34)

There are four “us-petitions” (give us, forgive us, lead us not and deliver us)

- “Give us this day our daily bread”
 - Expresses our trust in our Heavenly Father.
 - “our daily bread” - earthly nourishment
 - God not only supplies our material needs, but also the Eucharist as bread for our souls (Jn. 6:25-34).
- “And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us” (Rom 3:23)
 - In confessing our sins, we acknowledge our trust in the Father’s mercy and forgiveness. (1Jn. 1:8-9)
 - We are required to show love and mercy so that we can receive love and mercy (Mt. 6:14-15; Col. 3:13).
 - We must forgive others even before they ask forgiveness, and we must forgive generously over and over (Rom 5:8 and Mt. 18:21-22).
- “And lead us not into temptation”
 - Knowing the evil of sin and our proneness to it (concupiscence), we are asking that God does not allow us to take the path that leads to sin. We are praying to avoid the near occasion of sin.
 - We are in a battle for our souls, threatened by Satan, worldliness, and our own human weakness.
- “But deliver us from evil”
 - “evil” in this petition is not an abstract evil, but actually “refers to a person, Satan, the Evil One, the angel who opposes God” (CCC, 2851).
 - The greatest evil is sin, from which Jesus has ransomed us.
 - Satan is effective because we forget his existence and cunning (1Pt. 5:8-9).
- The prayer that Jesus taught is a summary of the Gospels and indeed of all Scripture.

EXPLORE!

- Explore with the candidates how the Lord's Prayer is a summary of the whole Gospel.
- Explore with the candidates what the word 'Kingdom' means to them and why do Christians pray for that kingdom to come?
- Discuss the connection between seeking forgiveness from God and extending forgiveness to others.
- Reflect on how the principles outlined by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount could influence social responsibility in our communities.

THE BEATITUDES

The word beatitude comes from the Latin *beatitudo*, meaning "blessedness."

The phrase "Blessed are" in each beatitude implies a current state of happiness or well-being - "divine joy and perfect happiness".

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

- Spiritual condition of poverty.
- Recognising one's need for God as King.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

- Those who express deep sorrow for sin and repent from their sins.
- Freedom found in forgiveness of sin and the joy of eternal salvation.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

- Those who are meek submit to God's authority and make Him Lord (Rev. 21:7)
- Meek are those who imitate Jesus Christ, the exemplar of gentleness and self-control.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

- "Hunger" and "thirst" speak of deep need and driving passion.
- "to be filled" is the satisfaction of our soul's desire – Jesus Christ.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

- Those who have received mercy will receive mercy.
- We show mercy through forgiveness, kindness, and compassion toward others.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

- An inward holiness that only God sees.
- Hebrews 12:14: without holiness, no one will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

- We have peace with God through Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
- Reconciliation through Christ brings restored fellowship (peace) with God.
- 2 Corinthians 5:19-20: God entrusts us with this same message of reconciliation to take to others.

Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of right, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

- As Jesus faced persecution, so will his followers.
 - Those who endure by faith rather than hide their faith to avoid persecution are genuine followers of Christ.
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The Lord's Prayer & The Beatitudes — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is addressing God as our Father important to acknowledge in prayer?
2. How could praying “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done” change the world?
3. How do the seven petitions and their order show us the right order of life and prayer?
4. Why is forgiving others so important in our relationship with God that Jesus tells us this as part of his framework for regular prayer?
5. How can the Lord's prayer be an invitation to share in the prayer-life of Jesus and in His own intimacy with the Father?
6. Focusing on the word blessed. In what ways have you heard it used? How can Jesus' use of that word inform us of His intent behind the Beatitudes?
7. What do the Beatitudes reveal about the heart and character of God?
8. What do you sense God is trying to show you or teach you through the Beatitudes?

PRAYER

Matthew 6:9-15

or

Gospel Reflection:	Year A	Jn. 11:1-45
	Year B	Jn. 12:20-30
	Year C	Jn. 8:1-11

The following format will be used for all Gospel reflections:

- Read the text aloud.
- Pause for a minute's silence.
- Read the text aloud again.
- Ask everyone to pick a word or a phrase that struck them. They just say the word or phrase without comment or discussion.
- Read the text again.
- Ask those present to comment on their word or phrase. What struck them about it? Why/how is it speaking to them?
- Continue with the discussion.

