

## The Seven Petitions of the The Lord's Prayer

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The prayer Jesus taught us is approximately 55 words.

How do we pray the Our Father? Do we pray it rote? Theodore Cardinal McCarrick once said that we were taught in Catechism to memorize, not understand.

Can we say that it is poorly prayed, yet it is the most beautiful and profound?

So should we say it or pray it (by understanding it)?

It has seven petitions. Seven signifies perfection - seven perfect petitions. Jesus taught us. We imitate Him. He is Perfect. He invites us into communion with Him when He allows us to use the word "Our."

1<sup>st</sup> - Our Father, who art in heaven, **hallowed be Your name** (ccc 2858);

2<sup>nd</sup> - **Your kingdom come** (ccc 2859)

3<sup>rd</sup> - **Your will be done on earth as it is heaven** (ccc 2860).

4<sup>th</sup> - **Give us this day our daily bread** (ccc 2861).

5<sup>th</sup> - and **forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us** (ccc2862);

6<sup>th</sup> - and **lead us not into temptation** (ccc 2863)

7<sup>th</sup> - but **deliver us from evil** (ccc 2864).

(I replaced the word Thy with Your).

In the first three petitions, notice the word Your (God), not mine or me. We are sending glory and praise to Him, "Our" Almighty Father.

The last four petitions are about us. We get to ask for four things. Is this all we need in life?

Business manuals always state you always start out by complimenting.

A person I admire greatly once joked that when his children wake him up on a Saturday morning and start telling him how much they love him, it automatically guarantees a trip to “Toys R Us” later in the day.

What can we expect? We know that God always returns at least double.

The Lord’s Prayer is found in two of the four Gospels. A briefer version, (Luke 11:1-4) has only 5 petitions (missing: Your will be done, and deliver us from evil). (Matthew 6:9-13) has all seven. Matthew’s version is part of the Sermon on the Mount (Beatitudes, Matthew 5:7-9).

Sts. Augustine, Teresa and Francis wrote books on the Our Father.

St Teresa believes that the prayer could be a single sentence. “Give us, Father, whatever is good for us?” As Peter said in (John 21:17), “Lord, You know everything.”

Let us begin to break “The Lord’s Prayer” down further.

Supposed we phrased it? Tim Rash, in a piece I found on the Internet, uses: 1) God’s Glory; 2) Union with God; 3) Perfect Love; 4) Needs of Soul and Body; 5) Forgiveness of Sin; 6) Protection in Temptation; 7) Freedom from all Harm.

What if we extracted just one word? 1) Name (God); 2) Kingdom; 3) Will; 4) Bread; 5) Forgive; 6) Temptation; 7) Evil.

I found this – what could be a personal prayer based on “*The Lord’s Prayer*”.

- You are our Father, You live in heaven, we talk to You, Father You are good.
- We believe Your word, Father, we Your children, give us bread today.
- Others have done wrong to us and we are sorry for them, Father, today.
- We have done wrong, we are sorry, teach us Father not to sin again.
- Stop us from doing wrong, Father, save us all from the evil one.
- You are our Father, You live in Heaven, we talk to You, Father You are good.

Some you have may know that I am ever so slowly pursuing a Master’s Degree in Theology at Seton Hall’s Immaculate Conception Seminary. We once spent a six hour Saturday class reversing the petitions of the “The Lord’s Prayer.”

So let us see how it looks:

1<sup>st</sup> – but **deliver us** from evil

2<sup>nd</sup> – and **lead us** not into temptation

3<sup>rd</sup> – and **forgive us** our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against **us**

4<sup>th</sup> – Give us this day our daily bread

5<sup>th</sup> – Your will be done on earth as it is heaven

6<sup>th</sup> – Your kingdom come

7<sup>th</sup> – Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name

Notice how “Give us this day our daily bread” remains in the middle in both sets of petitions. Both remain as the fourth petition. Pope John Paul II placed the Eucharist as the “Source and Summit” of Catholic life.

Some pretty interesting debates ensued. Can it be said that too many Catholics are “Cradle Catholics,” having been borne into the Catholic religion, but never really grasped, studied, or appreciated it? Or how about those who have fallen away? Or those who are full of pride, or who have fallen into sin, and don’t think they need any guidance?

By the way, I was all of the above.

So, wouldn’t it make sense for me to start with “deliver me from evil?” Then, “lead me not into temptation?” Third, “forgive me.” Fourth, “nourish me, with Your Bread.”

