

Matthew 6:5-15
Saint Paul's Episcopal Church
22 February 2026

In nomine...

Each Sunday after the great Amen, the amen that concludes the Eucharistic prayer, the presider invites the gathered faithful to pray with these words, "And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are *bold* to say..." Those first few years that I spent in the Episcopal Church I always wondered at the use of the word bold in that invitation. Bold. What was bold about what we were about to do? We were praying. Hadn't we just been praying? Why are we suddenly being asked to be bold? Has this ever struck you?

To add to my confusion we were about to pray the foundational prayer of the Christian life, one of the first prayers that I learned when I entered the church, one of the first prayers we teach our children to pray, one of the prayers that even those without faith have probably heard and can potentially join in easily in at a funeral. With the use of the word bold, the church is telling us that we are doing something different, something radical, something worth paying attention to.

The Lord's prayer, the Our Father, is one of the most repeated prayers in the liturgical life, in the life of a disciple, and yet, we often do not spend a whole lot of time discussing it.

So, during this season of Lent each sermon will spend time going deeper into different aspects or petitions of this prayer that Jesus himself gave to us and that is probably as good a place as any to begin. This is *the* prayer that he taught. Jesus gave us this prayer and only this one. The giving of the Lord's prayer appears in two places; in Matthew's gospel it is given within the context of the Sermon on the Mount. In giving his hearers this prayer, Jesus is empowering them to avoid hypocrisy. Don't be like the Gentiles who utter words just to utter words, say this simple prayer.¹ In Luke's gospel the disciples ask Jesus to teach them how to pray as John the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray. He then offers them this prayer in response to their request.²

As I mentioned earlier, this prayer is foundational. Because of its repetition in the Daily Office and Eucharist, because of its ecumenical nature—we can be assured that throughout our world someone is praying this prayer. Every minute. Every second – of each day, some is praying *Our Father*. In beginning this dominical prayer with the phrase *Our Father* Jesus is teaching us that our prayers are not just about us. We are presuming to pray on behalf of all of humanity, all of creation. *Our Father* God does not belong to just us. God belongs to all. We have no private household gods.

¹ Matthew 6:5-15.

² Luke 11:1-4.

We have direct access to God in our prayers, but God is not only invested in our good, but rather God is also invested in the good of all of humanity and it is within that reality that we make our prayer.

In offering us this prayer Jesus is teaching us that God wants to have a parental relationship with us. Which for some of us is easy to grasp and for others is challenging. Not everyone who hears this prayer or is taught this prayer has had a good relationship with their father or mother. Being asked to call God *Father* is hard for some of us. That is true and it is OK to struggle with this ask. But I would ask you to struggle with it, not to just set it aside. God is our Father. God is our Mother. God is our parent – with a depth and a truth that even the most loving and caring earthly parent can never be. God as Father, as Mother, as parent is the model by which we should measure our parents and our parenting.

In inviting us to call God Father, Jesus is inviting us into a personal relationship with the whole of the Trinity. He is inviting us to be knit to the heart of the One who formed us in the womb. He is inviting us to be intimately involved in the One that is beyond comprehension, the One who gives and sustains life, the One whose heart weeps for every pain that we feel. Jesus is promising us a depth of relationship with God, never before known. It is a relationship that exists in the ideal, *Our Father, who art in heaven*, Jesus came here to be with us in the finite, so that we might be with him in the infinite, in heaven.

From within the muddle of human existence, Jesus is calling us to be in the harmony of eternity, in that Kingdom where there is no death, no sorrow, no crying, but only the fullness of joy with all the saints.

The Lord's prayer is at its core a prayer of relationship—between Creator and created, it is a distillation of everything that Jesus taught, and a pledge of sustenance for the journey. Over each of next four weeks we go a little deeper in different aspects of the prayer, though we will not be able to cover to completion. Though to be fair to us, the Church has been wrestling with this prayer for a couple of thousand years and there is still much more to say and learn. Next week our dear assistant Rector will take up the phrase "Give us each day our daily bread"; until then, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are *bold* to say...

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,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.