

Commentary on the Gospel: Our Father

Gospel for the 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C), and commentary.

Gospel (*Lk 11:1-13*)

He was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.”

And he said to them, “When you pray, say:

“Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread; and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive every one

who is indebted to us; and lead us not into temptation.”

And he said to them, “Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; and he will answer from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything’? I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him whatever he needs. And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he

asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Commentary

Saint Josemaría was deeply moved by the scene in this Gospel passage: "Jesus shared his life with his disciples; he came to know them; he answered their questions and resolved their doubts. He is indeed the Rabbi, the Master who speaks with authority, the Messiah sent by God. But he is also accessible; he is close to them. One day Jesus went off to pray and the disciples were near him, perhaps staring at him and trying to make out what he was saying. When Jesus came back, one

of them said: *Domine, doce nos orare, sicut docuit et Ioannes discipulos suos*; Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.”[1]

Jesus replies with naturalness, teaching them with simplicity to unite themselves to his prayer: “When you pray, say, Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come” (v. 2). First they should address God as “Father” because we are children of God. The consideration of our divine filiation sets the proper tone for our prayer, which is simply a trusting dialogue of a son or daughter with their father who loves them tenderly.

Jesus, the Son who speaks with his Father, shares with his disciples and with us the sentiments that he harbors in the depths of his heart and that are the topic of his prayer and ours. First, “hallowed be thy Name.” God does not need this

recognition, but it is very good for us to recall it so as not to forget where all holiness stems from. Then he adds: “Thy Kingdom come,” which is the desire that God may reign in all souls so they attain happiness and salvation. Also here He is the first one interested in this becoming a reality, but he counts on our good desires and our using the means to help make his reign in all hearts and in the world a reality.

Next come three petitions relating to the present, past and future. First, “Give us this day our daily bread” (v. 3). We ask God for the nourishment we need each day, for what is truly necessary, far removed from both luxury and misery (cf. *Prov 30:8*). The Fathers of the Church have seen in the bread we ask for here not only material nourishment but also the Eucharist, without which our Christian life is greatly impoverished. The Church offers this

Bread to us each day in the Holy Mass. May we learn to truly value it and to find there the strength for our whole day!

In the second petition, “forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us” (v. 4), we implore God to remove from us whatever is weighing on our conscience. Our Lord knows that we are weak. Therefore he invites us to acknowledge with simplicity our mistakes, limitations and sins, to ask for forgiveness and make reparation for them with great love.

Finally, Jesus urges us to ask God not to lead us into temptation (cf. v. 4). What exactly do we mean when we make this petition? It is as if it were the filial cry of a son or daughter opening their heart to their Father. Benedict XVI says that in this petition we are telling God: “I know that I need trials so that my nature can be

purified. When you decide to send me these trials, when you give evil some room to maneuver, as you did with Job, then please remember that my strength only goes so far. Don't overestimate my capacity. Don't set too wide the boundaries within which I may be tempted, and be close to me with your protecting hand when it becomes too much for me ... We make this prayer in the trustful certainty that Saint Paul has articulated for us: 'God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it' (*1 Cor 10:13*)."[2]

[1] Saint Josemaria, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 108.

[2] Joseph Ratzinger-Benedict XVI,
*Jesus of Nazareth. From the Baptism
in the Jordan to the Transfiguration.*
Doubleday 2007, pp. 163-164.

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