

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Verses & Notes September 13, 2006

Matthew 6:5-13

Matthew, chapter 6

- 5: *"And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites;
for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners,
that they may be seen by men.
Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.*
- 6: *But when you pray,
go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret;
and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*
- 7: *"And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do;
for they think that they will be heard for their many words.*
- 8: *Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*
- 9: *Pray then like this:
Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.*
- 10: *Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.*
- 11: *Give us this day our daily bread;*
- 12: *And forgive us our debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors;*
- 13: *And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.*

Discussion Notes:

Introduction:

- "Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Review:

- Because of questions / comments / gut feelings, Jim & I felt like we need to spend more time today discussing the Our Father.
- Email from last week:
Hello Marcus,

I am a cradle Catholic who has been away from the church for 35 years, but I've been watching "The Journey Home" and listening to "Deep in Scripture". It has been soul stirring. Although I'm still not sure I can accept all the teachings of the church, as I've been involved with the "New Age" movement for a long time, it is a small miracle that I'm even considering it... I listened to "Deep in Scripture" this morning and was moved by your discussion of prayer. Prayer from the heart is so important. After reading a book on centering prayer by M Basil Pennington a few years back, I was shocked to learn that this was a type of prayer I didn't know existed in the Catholic Church and was something I was doing on my own. This type of prayer seems to have started with the desert fathers in the 4th century. In addition to the "Our Father", do you think that the very first Christians spent time in a centering type prayer as a way of experiencing a closer

relationship with God?

Sincerely,

Christine from California

- Article by Father William Most on Prayer excerpted from his book *The Father's Plan* published by Christendom College Press.
- A must read: Part IV of the Catechism of the Catholic Church!
- This week's special: Dr. Scott Hahn's new book, "Understanding Our Father."

PRAY THEN LIKE THIS:

- Imperative form = command
- Though some Christians emphasize "like" to mean merely a model & therefore refuse to pray the Lord's Prayer, from the beginning, the Church has promoted the praying of the Lord's Prayer:
St. Augustine (CCC, 2762) *"Run through all the words of the holy prayers [in Scripture], and I do not think that you will find anything in them that is not contained and included in the Lord's Prayer."*
St. Thomas Aquinas (CCC, 2763) *"The Lord's Prayer is the most perfect of prayers. . . . In it we ask, not only for all the things we can rightly desire, but also in the sequence that they should be desired. This prayer not only teaches us to ask for things, but also in what order we should desire them."*
- Traditionally the Our Father divided / interpreted in 7 Petitions (Books on the *Our Father* by Dr. Scott Hahn, Fr. Dubay, Fr. Garrigou-LaGrange, etc. as well as the Catechism: Section Two.)
- Last we considered it as 5 prayerful acts of surrender/conversion.
 - **Stanza One:** *Adoration of the God before you:*
"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name!"
 - **Stanza Two:** *Complete surrender to Him:*
"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."
 - **Stanza Three:** *Detachment from all but what you need:*
"Give us this day our daily bread."
 - **Stanza Four:** *Forget and forgive the past, wiping it clean:*
"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."
 - **Stanza Five:** *Relinquish all anxiety about the future into God's hands:*
"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."
 - **"Amen."** *Turning your back on all things that take us away from Jesus.*
- This week, consider the prayer, phrase by phrase, not as an academic exercise, but in preparation to pray it, especially with reflections from the Early Church Fathers & Catechism.

OUR FATHER

- This prayer is rooted in community / the body of Christ / liturgical prayer
St. Jn Chrysostem, Hom. In Mt 19,4 (CCC 2768)
"[The Lord] teaches us to make prayer in common for all our brethren. For he did not say "my Father" who art in heaven, but "our" Father, offering petitions for the common body."
- Traditionally given to new members in Baptism and confirmation (2769);
- Does not imply possession but relationship (2786);
- To be said by those who are now adopted sons of God by faith in Jesus thru the Holy Spirit (2790);
Origen (died A.D. 251) (On Prayer 22.2)
"According to the apostle, "I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no better than a slave, though he is the owner of all the estate; but he is under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father" (Galatians 4:1-2). But "when the time had fully come" (Galatians 4:4) consists in our Lord Jesus Christ coming among us, when those who

desire it receive adoption as sons, as Paul says in these words: "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" (Romans 8:15).

- Confronts our individualism & calls us to prayer in solidarity with other Christians (2792).

St. Peter Chrysologus, Sermo 71,3 (CCC 2777)

"Our awareness of our status as slaves would make us sink into the ground and our earthly condition would dissolve into dust, if the authority of our Father himself and the Spirit of his Son had not impelled us to this cry . . . 'Abba, Father!' . . . When would a mortal dare call God 'Father,' if man's innermost being were not animated by power from on high?"

