

Meditations on the Pater Noster *for the Month of August*



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Our Father Prayer – Pater Noster

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.

Amen

August 1st

The Apostles' Request

St. Luke tells us (xl. i) that the Lord's Prayer was taught by Our Lord to His Apostles at their own request. What led them to make such a request?

(1) The instinct of their hearts taught them the need of a constant dependence on God, and they knew that prayer is the expression of that dependence. I, too, can do nothing good unless I depend on God, and express my sense of that dependence by frequent prayer. **(2)** They were not satisfied with the traditional prayer of Judaism. They knew that their Master had come to teach men a higher doctrine. So our prayer corresponds to our spiritual level. If it is a high one, we shall pray much and well; if a low one, little and badly. **(3)** They had witnessed the fervent prayer of Christ. They knew that He prayed before entering on any new work. They had seen Him spend long nights in prayer. Does His example teach us to commend all our enterprises to God in prayer?

"Lord, teach us to pray." They knew they had not yet learned the lesson. To pray well did not come naturally to them. Jesus had to teach them. Have I ever really learned to pray? If not, I must cry out: "Lord, teach me to pray"; to pray without distractions, to pray boldly, perseveringly, earnestly, humbly.

"Lord, teach us to pray." The Apostles had good-will and needed only instruction. Their great desire was to pray well. Am I of the same disposition, or am I one of those who knows well enough how I ought to pray, but will not take the trouble, nor yield to prayer the time I spend in other occupations that I find more attractive and easy?

August 2nd

God Our Father

It is not easy to realize all that is included in the relation of Father which God holds to us His children. Even of our bodies He is far more truly the Father than our earthly parents. God created the original material out of which my body was formed. It was He who fashioned it to a shape fit to receive my soul; it was He who gave it life; it was He who watched over it during the process of its formation; it was He who brought it safely into the world. If I owe respect and obedience to my earthly parent, how much more do I do so to God!

God is my Father, in a far truer sense, as the author of my soul. To it my earthly parents contributed nothing. As regards all that is my true self, all that is most noble in me, all that belongs to the higher order of things. God, and God alone, is my Father. He and He alone, has given me my talents, my memory, my free-will, my intelligence. If in my body I resemble my earthly father, I resemble my Heavenly Father in my immortal and spiritual soul. Hence I am far more closely united to the latter, and am indebted to Him for my true self that is to dwell with Him forever.

God did not bring me into being by a mere momentary action, but continues the act of creation in my preservation, and will continue it to all eternity. Earthly relationship gradually fades away, but not my relationship to God. Earthly parents forget their children, but God never forgets me. "Can a woman forget her infant so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? If she should forget, yet will not I forget thee" (Isaias xlix. 15).

August 3rd

God Our Father

God, in creating man, did not limit His Divine Paternity to the exercise of a fatherly care of him here on earth. He destined him for a far more complete sonship. He endowed him, at his first creation, with supernatural gifts which rendered him in a far higher sense the son of God than did the mere fact of creation and preservation. He stamped upon him a supernatural likeness to Himself, so that man is truly, as St. Peter says, a partaker in the Divine Nature. (2 St. Peter i. 4). How truly then may man call God his Father, since there is no truer mark of sonship than to share the nature of the father.

But God was not even satisfied with this. He determined to raise man to a far closer union with Himself, and a far more complete resemblance to Himself than was possible on earth. He prepared for man, body as well as soul, a place in His own Heaven, where man would live in the closest intimacy with Himself that was possible for one whom God had created. Our Father in Heaven desired that all His sons should share His own glory and splendor.

What was the gift that God intended to bestow on man as His choicest gift? He was not only to dwell with God for ever, but he was to see his Father face to face, and that sight was to perfect his likeness to God, and to fill his heart with an overflowing and unspeakable happiness, a happiness like to that of God Himself. What greater proof could God have given to man of His love than this? "We shall be like to Him because we shall see Him as He is" (St. John iii. 2).

August 4th

God Our Father

The designs that God our Father had devised for the happiness of His children were frustrated by their own guilt and folly. Our first parents, and in them all their descendants, revolted against God, their Father and benefactor, and forfeited their claim to all the good things that He had promised them. But God had foreseen this, and in His wonderful mercy had provided a remedy. "God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son, that all who believe in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." What love could be greater than this?

When God sent His co-equal Son in the form of man, for the sake of us His children, how was He received? We should have expected all the world to come and pour their treasures at His feet, and adore Him with the most devoted love, gratitude and loyalty. Instead of this they rejected Him, persecuted Him, and at last put Him to the most ignominious death then inflicted. If I had lived then, I had good reason to fear that I should have joined with these thankless brutal enemies of God.

Yet our Father did not turn away from us in disgust. He made the very malice of the persecutors of Jesus the means of rescuing us His children from our debased condition. The shedding of the Blood of Jesus has redeemed all mankind, if they will accept the salvation offered them. It has redeemed me. It has saved me from Hell, opened Heaven to me, forgiven my sins. All this is the manifestation of the infinite love of God my Father for me. What can I do to show my love and gratitude?

