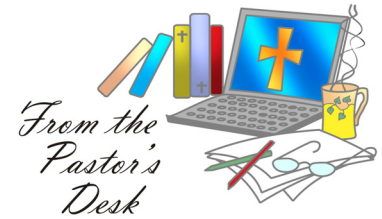


My Dear Friends in Christ,

And Jesus said... *"This is how you are to pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and do not subject us to the final test, but deliver us from the evil one."* (Matthew 6:9-13)



There seems to be nothing more perfect than a conversation between lovers. This happens with words, with looks, with gestures. For those who are so in tune with the other, it seems at times that the thoughts and desires are already known and acted upon before they are voiced. Prayer is supposed to be a conversation between lovers, *"...not babble(ing) like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words."* (Matthew 6:7) When we look at the Old Testament, the Song of Songs, it is precisely that loving conversation... *"My lover is for me a sachet of myrrh to rest in my bosom. My lover is for me a cluster of henna from the vineyards of Engedi. Ah, you are beautiful, my beloved, ah, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves! Ah, you are beautiful, my lover- yes, you are lovely."* (1:13-16) The biblical editors have even divided the phrases in this most beautiful prose into parts as if it is a dialogue between a bride and groom. Prayer, therefore, should be conversation... about the day, one's feelings, one's fears, one's joys, one's frustrations. This can

take the form of a Devotional Form of Prayer like the Rosary, which by its repetitive nature is not "babbling like the pagans," but a tool to constantly bring us back into the conversation with Our Loved, Our God when we can so easily be distracted. Prayer can also be in the form of meditating on moments in Scripture. Such as taking the picture to above of the Sermon of the Mount and by placing oneself in that scene, imagining what it was like to be listening to the Lord as He first preached. Prayer can also be Ritualistic, which is what we participate in during the offering of any Mass (Sunday, weekday, funeral, Nuptial, Confirmation, First Holy Communion).

From all the years of Our Blessed Lord's ministry, those three before His crucifixion, all the years He quietly *"advanced (in) wisdom and age and favor before God and man,"* (Luke 2:52) all the years He learned and practiced the trade of Carpenter, we not only have very few words recorded in Christ's native tongue, Aramaic, we have only one prayer. In Luke's Gospel *"one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say..."* (11:1-2) In Matthew's Gospel, Our Blessed Lord teaches the disciples to pray as a part of the Sermon of the Mount (6:9-13). The Our Father is not found in John's or Mark's Gospel.

As these are the only words specifically given to us by God the Son, Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, it would behoove us to spend some time in delving the secrets of this most awesome prayer personally handed down from above. Therefore, much like the Litany to Our Blessed Lady, a deeper and hopefully prayerful examination of the one prayer that all of Christianity shares will be undertaken. As we are beginning this process, please offer an Our Father daily, that we will continue to grow together as one family in Our Blessed Lord... who taught us how to pray.

God love you... Father Fernan