



From the Deacon's Desk

Our Father Who Art in Heaven – Understanding the Our Father

The church teaches that the Our Father is the most perfect of prayers. St. Augustine taught that the prayer summarizes the four Gospels. He also writes: "Everything that pertains to hope is embraced in the Lord's Prayer" [Handbook on Faith, Hope, and Love, p114]. It's a pretty simple prayer; one easily learned but often spoken as a reflex. I recently attend a rosary at a parish that said the Our Father in 15 seconds! It is hard to believe that anyone understood what they were praying.

The Our Father is a prayer of petition – one of the five types of prayer [the others are: blessing and adoration, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise]. When we pray, we make seven petitions:

First Petition: *Hallowed be Thy Name*

We ask that the entire world in general and ourselves specifically know, love, and honor God

Second Petition: *Kingdom Come*

We ask that God may reign in us so that one day, we might enter into Heaven.

Third Petition: *Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven*

We ask for the grace to do the will of God in all things.

Fourth Petition: *Give us this day our daily bread*

We ask for all that is necessary each day for our soul and our body.

Fifth Petition: *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us.*

We ask God to pardon us our sins in the same measure that we pardon those who offend us.

Sixth Petition: *Lead us not into temptation*

We ask God to either not allow us to be tempted or to give us the grace not to be conquered by it.

Seventh Petition: *Deliver us from evil*

We ask God to free us from the evil of sin, past, present, and future.

If we are to really pray the Our Father, and not just repeat it, there are two attitudes we must have: persistence and confidence. Persistence provides God more freedom to work in our lives; confidence is the cure for any hesitation we might feel about bringing our needs before God.

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