August 5th

God Our Father

The Wise Man tells us that "the glory of children are their fathers" (Prov. xvii 6). What then must be the glory that belongs to us as the children of God! We have a Father who is infinite in His Divine perfections; one whose majesty, beauty, holiness, power, and knowledge no words can describe, no heart imagine. How proud we, the children of such a Father, ought to be! How we ought to love Him, honor Him, and seek to imitate Him! How sweet ought the Name of our Father in Heaven be to us His children!

When we turn from His glory to our own misery, how full of shame and of humility we should become! "Father, I am unworthy to be called Thy son. How often have I disgraced my noble lineage! How often have I done my best to efface that likeness to Thee which alone constitutes true loveliness! How I have dishonored Thy Name by my words and deeds!" "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, according to Thy great mercy, and according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity" (Psalm l. l, 2).

How can I, who am so vile, view the contrast between the Father and His child without being disheartened and discouraged? I can, when I remember that my Father has a Son of the same nature as myself, and that in that Son and through His merits, and because of my relationship to Him, my Father in Heaven forgets all my unworthiness, and welcomes me to His Divine love! He loves me in Christ, and for Christ's sake, and so I need not fear. "In His grace He has graced us in His beloved Son" (Ephes. i. 6) . "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."

August 6th

Our Father

When we call God "Our Father," we are necessarily reminded of the common kinship of all men. Our bodies are all made after one type, and that type is a reflection of the immaterial principle which dwells within. Hence the body of a man shares to some extent the dignity of his soul. We owe to our own bodies, and to those of all other men, a respect that is in no way owed to the bodies of the lower animals. Do I remember in all my actions the reverence due to my own body, and to the bodies of others, by reason of their being the noblest work of God in the material order, and being all destined by Him to immortal life?

But if our bodies have a certain dignity, our souls have one immeasurably greater. They are all stamped with a likeness to God that gives to each member of the human family a sort of God-like dignity. The soul of one little child is of more importance than all the souls of the lower animals together. If any word or act of mine is of a nature to injure the soul of any, even the lowest and humblest, I thereby provoke the anger of our common Father in Heaven. My brother's blood cries out to God for vengeance.

Our common brotherhood under God our Father also teaches us that God destines us to form one happy family in Heaven. He desires to see us united there before His throne, "a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations and tribes, and peoples and tongues" (Apoc. vii. 9). Do I bear in mind this exalted dignity to which God destines every one of His children on earth?

August 7th

Our Father

Our Lord instructs us to address God as "Our Father," not as "My Father," because our highest right to sonship comes to us through Jesus Christ. He, alone, has an eternal and unalienable right to be called the "Son of God." He, alone, is the Son of God by nature. We are only sons by adoption. It is because God has sent the spirit of His Son into our hearts, that we can call him, "Abba, Father." This is why Christ says to His Apostles before the Ascension: "I ascend to My Father, and your Father." Make acts of gratitude that you, though so unworthy, have been adopted as the son of God.

We are further taught by the phrase, "Our Father", that we are all brethren in Jesus Christ, sons of one common Father, members of one family. If all are our brethren, we must treat them as such. Everyone in the world, however vicious, degraded, or disagreeable, however unkind or hostile to us, is our brother, because Christ died for him, has redeemed him with His Precious Blood, and identifies Himself with him, saying: "Whatever you do to him, I, your Lord and Savior, count as done to Me." What a splendid motive for charity is this!

But above all, those who are united to us as members of the Catholic Church are our brethren in Jesus Christ. They are our brethren on a fresh ground, being members of His mystical Body. They are of our flesh and our bone. We ought to show very special charity to Catholics; they have a claim on us that others have not. They, and they only, belong to that sacred family of which Jesus Christ is the Head.

August 8th

Our Father Who art in Heaven

All true religion consists in having our hearts in Heaven, and not on earth; in seeking those things that are above, in looking for our happiness in Heaven rather than here. Sursum corda--"Lift up your hearts," is the instruction given by the priest in Holy Mass, before the Consecration. The object of all our prayers, of all the sacraments and sacramentals, is to raise our hearts to Heaven. This is why we are reminded that God is in Heaven, that He, from whom all good things come, is, above all, our Father in Heaven. Do I bear in mind the fact that Heaven, and not earth, is my true home?

God is everywhere, as we learn from the Catechism. But He is, in a special manner, in Heaven. His most faithful servants are in Heaven. Heaven is His throne, as the Psalmist tells us, and earth is only His footstool. There He dwells in the inaccessible light to which no mortal man can approach and live. The glory of Heaven reminds us of the glory, the dignity, the infinite majesty of the God of Heaven, and of the reverence we owe to Him, to His saints, to His priests, and to those earthly temples where He is as really present as in Heaven itself.