The following questions may be helpful:

What does this mean to me?

How does it make me feel?

Did I find the text disturbing/hopeful/confusing?

What images of God emerge for me?

What do I think that God is saying in this text?

What impact does this have on my life?

Scripture and Catechism Resources

Scripture

The Lord's Prayer

- Ex. 16:2-16 God miraculously feeds the Israelites in the desert with manna and quail.
- Ex. 20:1-7 Worship God alone and speak his name with reverence.
- Sir 23:1-6 A prayer to God for protection against temptation and sin.
- Sir 28:1-7 Forgiveness of the wrongs done to us is necessary for God to pardon our sins.
- Mt. 6:9-15 Jesus teaches the Lord's Prayer and emphasises our need to forgive others.
- Mt. 6:25-34 Do not be anxious about anything; your Heavenly Father will take care of you and your needs if you seek first his Kingdom and holiness.
- Mk. 11:25 When we pray, we must forgive others, so that our Father will forgive our sins.
- Lk. 11:1-4 Jesus teaches a condensed version of the Lord's Prayer at the request of a disciple.
- Lk. 15:11-32 The Parable of the Prodigal Son, showing the Father's merciful forgiveness.
- Lk. 19:39-46 Jesus admonishes his apostles to pray not to succumb to temptation, and submits his will to his Father's.
- Jn. 5:30 Jesus acts only under his Father's authority because he seeks his Father's will, not his own.
- Jn. 6:32-35 The Father gives us the true bread, which is Jesus himself.
- Jn. 6:38-40 Jesus came to do the Father's will, which is to give eternal life to all who believe in his Son.
- Rom 8:14-17 We call God Abba, Father by the Holy Spirit, and become co-heirs with Christ if we suffer with him.
- Rom 14:17 The Kingdom of God is joy, peace, and righteousness in the Holy Spirit.
- 1 Cor 10:13 We all experience temptation, but God will not allow temptation we cannot withstand.
- Jas 1:12-15 We will be rewarded if we endure temptation, but temptation itself is not from God but from our own disordered desires.
- 1 Jn. 4:20-21 If we do not love our brothers and sisters, we do not love God, for love of God necessarily means love of our brothers and sisters.

Beatitudes

- Ex. 34:6 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
- Neh. 9:26 Blessed are those persecuted in the cause of right.
- Is. 61:1 Bring good news to the poor; proclaim liberty to captives and set free those who are in prison.
- Is. 61:3 Inheriting the face of the earth.
- Ps. 24:3-5 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
- Ps. 34:14 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.
- Ps. 37:11 The meek shall inherit the land and delight in abundant peace.
- Mt. 5:3-10 Jesus teaches the crowd how to pray - the eight Beatitudes.
- Mt. 6:9-13 Pray then like this: "our Father in heaven....."
- Mt. 6:33 Seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness.
- Lk. 6:22 Four of the Beatitudes are listed.
- Lk. 17:1 The kingdom of God is in your midst.
- Jn. 3:1-17-26 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.
- 1 Cor 13:1-13 Without love, we gain nothing. Love is patient and kind.
- Rom 8:1-39 The law of the Spirit sets us free in Christ Jesus.

Heb. 1:1-14 Jesus is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

Catechism

1716-1719 The Beatitudes are at the heart of Jesus' preaching and fulfil the promises made to the chosen people and reveal the goal of human existence – the Kingdom of God. God alone satisfies the human desire for happiness.

2664 We pray to the Father only if we pray in Jesus' name.

2759-2772 The Lord's Prayer, given to us by Jesus, summarises the entire Scriptures and is the prayer of the entire Church.

2777—2796 The meaning of praying to our Heavenly Father.

2803-2854 The significance of each of the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer.

(Source: Adapted from RCIA Catechist's Manual, Association for Catechumenal Ministry, Maryland, 2007)

The Lord's Prayer

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.

The Beatitudes

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.
Blessed are they who mourn: for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.
Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.