- Must cleanse ourselves of false imagery...Jesus shows us the Father (Mt. 11:25-27)
- Expresses our communion / fellowship with the Trinity (1 John 1:3)

WHO ART IN HEAVEN

- Not only a place "up there" but a state of being; not that God is distant but majestic (2794).

St. Augustine of Hippo (died A.D. 430)

Let the new people, therefore, who are called to an eternal inheritance freely employ the word of the New Testament and say, "Our Father who art in heaven," that is, the place where holiness and justice reign. For God is not contained spatially. The heavens may be in a sense "higher" created bodies of the world, even while remaining created, and so cannot exist apart from some spatial location. But do not think of this spatially, as if the birds are nearer to God than we. It is not written that "the Lord is closer to tall people" or "nearer to those who live on higher hills." For it is written, "The Lord is near to the broken-hearted and saves the crushed in spirit" (Psalm 34:18), namely, close to those who are humble. (Sermon on the Mount 2.5.17)

- (CCC, 2795) *The symbol of the heavens refers us back to the mystery of the covenant we are living when we pray to our Father. He is in heaven, his dwelling place; the Father's house is our homeland. Sin has exiled us from the land of the covenant,⁵⁶ but conversion of heart enables us to return to the Father, to heaven.⁵⁷ In Christ, then, heaven and earth are reconciled,⁵⁸ for the Son alone "descended from heaven" and causes us to ascend there with him, by his Cross, Resurrection, and Ascension.⁵⁹*

HALLOWED BE THY NAME.

- "Hallow" not in the causative sense but evaluative / recognition:

St. Cyprian of Carthage (died A.D. 258) (Treatises, On the Lord's Prayer 12)

We pray "Hallowed be thy name," not that we wish that God may be made holy by our prayers but that his name may be hallowed in us. But by whom is God made holy, since he himself is incomparably holy? It is because he commands us, "You shall be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16, Leviticus 20:7), that we ask and entreat that we who were sanctified in baptism may continue in that which we have begun to be. And this we pray for daily, for we have need of daily sanctification, that we who daily fall away may wash out our sins by continual sanctification.

St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407) (The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.4)

The prayer to hallow God's name corresponds with what Jesus has previously taught: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16), just as the seraphim too, giving glory, sang "Holy, holy, holy" (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8). So "hallowed" means "glorified." In effect he is saying, "Enable us to live so purely that through us all may glorify you." It points us again to mature self-control, that we may present to all a life so irreprehensible that everyone of those who observe may offer to the Lord the praise due to him for this.

- Therefore, adoration / praise / thanksgiving.
- (CCC, 2815) "This petition embodies all the others. Like the six petitions that follow, it is

fulfilled by the prayer of Christ. Prayer to our Father is our prayer, if it is prayed in the name of Jesus. (Jn 14:13; 15:16; 16:24,26; 17:11)

THY KINGDOM COME.

- Basileia = kingship or kingdom or reign; aspect of the “already; not yet.”

St. Cyprian of Carthage (died A.D. 258) (Treatises, On the Lord’s Prayer 13.26)

We ask that the kingdom of God may come to us, even as we also ask that his name may be sanctified in us. But when was it ever the case that God did not reign? Or when did that kingdom begin with him who both always has been and never ceases to be? We are here praying that our kingdom, which has been promised us by God, may come, the very kingdom acquired by the blood and passion of Christ. We pray that we who now are his subjects in the world may hereafter reign with Christ when he reigns. For this he himself promises when he says, “Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34). Christ himself, dearest beloved, is the kingdom of God, whom we day by day desire to come, whose advent we crave to be quickly manifested to us. For since he is himself the resurrection, since in him we rise again, so also the kingdom of God may be understood to be himself, since in him we shall reign.

St. Augustine of Hippo (died A.D. 430) (Sermon on the Mount 2.6.20)

The expression “thy kingdom come” is not to be thought of as if God were not now reigning. But some might get the strange impression that “come” implies “for the first time upon the earth” --- as if to imply that God were not even now really reigning upon earth! Or that God had not always reigned upon the earth from the foundation of the world! “Come,” therefore, is to be understood in the sense of “manifested to humanity.” Just as light that is present is absent to the blind or to those who shut their eyes, so the kingdom of God, though it never departs from the earth, yet is absent to those who know nothing about it. To none, however, will ignorance of God’s kingdom be permitted when his Only-begotten comes from heaven. Then he will be recognizable not only by the intellect but visibly as the Man of the Lord to judge the living and the dead.

- (CCC, 2819, quoting Romans 14:7) “The kingdom of God [is] righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”
- Not = progress in culture / society, but living the Beatitudes in the power of the Sacraments.

THY WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.