The fact that our Father is in Heaven is also intended to kindle our hope. Where our Father is, our true home must be. St. Paul tells us (Philipp. iii. 20) that our conversation is in Heaven, because from thence it is that we look for Our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall reform the body of our lowliness and make it like to His glorious Body, and place it, resplendent with beauty, before the throne of "our Father in Heaven."

August 9th

Our Father Who art in Heaven

As our Father is in Heaven, Heaven must be the proper home for us His children. Earth cannot be our true home. It can only be a place where we are to remain for a time, until the place is ready that our Father has prepared for us in the happy abode where He is waiting to welcome us. Why then should we distress ourselves about the transitory things on earth, where we are passing a very brief time at most, and where all that befalls us is intended by our Father in Heaven to make us fit to reign with Him forever?

As our Father is in Heaven, He is able to look down on what takes place on earth with all the perfect clearness of the light of Heaven. He sees every one as he really is; He is not deceived by earthly splendor; He knows in the most perfect detail the trials, the sorrows, the temptations, the struggles, the virtues, the merits of each; He makes allowance for each, and judges each with the most perfect impartiality, and at the same time with the most indulgent love. No fear lest He overlook thee, insignificant and worthless as thou art.

As our Father is in Heaven, we His children have no reason to fear any enemies either of our soul or body. He, who is in Heaven, is necessarily all-powerful, and laughs to scorn the devices of the wicked. His enemies may appear to succeed for a time, and His friends to fail, but our Father in Heaven is but waiting for the time when He will bring to shame all His foes, and will exalt His faithful friends. When the wicked seem to triumph, I must console myself by the thought that their victory will then be turned into a crushing defeat.

August 10th

Hallowed be Thy Name

The first petition of the Our Father asks for that which is important beyond all else in the world. That honor paid to God be by all things according to their degree, is the end for which the world was created. But above all other honor, in its dignity and value, is the honor paid to God by the rational service of man. When therefore we pray: "Hallowed be Thy Name," what we ask for is that all men may serve, love, and fear Almighty God, and so fulfil the purpose of God.

But the honor paid to God is not only all- important in itself, it is also all-important to us. No man can be truly happy unless he hallows the Name of God by paying to Him the reverence that is His due. Without this our lives must be a failure. We cannot really succeed unless we sanctify our actions by doing them for the glory of God, and from a supernatural motive. Nothing can satisfy man except God; no work can prosper in the end unless it be consecrated to Him.

What do we mean by hallowing the Name of God? The name of Him, who has dominion over others, signifies his authority. The Apostles worked miracles and taught in the Name of Jesus, i.e. by authority derived from Him. We offer all our prayers in His Name. What we pray for in the words, "Hallowed be Thy Name," is that the authority of God may everywhere be acknowledged, that all may submit to the authority of the Church which is invested with His Divine authority. Do I recognize and rejoice in the Divine authority of the Church as my teacher speaking in Christ's Name?

August 11th

Hallowed be Thy Name

When we pray that God's Name may be hallowed, the first thing we must seek to discover is whether we hallow it ourselves. To begin with, do we say our morning and evening prayers regularly and carefully? If we omit these, we neglect and treat as of no account the authority of God. And throughout the day, is our work done for God or for ourselves? In our works do we seek our own honor or pleasure, or the honor and glory of God? We do not hallow God's Holy Name if the thought of Him finds no place in our hearts from morn till night.

Still less can we be said to honor God's name if we allow ourselves to be guilty of any positive disrespects to Him. We do not hallow God's Holy Name if we permit our eyes to wander during Holy Mass, or if we deliberately think of things other than God while we pretend to be praying to Him. We do not hallow His Name if we are careless in our preparation for Holy Communion, or if we hurry over our thanksgiving afterwards. Alas! how often have I failed here!

There are also certain sins which are a special dishonor to God's Holy Name. Any sort of unnecessary oaths, any profane use of the Holy Name of God is a violation of the precept to hallow God's Name. So, too, is any disrespectful talk about holy persons or things, any disloyalty to what the Church has enjoined, any sort of profane conversation, any criticism of the commands of our lawful superiors. Is my conscience clear on these points?

August 12th

Hallowed be Thy Name

*T*he petition, "Hallowed by Thy Name," is a prayer offered for the whole world. In it we implore the mercy of God on all the idolaters and heathens who in their ignorance dishonor God's Holy Name by giving to some idol or some false god the honor due to God alone. They are to be counted by millions. How miserable their condition, brought up as they are to believe in the grossest superstition and in the darkness of Paganism. How are they to believe unless the Gospel is preached to them? Do I ever pray for the heathen, and do I contribute according to my ability that missionaries might be sent to preach to them?

