

**Step-by-Step Walk Through the Mass
Do This in Remembrance of Me, Part 59,
The Lord's Prayer
by FR. LUKE SPANNAGEL**



As we journey through our final preparations before Communion, we take a closer look at the **Our Father**. “At our Savior’s command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to say: Our Father...” The Lord’s Prayer is the first part of the Communion Rite. This prayer, of course, is the prayer given to us by Jesus in the Gospel (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4). These are the very words that Jesus gave us to pray! As a priest, I feel like one of the most common things people say to me is that they don’t feel like they pray very well, or that they don’t know what to say when they pray. Maybe the disciples felt this way when they asked Jesus how to pray. In response, he gave the words that we now know as the Our Father. Here is an opportunity to pray with confidence with words directly from the mouth of Jesus.

A Daring Prayer

Why does the priest say in the invitation, “we dare to say”? As Charles Belmonte notes, “This invitation is a very touching and most ancient formula (one alluded to as early as the fourth century by St. Jerome). It states that we should not dare (*audemus*) to utter what we are about to say—were it not for the express command of our Lord. He taught us to approach God as a son talks to his father” (*Understanding the Mass*, p. 169). According to the Diocese of Peoria, “Our Lord used the word ‘Abba’ to express our filiation of the most high God. We are His sons and daughters and we call upon Him in a most intimate and familial term: Father. Our Lord desires we approach our Father with the serenity and confidence of children. Not only does he reveal this, but in a certain sense he commands it when he says, ‘When you pray, pray like this... Our Father!’” (“A Study of the Mass, p. 17). We dare to call God our Father because Jesus said we could!

If you look through the Old Testament, we see a few people having a uniquely close relationship with God: Adam, Abraham, and others who talked with God (Genesis 3 and 18); Moses, whose face was radiant after being in God’s presence (Exodus 34); Jonah and Job who talked with God when angry and frustrated (Jonah 4; Job 3 and 42), among others. As Edward Sri writes, “The ancient Jews certainly viewed God as the father of the people of Israel. But it was not at all common for an individual to address God as ‘Father.’ Nevertheless, this is precisely what Jesus calls us to do [...] and if he was speaking his native Aramaic, he probably used the word ‘Abba’ for father. This was an intimate, affectionate term similar to ‘Daddy’... This underscores the intimate relationship we now have with God because of Jesus’ work of salvation. Through our union in Christ, God has truly become our Father” (*A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*, p. 124).

God’s Desire to Be Close to Us

Among some of the first words we learn as young children are “mommy” and “daddy.” This is true for all different kinds of people with all different kinds of language. In some ways, these words are really central to who we are—people in relation to others. When Jesus taught us to pray, he said we should begin by saying, “Our Father.” If a good translation of “Abba” is “Daddy,” just think about how close God wants us to be! So close, in fact, that we could call him by a name that even a young child could recognize. What an amazing gift! What an amazing sharing in the life of God! No wonder we can pray with confidence—we have a Loving Father who loves us so much and so perfectly!

As the Diocese of Peoria has said, “The ‘Our Father’ itself is a model of prayer. It beseeches the Father, it praises and blesses Him, it recognizes His Divinity and Majesty. It asks and intercedes, asks pardon for our sins, avoidance of temptation and a deliverance from evil. It is so fitting we call upon our Father God in such a great prayer as we prepare to receive His great gifts... In this proximate preparation for Holy Communion, we are asking the Father for the gift of His Son. Unworthy as we are, we pray this in confidence, knowing of His infinite mercy and desire to share His gifts with us” (“A Study of the Mass, p. 17). Next, we’ll look at this wonderful prayer in more depth, including the meaning of the petitions. In the meantime, if you decide to pray a few extra Our Father’s, please pray one for me!