

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

Last week, we finished looking at the Eucharistic Prayer. We now enter the Communion Rite. The Communion Rite begins by praying our family prayer – the “Our Father.” This is a reminder that at the heart and core of everything we do as Catholics, at the heart of the Mass it is all about relationship: our relationship with the Father. We have been made heirs to the Kingdom of God through Baptism, and that we are no longer creatures of God, but His *children*!

The first words we say are “Our Father”. We all know this prayer, right? Yet, it is so easy to miss the importance of it. In the Gospel of Luke, we hear Jesus say to call God “*Abba*”. This is the word small children would use to call out to their fathers – much like “Daddy” or “Papa”. Jesus shows us that all intimacy originates in God, that we can know tenderness because God is tender. Ask yourself, “Do I think of God as tenderly loving me, or do I think He has to put up with me?” If you are a parent, you probably know the joy of gazing on your young child when he or she is asleep. You’re so in love with your kid, you can’t keep your eyes off of him or her. God is watching you with that same love. He can’t keep His eyes off of you! He is your *Abba*, Daddy, Papa.

Not only is He my *Abba*, He is *our* Father. This means we are brothers and sisters in Christ. So often, we fight like brothers and sisters, but our Father in heaven is in anguish by our strife and discord. It pains Him when we hurt each other and don’t forgive each other, for each of us is His precious and beloved child, and He longs for our unity.

We then cry out, “hallowed be thy name”. We recognize that God’s name is *holy*, and to be treated with respect. Note that the commandment, “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain” is given long before Jesus became man. Our culture is filled with instances of taking the name of Jesus in vain, but also “God” and “Lord”. Rule of thumb – if we are not talking to Him (prayer) or about Him, then we are not keeping His name holy. So if you randomly say, “Oh my God,” we should (probably) immediately follow up by saying, “I am heartily sorry for having offended thee...”

Then we ask God’s reign to extend to us here on earth, “thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” We want God’s coming, for He *is* LOVE. But when we ask for His will to be done here like it is done perfectly in heaven, are we really asking for it to be done in *me*, or just in the people around me? When we pray this, we are asking God to help us to do His will. So often we pray telling God, “My will be done,” not “Thy will be done.” Do we really surrender our imperfect wills to God so that His perfect and loving Will will be done?

“Give us this day or daily bread”. We ask God to give us what we need. Note that we don’t ask for a week’s or month’s worth of bread, but daily bread. Do we really trust God? He is with me now, and He is taking care of me now. When *later* becomes *now*, He will still be with me. We must trust Him not for what we want, but for what we need, if we do His will.

The next one is hard: “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Really. We are asking God to forgive us only to the extent that we forgive others. Jesus knows that we need this; that we need to forgive others for our own peace. Jesus, help us to forgive the hurts we endure!

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” A powerful prayer to avoid sin. But how many of us walk right into temptation? How often do we *really* try to avoid the sins we like? Our Father will deliver us, but we have to cooperate. He will not hinder our free will. May we always choose Him, and not our sin!

The priest then prays for us to be delivered from evil, given peace, and set free from sin and distress here and now until Jesus comes again. Then you respond, “For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and for ever.” We end our family prayer by recognizing God’s authority and glory. A fitting way to honor our Father.