*B*eside the heathen, the followers of the false prophet, the Jews, and the worshipers of Buddha, how many millions there are of those who call themselves Christians, and yet do not hallow God's Holy Name. All the manifold sects of Protestants, the schismatic Greek Church, Anglicans, Wesleyans, Congregationalists, all dishonor God by holding aloof from the Church that He has founded, and by a careless indifference to Divine truth. For all of these we pray in this petition. We ought to feel real sorrow at the thought of all these wanderers, and to lose no opportunity of helping them to find the truth.

*E*ven among Catholics, how few hallow God's Name as they ought. How many neglect prayer, and Holy Mass, and the Sacraments, and live almost like heathens. How sad the spectacle of so many thousands who have been nursed in the bosom of Holy Church, and yet dishonor God by their evil lives. Oh, what need there is to pray, "Hallowed be Thy Name."

August 13th

“Thy Kingdom Come”

*J*esus Christ came on earth to establish the Kingdom of God among men. Why, then, does He teach His disciples to pray for that which He has already accomplished? It is because He came but to plant the seed, which was afterwards to spring up and grow into a perfect tree. Its process of growth has been marred by the sins of men, by the attacks of its foes, by the lukewarmness of its friends. There are whole countries where the devil still reigns. There are others which were once the Kingdom of Christ, but now are so no longer. Lament over these defections, and pray that God's Kingdom may come to those countries where it is still unknown.

*A*s long as the world lasts we shall have to offer this prayer. The world will never admit the sovereignty of Christ, but will ever remain His enemy. His Kingdom, though recognized and loved by all men of good-will will always encounter the bitterest opposition from the pride and self-love and concupiscence of the world. Those who love the world cannot brook the idea of Christ being their King. They will not give up their independence. Is this my spirit, or am I a man of good-will?

*H*ow am I to tell on which side I am fighting? By the spirit that guides my actions. If I am humble, charitable, willing to submit, patient, forgiving, then I belong to the Kingdom of Christ, and can heartily offer this petition. If I am proud, selfish, resentful, harsh in my judgments, anxious to be prominent, then I belong to the world, and am a rebel against my King. "If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him" (I St. John ii. 15).

August 14th

“Thy Kingdom Come”

When we pray, "Thy Kingdom come," we ask Almighty God that the number of His elect may soon be complete, and that Our Lord may soon come again to take to Himself His great power, and reign. That second coming of Christ has been watched for by His saints for nineteen hundred years. "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," says St. John (Apoc. xxii. 20). "We look for the new heavens and the new earth, in which dwelleth justice," says St. Peter (2 St. Peter iii. 13). "The Lord is right at hand," writes St. Paul to the Philippians. Do I look forward with joy and confidence to the day of the Lord's return?

If we are to desire from the heart the coming of Jesus, to reign on earth, we must prepare for His coming by making Him Lord and King of our hearts, nay, of our whole nature, of everything we are, and everything we possess. Above all, our natural self-will and self-love must pay humble homage to Him, and must cease altogether from disputing His sway. Too often they have had the mastery rather than He, and as long as they reign, He will not come to dwell with us, and to prepare us for His future coming in glory.

If Christ is to reign in our hearts. His dominion there must be universal and constant. Our senses must be subject to Him, so that we do not indulge them except in obedience to His will. Our imagination must not wander here and there as it chooses, but must be under His control. No day-dreaming, no vain and idle following of every thought to which we are inclined, no admittance of what we know is dangerous, if Christ is to be truly our King.

August 15th

“Thy Will Be Done”

*T*he will of God is of two kinds: His absolute and His conditional will. The former includes everything that happens. Even the sins of men although in their character of sins they cannot be said to be in any sense in accordance with the will of God, as mere physical events are a part of God's providence, and are the means of working out His wise purposes, and indirectly are a source of glory to Him. He brings good out of evil, and the sins of men are often an occasion of merit to the saints, and are always an element in the carrying out of the designs of God. Admire the wisdom of God, whose glory all things sub serve.

*A*ll that is not sin is directly intended by God for His greater glory. All that we call evils and misfortunes have for their object the happiness of His elect. All sickness and pain, all the trials that beset mind and body, all failures, disappointments, all temptations, persecutions, all bodily and mental suffering, poverty, cold, hunger, physical depression and mental desolation, are a part of God's dispensation of love. It is difficult for us to realize this, but at least we can bow our heads and say: "Thy will be done."

*H*ence we ought never to regret anything except our sins, and those of others. We should never wish the circumstances of our life to be different from what they are. God has so ordained them, and that should be enough for us. We must, therefore, not only acquiesce in all that befalls ourselves and others, but also we ought to rejoice in seeing how all things without exception work together for His saints and the faithful. Is this the state of my heart?

August 16th

“Thy Will Be Done”

*B*esides the absolute will of God, which must always be carried out, there is also His conditional will, the fulfilment of which is subject to the free-will of man. Thus God wills that all men should save their souls, but He wills it only conditionally on the co-operation of man with His grace. Man has therefore the awful power of frustrating the merciful designs of God respecting him. He can defeat the love of God, and can in some way compel God to turn away from him in anger. Every time a grace is rejected, and man does not comply with the suggestions and inspirations of God, he prevents the carrying out of the perfect will of God.

