

The Lord's Prayer - A Contemplative Approach

The Lord's Prayer, also known as the Our Father, comes from Jesus' answer to his disciples when they asked him to teach them how to pray. Most traditional versions of the prayer are a compilation of the two different recordings of the prayer in the Gospels: Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 11: 2-4. The ending to the prayer, "For Yours is the Kingdom..." is not from the Gospels, but became commonly used possibly as early as the middle of the 1st century (the same time as the New Testament was being written).

As a pattern for Christian prayer, the Lord's Prayer has been prayed in many ways by Christians since the very beginning. One contemplative method of praying the Lord's Prayer was developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) in the 16th century AD. This is called the "Second Method of Prayer." In its essence, it is simply praying the prayer very slowly, giving unhurried pause after each word to meditate—reflect, listen, contemplate its meaning—before moving to the next word.

Steps:

1. Posture

Position yourself in a way you can sit or kneel comfortably for the duration of the prayer. Quiet yourself inwardly, slow your breathing, still your thoughts, inviting God to meet with you. Ask God for the grace and help to be attentive to the Holy Spirit.

2. Pray the Lord's Prayer one word or phrase at a time

- a. Say the first word, "Our", or the first phrase, "Our Father." Meditate on it as long as you "find various meanings, comparisons, relish, and consolation in the consideration of it." *
 - a. You can reflect on questions such as: What does it mean? Am I drawn to it, and why or why not? Does it stir up something in me, and if so, what and why? Am I sensing a stirring to give something to God? To ask for something from God?
- b. Then say the next word or phrase, going through the whole prayer one word or phrase at a time, pausing to do the same after each. **
- c. If you find yourself drawn into a particular word or phrase, feel free to remain there. If your whole time is taken up in one or two words/phrases, that's ok as it is where God is meeting you. End with saying the rest of the prayer as you normally would.

3. Moving Outward

Conclude with a word of thanks, praise, or simply saying the prayer once more in your normal speaking rhythm. Ask God for the grace to take what you've received into the rest of your day.

(please see the next page for different English wordings of the prayer)

*quote from *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, translated by Louis J. Puhl, S.J.

**Ignatius' "Third Method of Prayer" is essentially the same, except that you pray each word in time with your breath instead of pausing between them (e.g. breathe in "Our", breathe out "Father," breath in "Who", etc.).

The Lord's Prayer - Three Versions

Traditional

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Common English - What we often use at Spring Garden

Our Father, who is in heaven,
hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come, Your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For Yours is the kingdom,
the power and the glory
For ever and ever. Amen.

Contemporary English

Our Father in heaven,
may Your name be made holy.
May Your Kingdom come, may Your will be done
here on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today the bread we need for today,
and forgive us the things we owe,
as we have forgiven what was owed to us.
And do not lead us into trial,
but rescue us from evil.
For the Kingdom is Yours,
the power is yours, and the glory is yours,
for ever and ever. Amen.