

YEAR OF FAITH – The Our Father

The “Our Father” is the prayer our Lord Jesus Christ taught his disciples. It is the prayer of God’s children, who were reborn by Baptism. In the Liturgy, the priest introduces the Our father with these words: “And make us worthy, O Master, that we may, with confidence and without condemnation, dare call you “Father,” God of heaven and say...”

Our Father – God is the Creator of all human beings. But, in Baptism, we receive “filial adoption,” adoption as His own children. We share in the life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Who art in heaven – God is exalted above all creation.

Hallowed by Thy Name – God’s Name is Holy and is worthy of reverence. As Christians, we honor God’s Holy Name by living in such a way that we show forth His Goodness and Love.

Thy Kingdom come – is not to be taken, wrote the Blessed Augustine of Hippo, “as if, indeed, (God) were not even now really reigning upon earth, and had not always reigned upon it from the foundation of the world.” In these words, we pray that all people, including ourselves, would freely accept God’s Kingship over them.

Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven – Saint John Chrysostom said: “For He did not say ‘Thy will be done in me or in us,’ but ‘on earth,’ the whole earth, so that error may be banished from it, truth take root in it, all vice be destroyed on it, virtue flourish on it, and earth no longer differ from heaven.”

Give us this day our daily bread – Church Fathers have seen in this petition various meanings: Bread signifies food and all things necessary for each day. It may also refer to the Divine Eucharist, the ultimate gift that sustains our life in the Spirit. Saint Cyril of Jerusalem said, “The body of Christ is the daily bread and we pray that we may share in it blamelessly.” The daily bread is also the Word of God, for Christ said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the Mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4)

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us – the Blessed Augustine said, “We should ask that our debts (i.e., sins) be forgiven us in such a manner as we ourselves forgive our debtors, knowing that that which we seek for our sins (i.e., forgiveness) cannot be obtained unless we ourselves have acted in a similar way in respect of our debtors.” This is the very important focus of Cheesefare Sunday, also known as Forgiveness Sunday.

And lead us not into temptation – “Let no man, when he is tempted, say that he is tempted by God. For God is not a tempter of evils and He tempts no man.” (James 1:13) Temptations come to us primarily from the word, the flesh, and the devil. God permits us to be tempted in order to strengthen us and to show that we are in need of His Saving Help. Saint John Cassian said that we do not pray, “Do not allow us ever to be tried,” but rather, “Do not allow us to be overcome when we are tried.”

But deliver us from (the) evil (one) – Saint Cyril of Jerusalem taught: “Now evil is our adversary, the devil, from whom we pray to be delivered.

For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory – According to Saint John Chrysostom, this final doxology (in the ancient Byzantine scriptural manuscript) is to give us encouragement when we are tested by the assaults of the evil one. And, again, Saint Cyril: “He again encourages and raises our spirits, by reminding us about the King under whom we are clothed, and showing Him to be more powerful than all.... Then, after completing the prayer, you say, ‘Amen.’ By this ‘Amen,’ which means ‘So be it,’ you set your seal to the petitions of the divinely-taught prayer.”