*T*o do the will of God is the highest perfection of sanctity. It is this which gives to human action its value in God's sight. It matters not how we are employed so long as the employment is that God wishes us to be engaged in. If I can say with regard to all my daily actions, I believe that this is what God wishes me to do, I am living the most perfect life possible.

*H*ence to do the will of God includes every virtue. If I do what I believe is God's will, because it is His will, I cannot help being humble, charitable, modest, generous, obedient, self-denying, prudent, chaste, recollected, devout. It is this which earns the love of God and the Kingdom of Heaven. "Not everyone that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father Who is in Heaven, he shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (St. Matt. vii. 21).

August 17th

“Thy Will Be Done on Earth”

What a different place this earth would be if God's will were always done! What peace and happiness would prevail! What mutual good-will, and kindness, and unselfish generosity. With what perfect resignation we should bear all the crosses that God sends us. What harmony and good feeling would be found in every household! No more wars and strife, no more quarrels, no more resentment, no more jealousy, no more bitterness, no more regrets and disappointment; nothing but a loyal performance of the will of God in every detail of life, and a patient waiting until the time of our earthly sojourn has elapsed.

No one can ever run counter to the will of God without having to suffer for it. He must pay the penalty of disobedience. It is no use thinking that the matter is a trifling one, and that therefore the will of God can be disregarded with impunity. There is nothing small or trifling in things Divine. Every violation of God's holy will will bring sooner or later, a proportionate punishment. Often it will involve others, as well as the offender, in sorrow and suffering.

The reason of this is that as man is created to do the will of God, any departure from the end for which God designed him, must introduce an element of discord into man's nature. There is a war within us, self-will struggles against God's will, and this struggle means continual misery. One of the chief torments of the lost will be their self-will struggling vainly against the omnipotent will of God. Grant, O Lord, that my self-will may be brought into perfect subjection to Thy holy will!

August 18th

“Thy Will Be Done on Earth, as it is in Heaven”

What is it that is the distinguishing mark of obedience of the angels and saints in Heaven? It is that they do the will of God, not for any reward, but simply and solely because it is God's will. In the joy of the Beatific Vision their will is so perfectly united to God's, that the mere fact of doing the will of God is for them perfect happiness. This is what we have to try to imitate. Our life will become a sort of Heaven on earth, when our greatest enjoyment consists in doing God's work without the thought of any earthly reward, save the consciousness that we are carrying out His will.

The blessed in Heaven also find their delight in witnessing the accomplishment of God's purposes. They never regret anything that happens, but they regard every event as something in which they can find satisfaction, simply because God has so ordained it. We on earth often find it hard to acquiesce in God's arrangements. We wish God had willed otherwise. If we are to be like the angels and saints in Heaven, we must look at the bright side of everything, and must never regret anything that God has ordained for ourselves or others.

The blessed in Heaven enjoy the most perfect liberty. Hence there can be no true liberty in the power to commit sin, and in running counter to God's holy will. The liberty to sin is a sort of bondage. When every sin becomes practicably impossible to us, then we shall enjoy true freedom, and shall be like to the saints in Heaven. Then, we shall be like to God Himself, and shall be fit to see Him as He is.

August 19th

“Give us this day our Daily Bread”

Give us.--If we are to ask God to give us this day our daily bread, we must be dependent on Him for it. Although we are said to earn our bread, yet it is really God Who gives it to us. All the temporal goods that I possess come from Him. All that is required for the sustenance of life is His gift. He feeds me just as really as if I received each day from the hand of an angel what is necessary for my support. Grant to me, O Lord, a constant sense of my dependence on Thee, and a continual gratitude for Thy loving care.

Give us this day.--This petition is a practical admonition lest we, forgetting the warning of our Lord, be not anxious about the morrow. As long as we do our duty, and use ordinary prudence, we need have no anxieties about the future. We must not shelter avarice and selfishness under the name of carefulness. Our Heavenly Father who cares for the fowls of the air, will not let His children want. Try to foster a strong confidence in His loving care, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added to you."

Give us this day our daily bread--We must not ask for luxuries, or expect them. "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." God will give us what is necessary if we trust in Him, but He does not promise to provide what is superfluous. Beware of a discontented craving after earthly comforts which are not within our reach, or an envious feeling towards their possessors.

August 20th

“Give us this day our Daily Bread”

Our daily bread does not mean only the food necessary for our bodies. We have a higher and more important part of our nature which needs continual sustenance, if it is to be preserved in good health. Our soul too needs its food. Therefore, by the plea for bread, we beg also, all the varied graces which we need, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the helpful suggestions of our Guardian Angel. Without this daily bread, our souls, left to themselves, would soon become weak and feeble, and quite unable to resist when temptation comes.

