



Opening Question:

What or who motivates you spiritually?

What motivates us every day? Is it ambition or a sense of duty? Or we could ask who motivates us? A loved one, an overbearing boss, or an inspirational mentor? Or is the answer something deeper?

We can ask these same questions about prayer. Who urges us to pray? Christians answer the Spirit. But prayer assumes a relationship between those who pray and God. So what is our relationship with God? He is our Father and we are his children. And it is the Spirit who not only urges us to pray but establishes that relationship.

Because you are his children, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."

Galatians 4:6

Jesus himself summed up the work of the Spirit and our relationship with God in a simple prayer he taught us: the Lord's Prayer.

Two Versions of the Lord's Prayer

There are actually two versions of the Lord's Prayer: one from Matthew, the other from Luke. When we compare the two we find Matthew's version has seven petitions while Luke has five. Matthew's version repeated some themes. God's Kingdom and his will are identical so Luke doesn't repeat the latter. The middle petitions about daily bread and forgiveness remain. Freedom from temptation and the evil one also have the same theme. Again, Luke doesn't have the latter. Compared to Luke, Matthew's version is fuller. It fits better in worship and in personal prayer even in the early Church. So, it became the standard version.

Our Father...

We begin the prayer with two words: "Our Father." Although we can pray it alone, the word "our" points to a community. We, the Church, are in a



relationship with God. We are his possession but we are so much more. He, the Creator, invites us, his creatures, into intimacy. The Father reveals himself to us in the same way he shows himself to his Son. And we share in the communion of the Father and the Son. So, He raises us up to the status of his adopted children. We see the possibility of becoming better people, more in the likeness of God. We depend upon the Father to trust him like a child. And, in word and deed, we can share the news that he is more than just our God. He is the Father of all.

...Who Art in Heaven...

God is in heaven. Heaven is not a place but a state of being. It transcends our space and time. It is beyond anything we can imagine. Yet, with Jesus present, we can worship the Father in that state of being. With Jesus present, we enter into heavenly worship.

...Hallowed Be Thy Name

Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer has seven petitions. The first three are addressed to God. "Hallowed be thy name" is the first of the three. To hallow means to make holy. While we hallow God's name through praise and thanksgiving, in reality, God makes his name holy. He hallowed his name when he revealed himself to Abraham, Moses, David and the prophets. He makes his name holy when he continually offers salvation to his people

through Christ. We partake in that hallowing when we respond to his offer in our lives and in our prayer.

Thy Kingdom Come...

The petition “thy Kingdom come” is a prayer for the Second Coming. We ask God for the return of Jesus in glory. We yearn for the divine presence and the power to make a taste of it present right now. The petition is more than a pious wish. We are to work for the Kingdom not through our own efforts alone. We help realize the Kingdom when we cooperate with God’s will.

...Thy Will be Done on Earth As It Is in Heaven.

Doing God’s will reveals the presence of God and his Kingdom. We pray not for God to impose his will. We ask God for the power to reveal his will in the same way Christ did. We pray we, too, can help others come closer to the Father.

The title and the first three petitions of the Our Father tell us something not only about God but about ourselves. As creatures, we are incomplete. So we seek out a loving God, a Father, to make us whole. We seek his will and his presence in our lives. And, if he is the Father, then we are his children, not by our own efforts, but by his activity in our lives. In fact, the more we pray for God’s will and his presence, the more we become his children. This is all due to the Spirit. As St. Paul stated in his letter to the Romans:

You didn’t receive the Spirit to make you cower as a slave. No, you were adopted by the Spirit as God’s children. And in the Spirit, we cry, “Abba, Father.”

Romans 8:15

Closing Prayer

How did you praise God today? How did you seek his will?

Reference to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraphs CCC 2761-2827

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