Hopefully, by now, I am close to getting back into God’s graces, if I am not there already. So, the fifth, sixth and seventh make sense now, “Your Will, Your Kingdom, Your Name.

Interesting possibilities. For the record, I argued that if Jesus wanted it any other way, He would have taught it that way. But, classmates said, He was Jesus, and we are not. He could pray it the way He prayed it. Our journey begins with the end.

I believe personal prayer is conversations with God. You can tailor and make any conversation into a prayer with our Lord.

Now, let us look at The Lord’s Prayer from another view.

Many of you are aware of St Teresa of Avila (mentioned above), a Spanish Carmelite nun in the seventeenth century. She was a mystic. She is one of the 33 Doctors of the Church and the first Woman. Her feast day is October 15<sup>th</sup>. She founded the order that St Therese (another Doctor) later joined. St Teresa and St John of the Cross worked closely together. Her books have sold in the hundreds of millions. They are Spiritual Classics.

One of more famous books was entitled, “Interior Castles.” Simply put, St Teresa saw the Soul as a Castle, with many rooms or (Mansions) (see John 14:2) (in My Father’s House, there are many dwelling places). As you grew closer to God, you moved into a room closer to Him.

St Teresa's successes came when she was fifty-one years old. The successes she had from that point on were breath taking. Up until then, she was always half in, half out with God. I guess you might say she too was battling Secularism, like we do.

The book described her journey. She made it all the way through. Most make it to the third mansion, and rarely past the fourth.

Several people (including my class) reverse The Lord's Prayer and its seven petitions and place them alongside the seven Mansions for study and contemplation.

Teresa's first Mansion was the Human Soul. The seventh petition is, "deliver us from evil."

Upon my conversion, when I was just a Spiritual infant, my Soul, the Human Soul, was constantly under attack. It is so intense that most fall back into the devil's clutches.

My Confessor likes to remind me that the Evil One was (is) pretty angry at having lost me. He thought I was a card carrying member. So you could imagine his shock.

How often does a mature business take for granted their customers and largely ignore emerging trends. Soon, they find themselves losing business.

As I spoke about earlier, not all Catholics are practicing or good. This is one of the prospect lists satan uses.

Yet, God always finds wonderful ways to find us and slap us upside the head. There is dancing in heaven when one of His wandering sheep comes marching home. I like to tell people that Jesus didn't slap me, he took at a baseball bat and announced, "McDermott, I have had enough. Follow me." Thank God I said, "Yes, Sir," ever so meekly and humbly.

Success here at the beginning starts to push the devil further away from you.

The second Mansion is War. The sixth petition is "lead us not in temptation."

God seeing how good you have done moves you into the second mansion. Just like a business that lost a customer, indignation pops up and all sorts of anger appears instead of humility acknowledging their fault and trying to figure out what they could have done better. Oh, how satan is upset with you. Let me count the ways. Evil declares War. He'll be offering all sorts of temptations here and reminding you of your past. You just stay strong and remind him that you have moved and you no longer live there (your past).

The third mansion is Fear (respect) of God. The fifth petition is "forgive us our sins, as we forgive others."

We are then “promoted” into the third Mansion. I call it a promotion because you have made great progress. God is on your mind constantly. You are starting to converse with Him. You tend not to sin too often, or at all. You get offended at others offending him. It is called love. You begin to understand how Secularism doesn’t work and how it never will. Your humility is so great, that nothing offends you. You recognize all your faults and work hard at correcting them.

The fourth Mansion is Sweetness in Prayer / Divine Consolations / Prayer of Quiet. The fourth petition is “Give us this day our daily bread.”

I heard it once said that God likes to take your “natural” and apply His “Super” making your experience “Super-Natural.” This is where the only phrase you can use is Huh, where did that come from? People who are here smile, and simply say, of course. Thank you Lord Jesus! You hear God in meditation, you receive rewards, and you feel so good and special.

Time and space do not allow me to reflect any further for this particular reflection. Hopefully, on another day, we can complete the final three and delve further in the petitions by attaching Scripture passages to them.

Finally, I was returning home from a recent vacation in Pennsylvania. I prayed the entire four hour trip home and was thinking about this reflection the entire day. Upon entering the toll booth, the collector said to me that he had a message for me. He said, “thank you for doing God’s work.” I smiled.