This food of grace with which we ask to be fed, consists in the supernatural help which God has promised to give to all who ask Him. We can do nothing good for ourselves, and the holiness of our lives depends on a plentiful supply of Divine strength to sustain us in our weakness. This strength is given to all who ask for it. Without prayer we are sure to fall; those who pray earnestly are always safe.

This bread of our souls is also given to us in the holy sacraments of the Church, and above all in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. The Body of Our Lord is that supersubstantial bread which is more especially the object of this petition. Without it, the life of our soul soon flags. "Except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you" (St. John vi. 54). Do I value and avail myself to the best of my ability of the opportunity that I have of frequently communicating?

August 21st

“Give us this day our Daily Bread”

When the devil tempted Our Lord to turn stones, that lay around Him, into bread, in order to satisfy His hunger, the answer of the Son of God was that "not by bread alone doth man live, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." In other words, that which alone will nourish our souls, make them strong in the grace of God, and enable them to grow continually in virtue, is to do each day the work that God appoints for us. This is the bread that "strengthens man's heart." This is the spiritual bread that we ask for in this petition. This alone will really satisfy our souls. The first requisite, the only requisite of a life pleasing to God, is that each day should be so spent as we believe God desires it to be spent.

This is the meaning of Our Lord's answer to His Apostles at the well of Samaria, "My meat is to do the will of God, and to perfect His work." God had given Him a definite work to do, and nothing else had any importance in His eyes. For this and for this alone, He lived. So God has for every one of us a certain definite work for Him that He desires us to do. If we do it, our life will be a success; if not, a failure.

We cannot live this life of obedience without prayer. We cannot even find out what is the bread that will nourish us, what is the work God desires of us, unless we ask Him to enlighten us. We cannot carry into execution what we know to be His will, unless He strengthens us. Daily, therefore, I must pray, "Give me this day the grace of feeding on the bread that God assigns me, of doing the Work that He would have me do, and none other."

August 22nd

“Forgive us our Trespasses”

No man can ever enjoy true and lasting peace unless he is at peace with God. If he is conscious of being at enmity with God, he knows that there is an element of discord in his nature which, sooner or later, will involve him in hopeless misery. It is not the punishment that he fears so much as the condition which is the necessary result of sin unforgiven. He knows that he is guilty before God, and there is nothing so intolerable in the whole world as a sense of guilt unforgiven, carrying with it as it does, shame, remorse, terror, and in the end despair.

The instinctive cry of one who labors under this sense of guilt is to cry out, "Forgive me!" We ask forgiveness of one of our fellow-creatures whom we have offended, and when they forgive us, a weight is lifted from our heart. But they cannot forgive the guilt of sin. It is beyond the power of mortal man to take away that awful sense of guiltiness. Only God can do that. Hence that cry without which we can never enjoy true peace: "Forgive us our trespasses."

In offering this petition our first thought is not of the positive punishment that we have incurred. It is not the positive punishment endured, which will be Hell's greatest torment, but the separation from God and the consciousness of being the object of the aversion of God and of all the saints. When we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses," our first thought should be not to be freed from the punishment we have deserved, but from the anger of God, which is the worst punishment that even God Himself can inflict.

August 23rd

“Forgive us our Trespasses”

When we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses," we do not only ask to be released from the guilt of such sins as separate us from God. There are many other offences which impair, though they do not destroy the life of our souls, and our union with God. These lesser offences have all their own guilt, and their own punishment. They may delay for long years our entrance into Heaven. They may have to be expiated by the most agonizing sufferings. We must the more earnestly beg for forgiveness for these venial sins, because we are inclined to underrate the greatness of their evil, and of the misery they carry in their wake.

Why cannot we get rid of these venial faults? Why is it that God does not free us from them altogether? It is not God's fault, it is our own. It is we who will not be forgiven, not God who will not forgive. We still retain a certain love for these venial sins. We cling to them, and therefore they cling to us. We do not really hate and reject them. We have not that utter aversion for them without which such forgiveness, as will rid us of them and of all their evil consequences, is impossible for us.

In order that we should clear ourselves entirely from the guilt and punishment of venial sins, we must abhor, not only this or that sin, but all sin, venial as well as mortal, and our hatred must correspond as far as is possible for us, to the gravity of our sins in God's sight. We are too often very far from fulfilling this necessary condition, and therefore the punishment which our sins deserve at the hands of God is not wholly remitted.

August 24th

“Forgive us our Trespasses”

How few there are who depart this life with their sins completely effaced! The guilt of their mortal sins is all washed away in the Precious Blood of Jesus and the eternal punishment that they deserved is remitted. But there is still a debt of temporal punishment to be paid; and till this is paid, the soul cannot, and would not wish to, enter Heaven. Some will remain in Purgatory until the Day of Judgment; others for long years or centuries. How little the atonement that I have made for my sins! What reason I have to cry out to God, "Forgive me that debt I owe to Thee, forgive, O my God, forgive."

