



What's What

A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.

The Our Father

The Our Father is a prayer we are all familiar with. It is prayed at Mass every week. But where does it come from? And what does it tell us? The prayer is given to us by Jesus which is why it is often called the Lord's prayer. It can be found in the Gospel according to Matthew and Luke (Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4). In both Gospels it is given as an instruction on how we are to pray.

Many scripture scholars note that the Our Father is a prayer rooted in Judaism. It is often seen as a shortened version of the 14 blessings that was used by Jewish religious leaders in the times of Jesus. However, Jesus has reduced these 14 blessings into 7 basic blessings.

Despite the general consistency with Judaism, there is one aspect of the prayer that is a major shift from Jewish thought, namely the introduction – Our Father. Addressing God as Father was not something done by the Jewish people in Jesus' time. In fact, God was so sacred that they did not even pronounce or write his name. By using the term Father for God, Jesus informs us that God has an intimate relationship with us. God is not a God who is so busy that he can only worry about "important things." Rather, he is interested in every detail of our life, just like a parent is interested in every

detail of their child's life.

The 7 blessings of the Our Father show us how we are to pray. First, we must acknowledge the holiness of God by saying "Hallowed is thy Name." By saying that the Name of God is holy, we are stating that God indeed is holy, and worthy of praise. Then we pray for the coming of God's kingdom. This is a double-edged prayer as it is both a petition to God and a reminder to ourselves that we are responsible to help bring about that very kingdom. Thirdly we pray that God's will be done. This is an important part of prayer that we often overlook. We frequently tell God our will. Ultimately we must remember that we are to desire God's will as it is more perfect than our own individual will. Next we pray for our daily bread. This is a symbol for that which will sustain us – both physically (such as food, water and shelter) and spiritually (such as the sacraments, especially the Eucharist). After praying for our needs, we pray for forgiveness for the offenses we have committed against God and others. The prayer for mercy from God also reminds us that we must be merciful to others. For the degree of mercy we show others is the same degree of mercy we ask God to show us. After recognizing our own sinfulness, we ask God for his assistance in avoiding temptation to enter into further sin.

Finally we ask for deliverance from evil. This can be seen as deliverance from the evil one (i.e. Satan) as well as evil in general.

Many Protestants end the Our Father with the doxology "For thine is the Kingdom, Power and Glory forever and ever." This doxology is found in later versions of the Gospel according to Matthew. However, the earliest versions of the text do not contain this doxology. Therefore Catholics do not include it in the prayer. However, this doxology is used in Mass after the Our Father is said, as it is a suitable way of offering glory to God.

- by Deacon Brian Carpenter

Issue 30 —
The Our Father

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Things to talk about:

- Who taught you the Our Father?
- Do you ever pray the Our Father outside of Mass? If so, when?
- How do the teachings of Jesus and his Church enrich our prayer?
- What is the importance of the heart in prayer?

Did You Know?

St. Cyprian notes that Jesus tells us to pray "Our Father" and not "My Father." This points to the importance of community in prayer, and the need for the Church.

The versions of the Our Father in Matthew and Luke are slightly different. Matthew's version, which focuses on forgiveness, is the one commonly prayed by Christians throughout the world.

On Easter Sunday 2007 it was estimated that 2 billion Catholic, Protestant and Eastern Orthodox Christians read, recited, or sang the Our Father in hundreds of languages.

The word "hallowed" means "set apart for holy use".

In earlier times many monasteries with lay brothers who didn't know Latin were instructed that instead of praying the Divine office, they should say the Lord's Prayer a certain number of times, often amounting to more than a hundred, per diem. To count these repetitions they made use of pebbles or beads strung upon a cord, which became known as a "pater-noster", a name which it retained even when it became used for counting, not Our Fathers, but Hail Marys when saying the rosary.



Saint of the Day: St John Fisher (1469-1535)

On Monday, June 23, the Church remembers St John Fisher, the patron saint of our Diocese.

John Fisher is usually associated with Erasmus, Thomas More and other Renaissance humanists. His life, therefore, did not have the external simplicity found in the lives of some saints. Rather, he was a man of learning, associated with the intellectuals and political leaders of his day. He was interested in the contemporary culture and eventually became chancellor at Cambridge. He had been made a bishop at 35, and one of his interests was raising the standard of preaching in England. Fisher himself was an accomplished preacher and writer. His sermons on the penitential psalms were reprinted seven times before his death. With the coming of Lutheranism, he was drawn into controversy. His eight books against heresy gave him a leading position among European theologians.

In 1521 he was asked to study the problem of Henry VIII's marriage. He incurred Henry's anger by defending the

validity of the king's marriage with Catherine and later by rejecting Henry's claim to be the supreme head of the Church of England.

In an attempt to be rid of him, Henry first had him accused of not reporting all the "revelations" of the nun of Kent, Elizabeth Barton. John was summoned, in feeble health, to take the oath to the new Act of Succession. He and Thomas More refused because the Act presumed the legality of Henry's divorce and his claim to be head of the English Church. They were sent to the Tower of London, where Fisher remained 14 months without trial. They were finally sentenced to life imprisonment and loss of goods.

When the two were called to further interrogations, they remained silent. Fisher was tricked, on the supposition he was speaking privately as a priest, and declared again that the king was not supreme head. The king, further angered that the pope had made John Fisher a cardinal, had him brought to trial on the charge of high treason. He

was condemned and executed, his body left to lie all day on the scaffold and his head hung on London Bridge. More was executed two weeks later.

Today many questions are raised about Christians' and priests' active involvement in social issues. John Fisher remained faithful to his calling as a bishop. He strongly upheld the teachings of the Church; the very cause of his martyrdom was his loyalty to Rome. He was involved in the cultural enrichment circles as well as in the political struggles of his time. This involvement caused him to question the moral conduct of the leadership of his country. "The Church has the right, indeed the duty, to proclaim justice on the social, national and international level, and to denounce instances of injustice, when the fundamental rights of man and his very salvation demand it" (Justice in the World, 1971 Synod of Bishops).

From www.americancatholic.org/features/saintofday/



Connections to Doctrine & Tradition

- The Lord's prayer is the most perfect of prayers. (CCC 2763, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, 83, 9).
- The Lord's Prayer is truly the summary of the whole Gospel (CCC 2774, citing *De Orat* 1:PL1, 1251-1255).
- The first series of petitions carries us toward God, for his own sake (CCC 2804).
- The four other petitions present our wants to him (CCC 2857).

These documents can be found online at www.vatican.va or www.usccb.org.

Want to know more?

Would you like to know more about the Our Father? Check out the following books and websites for more information:

- "US Catholic Catechism for Adults", USCCB, 2006
- <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09356a.htm>
- <http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/CU/ac0907.asp>

These are just suggestions. In providing these we assume no responsibility for, nor do we necessarily endorse these books or websites, their content, or their sponsoring organizations.

"What's What" is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.