- What is His will? What are we here praying for? (1 Tim 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9; Jn 13:34; Eph 1:9-11)

Tertullian (died A.D. 230) (On Prayer 4.1-2)

When we pray “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” we do not imply that anyone could prevent the fulfillment of God’s will or that he needs our prayer to accomplish his will. Rather, we pray that his will be done in all. Think of heaven and earth as a picture of our very selves, spirit and flesh. The sense of the petition is the same, namely, that in us (as spirit and flesh, as heaven and earth combined) the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Now, what does God will more than that we ourselves walk according to his ways? We ask therefore that he supply us with the energy of his own will and the capacity to do it, that we may be saved, both in heaven and on earth. The sum of his will is the salvation of those whom he has adopted.

- (CCC, 2825, quoting & reflecting Hebrews 5:8) “ ‘Although he was a son, [Jesus] learned obedience through what he suffered.’” How much more reason have we sinful creatures to learn obedience – we who in him have become children of adoption. We ask our Father to unite our will to his Son’s, in order to fulfill his will, his plan of salvation for the life of the world. We are radically incapable

of this, but united with Jesus and with the power of his Holy Spirit, we can surrender our will to him and decide to choose what his son has always chosen: to do what is pleasing to the Father.”

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD;

- “Give us”: Must not be an expression of the “gimees!” but as a humble, grateful child to a Father.
 - Again, praying the Beatitudes ...
- “us/ our” = praying in solidarity with all Christians.
- “Bread:” Our Father who has given us life desires to give us the nourishment we need.

St. Cyprian of Carthage (died A.D. 258) (Treatises, On the Lord’s Prayer 18)

“Daily bread” may be understood both spiritually and simply, because both meanings help us to understand salvation. For Christ is the bread of life; and this bread is not the bread of all, but it is our bread. And as we say “our Father,” because he is the father of those who understand and believe, so too we say “our bread,” because Christ is the bread of us who touch his body. Now we ask that this bread be given to us today, lest we who are in Christ and receive his Eucharist daily as the food of salvation should be separated from Christ’s body through some grave offense that prohibits us from receiving the heavenly bread. For according to his words: “I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh” (John 6:51).

- “This day ... daily” ... what is necessary now / today for life in Christ (Mt 6:34)

AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS,

AS WE ALSO HAVE FORGIVEN OUR DEBTORS;

- The order & connection within this petition is important:
 - Encouraged to boldly ask forgiveness as a child to a Father;
 - “As we also have” is to be a surrender of all claims for retribution.
 - If the order had been switched, it would have qualified our requests.

St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407) (The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.5)

This prayer for forgiveness belongs to believers. For the uninitiated could not call God Father. We discover forgiveness within the nurturing pedagogy of the Church. If then the prayer belongs to believers and they pray, entreating that sins may be forgiven them, it is clear that even after baptism the profit of repentance is not taken away. If he had not meant to signify this, why would he have instructed us to pray for forgiveness? He asks us to bring our sins to remembrance and ask for forgiveness, and he teaches us how to obtain remission. He makes the way uncomplicated. By this rule of supplication it is clear that it is possible even after the font of baptism that our offenses may still be washed away. He thereby persuades us to be modest, commands us to forgive others, sets us free from vengeful obsessions, promises pardon, and holds before us good hopes and a high view of the unspeakable mercy of God.

- “Our debtors” has no limit (Lk 6:27f)

AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION,

- (CCC, 2946) *This petition goes to the root of the preceding one, for our sins result from our consenting to temptation; we therefore ask our Father not to “lead” us into temptation. It is difficult to translate the Greek verb used by a single English word: the Greek means both “do not allow us to enter into temptation” and “do not let us yield to temptation.” “God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one” (James 1:13); on the contrary, he wants to set us free from evil. We ask him not to allow us to take the way that leads to sin. We are engaged in the battle “between flesh and spirit”; this petition implores the Spirit of discernment and strength.*
- This follows the preceding also because our inability to forgive / let go sometimes leads us into temptation; we are called to let go & leave to God.

BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL.

- “Us” again praying in community, for all in the family of God fighting the good fight.
- (CCC, 2851) *“In this petition, evil is not an abstraction, but refers to a person, Satan, the Evil One, the angel who opposes God. The devil (dia-bolos) is the one who “throws himself across” God’s plan and his work of salvation accomplished in Christ.*

St. Cyprian of Carthage (died A.D. 258) (Treatises, On the Lord’s Prayer 27)

After all those things, in the prayer’s summation there occurs a little clause concluding all our petitions and prayer in succinct fashion. For at the very last we state “but deliver us from evil,” understanding the phrase to mean all adversities that the enemy undertakes against us in this world. There can be strong and faithful protection against these adversities if God delivers us, if, as we pray and implore, he furnishes us his aid. Moreover, when we say “deliver us from evil,” nothing remains for which we should ask still further. When once we seek God’s protection against evil, having obtained this, we stand secure and safe against all the works of the devil and of the world. For what fear, indeed, is there with regard to the world for one who has God as protector in the world?