Besides the punishment due for mortal sins not fully atoned, how many venial sins are still a debt for most men that have to be wiped out. If through God's mercy I have no debt to pay for mortal sins, yet there has been a gradual accumulation of venial sins which will mean a long sojourn in the fires of expiation. The habit of venial sin has been strong in me, and has become almost a second nature. For these I must pray that God may forgive them before I die, and may remit the debt due for them.

If this petition is to be granted, it is not enough to cry out, "Forgive." I must do something, now, in this life, to atone for all the venial sins for which there still remains punishment due to the justice of God. I must give alms; and mortify my body; and pray much for others; and endure with patience and resignation the sufferings of this life. Above all, I must pray that I may have my Purgatory in this life, if I desire to escape it entirely in the next.

August 25th

“Forgive our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us”

We do not ask absolutely for the forgiveness of our sins, but we suggest a certain condition which is to be the limit and measure of the pardon granted us. This condition is our forgiveness of those who have offended us. We ask God not to forgive us, unless we forgive them, and to forgive us only to the same extent to which we forgive them. Can I honestly say that I only wish God to forgive me in the same proportion in which I forgive those who have done me an injury?

How can I tell whether I forgive others? God does not require of me that I should not feel hurt and pained at any unkindness shown me. This I cannot help. The saints, Our Lord Himself, felt unkindness most keenly. What I must avoid if I wish myself to be forgiven, is any indulgence of bitter, resentful feeling, anything that approaches hatred, anything like hostility towards others, anything that makes me regard the person offending as an enemy to be overcome, rather than as a friend to be won.

Nor again does God require that I should at once rid myself of the natural feeling of dislike with which some persons inspire me. I must fight against this feeling. I must try to supplant the natural dislike by a supernatural love. Our Lord asks: "If you love them that love you, what reward shall you have?" (St. Matt. v. 46). If I wish to please God, I must love my enemies, and do good to them that hate me, and show kindness to those whom naturally I dislike. Then I shall be a true child of my Father Who is in Heaven.

August 26th

“Forgive our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us”

Who is there who can look back over his past life without fear? Have all my past offences been forgiven? May it not be that I am still the object of God's anger on account of my many sins, my disloyalty, my meanness, my sensual indulgence, my pride, my selfishness, my unkindness to others, the scandal I have given, my neglect of prayer, my love of this present world? How am I to secure the indulgence of my judge?

Our Lord here tells us implicitly the condition that God imposes. It is one which seems most marvelously, most disproportionately easy of fulfilment, when we think what God is and what we are and consequently how terrible a thing it is to offend Him. All we have to do is to remit the hundred pence our neighbor owes us, and then God will forgive the ten thousand talents that we owe Him. I have simply put away all resentment, to have no wish to retaliate. This sounds easy, but is not at all so. Yet it is absolutely necessary for our own forgiveness.

This forgiveness of others depends for its merit:-- **(1)** On whether we have really anything to forgive. **(2)** On our own natural disposition. Some people have no temptation to resentment. **(3)** On our readiness to forgive any possible injury that might be inflicted on us. **(4)** On our motive, in that our forgiveness is an imitation of the forgiveness of the Son of God, and is granted to others for His sake. **(5)** On our readiness to do actual good to those who have injured us. **(6)** On wishing them no sort of harm or punishment. Do I fulfill these conditions?

August 27th

“Lead us not into Temptation”

In this petition we do not ask that no temptation may befall us. This would be practically impossible, and would be a misfortune rather than a benefit. "Blessed," says St. James (i. 12) "is the man who endures temptation." Temptations are necessary to try our faith, to increase our merit, to humble us, to enable us to sympathise with others, and for many other wise purposes. If I am tempted, I must not think that God is deaf to my prayers, but that He is going to lead me through the temptation to some great good.

What we do ask here is that we may not be led into temptation, there to remain until the temptation has involved us in sin. We ask that we may not be led into temptation as the bird is led into the snare of the fowler or the wild beast into the pit. We ask that when God sees us running on blindly towards the precipice, He will in His mercy turn us aside from it. How earnestly we ought to offer this petition when we remember our own weakness!

There is no saint so strong but that he would fall under temptation if God were to leave him to himself, and were to give Satan full power to tempt him as he pleased. No one could stand this ordeal. How much more easily should I fall, if it were not for the ever-present help of God! I could not withstand the fierce onset of passion, or the dogged force of self-will, or the dislike and ridicule of others, unless God tempered their force. O my God, do Thou avert what is too much for my weakness! Make in each temptation some means of escape for me, that I may be able to bear it.

August 28th

“Lead us not into Temptation”

When we pray God not to lead us into temptation, our primary request is that we may not be assailed by any temptation which God, in His knowledge of the future, sees will be too much for us. We ask Him in His mercy to avert it in some way, to have pity on our weakness and frailty. We know, indeed, that the temptation will be accompanied by a grace sufficient to enable us to withstand it, but we distrust ourselves and pray God to have mercy on our weakness, and not to allow any temptation to befall us to which He knows that we, through our own fault, shall give consent.

We also ask that in every temptation that God permits to assail us, He will give us an efficacious grace to resist, that is, a grace which is of such a nature that it will enable us to emerge victorious. Such graces are of inestimable value, they are a panacea against sin. They are not easily won: we cannot obtain them without earnest prayer; without prayer we are quite certain to be defeated, since the world, the devil, and the flesh are very powerful, and we are very weak.

When we offer this petition, we must be determined on our part to avoid all dangerous occasion. It is a mere mockery to pray that we may not be led into temptation, and then to run into it of our own accord. We must keep far away from all that experience has taught us is, to us, a cause of sin, or that tends to sin. We must look forward, and be ever on our guard. Is this my plan of action, or do I recklessly expose myself to danger, trusting that somehow I shall escape uninjured?

August 29th

“But Deliver us from evil”

In the last two petitions we have asked to be forgiven our past sins and to be preserved from sin in the future. We now add to these requests a further request to be delivered from all evil, past, present, and future. If we are to be "delivered" from evil, it implies that we are already involved in it. Alas, we are all immersed in evil from our very infancy. Original sin has sown its evil seed; pride is deeply rooted, selfishness, unkindness to others, resentment, rash judgment, love of indulging our senses, indolence, rebellion against God, neglect of prayer, self-will, unwillingness to submit still abound. O God, deliver me from these evils which still cling to me and defile me!

Not only are these evil tendencies still strong in us, but my own wilful acts have strengthened and developed them in me. They have become habitual in me, and it is difficult to shake off what is a habit. I do not enjoy the liberty of the children of God, because I have made myself a slave by my unwillingness to overcome myself, and to put on the sweet yoke of Jesus Christ. How am I to be rid of these self-made bonds? I can only pray, "Deliver me, O my God, from my evil and corrupt self!"

When I look forward, I do so with secret apprehension of the punishment due to me. Have I not deserved Hell? Have I not merited eternal separation from Thee? Have I not deserved to be left to myself to reap the bitter fruit of my own ill deeds? Yes, I have indeed, but still I cry, O God, in Thy mercy, deliver me from all the evil consequences of my unfaithfulness, and my sins. Have mercy on me, O Lord! Spare me, O Lord, for I am weak. Without Thee I can do nothing.

August 30th

“But Deliver us from evil”

In this petition we do not ask to be freed from spiritual evils alone. God, who knows the nature that He has created, encourages us to ask to be delivered from physical and temporal evils also. Our Lord Himself sets us the example of such a prayer. The Church in her public prayers begs for deliverance from earthquakes, pestilence, sickness, and other physical evils. We always do well when we turn to God in our temporal troubles. He wishes us to rely on Him for help and deliverance.

So too in sorrow, anxiety, sadness, and despondency we should pray. If it is right to ask God to free us from bodily sufferings, we have much more reason to beg to be delivered from mental sufferings, if it is His holy will. We cannot do better than to repeat often Our Lord's own words, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me." For both bodily and mental pain are in themselves calculated to interfere with and impair our ability to serve God, though He brings good out of evil, and suffering is often the road to holiness.

In our most earnest entreaty to be delivered from pain of body or mind, we must always implicitly, if not explicitly, insert a condition in our prayer that we may be relieved of our suffering only so far as God sees that the relief will be an advantage to our soul. "Not My will, but Thine be done!" This condition must be virtually, if not actually, present to our minds. We must be prepared to submit humbly, whether God grant our prayer or not. This will transform every evil into good.

August 31st

“But Deliver us from evil. Amen”

This last petition asks for that which is the end and object of all the other petitions as far as we ourselves are concerned. It begs of God in His mercy to deliver us from that evil which is for us the only evil worth the name, and to which all other evils lead, and are evil only because they lead to it. This evil is the eternal separation from God, which is the penalty of final impenitence. In other words, we pray in this final petition that God may save us from the unspeakable and irremediable misery of dying in sin, and so forfeiting the everlasting happiness of Heaven. How earnestly and constantly we should pray that God would, at the cost of any present suffering, save us from dying in sin.

If this petition is to be granted, we must seek now to make such a preparation for our last hour as may deliver us then from the power of the evil one. In this petition is included a prayer that the devil may then have no power to harm us. How can we secure this? **(1)** By keeping far away from willful sin. **(2)** By a regular and careful examination of our conscience. **(3)** By a great devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus. **(4)** By a frequent appeal to Mary and Joseph to be with us in the hour of death. **(5)** By a continual remembrance of the presence of God.

We end by summing up our petitions with that word which affirms our sincerity in all these requests that we ask of God. The word Amen adds a solemnity to our requests. It is a protest that our prayer comes from our heart. It is a declaration of our submission to the holy will of God. Is this true in my case? Do I really mean all that I have said in this prayer?

