

because the 'Kingdom' refers to knowledge of the Father brought by **His Son**, and 'Thy Will Be Done' to His grace being brought by the **Holy Spirit**.



The final four petitions are for spiritual benefits.

'**Give us Our Daily Bread**' is firstly for God's grace, primarily through the Eucharist, our prime source of sustenance, and secondly a recognition of our responsibilities to feed **others**, both materially and spiritually. We must show our love through charitable actions and by evangelisation.

'**Forgive Us Our Trespasses As We Forgive Those ...**' this is both a prayer of trust to a Father who is so loving that we are confident he will forgive our imperfections, and a shocking realisation that even God's forgiveness is dependent on **our love for others** - on the extent to which we are prepared to forgive (Lk.6:27). Tertullian drew attention to the parable of the Unforgiving Debtor (Mtt.18) while Augustine expressed the view that because Jesus told us to forgive our enemies (Mtt.5) then we must forgive those who injure us **even when they fail to ask for pardon**. Maybe we should all pray for thicker skins when we are offended by the words or actions of others!

Lead Us Not Into Temptation is both a plea not to be tempted beyond our means to resist, and not to succumb when we are tempted. Temptation is not entirely negative in its aim. Origen recognised that successfully resisting temptation has positive effects **in teaching us to know ourselves**, because our choices for or against temptation are decisions of the heart that reveal the extent of our love for God. Through temptation we also learn to appreciate the need for God's grace and intervention in our lives, and the power of prayer.

Deliver Us From Evil (also Jn.17:15) may, in one sense, be seen as superfluous because if we do not succumb to temptation then we can not be in a state of sin. However, its purpose is to ask protection for the whole world and the universal Church from Satan's influence, and to be able to bear the pain of suffering when it occurs in our lives.

Our Catholic Faith Prayer and Spirituality 2010-2011

8. The Special Prayer Jesus Taught Us



1. Does it matter that Matthew's and Luke's Gospels differ in their text of the 'Our Father'?
2. Do you agree with Tertullian's view that the 'Our Father' is a summary of the Gospels?
3. Why do we pray that we are not led into temptation **and** that we are delivered from evil?

The Importance of the ‘Our Father’

One of the first prayers taught to children, the ‘Our Father’ has always had a very special place in the prayer life of the Church because it was taught by Jesus himself (Mtt.6). According to Luke’s Gospel, this was after the disciples asked him how to pray (Lk.11).

In Matthew’s Gospel the prayer has 7 petitions, but in Luke’s only 5. It may be that Luke’s is the more accurate because Matthew seems to have a penchant for the number 7 as a recognised ‘perfect’ number e.g. 7 Beatitudes (Mtt.5), 7 Parables in his artificial chapter (Mtt. 13) of parables, 7 attacks against the Pharisees (Mtt. 23).

Traditionally the Church has recognised 7 petitions. - these follow the introductory phrase ‘**Our Father who art in the heavens**’.

The first 3 draw us to God for Who He Is - his Name, his Kingdom, his Will. The other 4 ask that we be Given, Forgiven, Led, and Delivered (* not in Luke).

1. Hallowed be thy **Name**
2. Thy **Kingdom** come
3. Thy **Will** be done on earth as it is in heaven*
4. **Give** us this day our daily bread
5. **Forgive** us our trespasses (sins) as we forgive those who have trespassed (sinned) against us
6. **Lead** us not into temptation
7. **Deliver** us from evil*



In the early Church this prayer was analysed for its deepest meaning. The first written account on prayer that referred to the Our Father was by Tertullian in the late 2nd./early 3rd century. This was followed by the reflections of Origen and the great theologian, St. Augustine. Perhaps in our own familiarity with it we have forgotten to reflect as they did on its immense insights to our Faith. For Tertullian, for example, the Our Father provided a summary of the entire Gospel.

Reflections and Insights Into The ‘Our Father’

The opening praise to God ‘**Our Father Who Art In Heaven**’ should be said in deep humility, containing as it does two unique revelations.

1. The Name of God is Father, a revelation denied Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:13), but now revealed by Jesus.
2. The immense privilege given us of being allowed to call God, who is the father of Jesus, **our** father also. This is because in our acceptance of Jesus at our Baptism we have become God’s adopted children (Rm.6:1f and 8:14-17). Therefore, everyone in God’s Church is in communion with him and with each other.

The Petitions

The first 3 petitions are reflections we are asked to make about the nature of God, his Name, Kingdom and Will, and how we should respond :



First, God’s **Name** is hallowed **in itself** - Tertullian reminds us that we can do nothing to affect the welfare of God! Rather this petition asks for a blessing, that God’s name be sanctified **in us** or, as Origen put it, we must urge it to be sanctified **in all people**.

Second, **thy Kingdom come**, is both a request and a wish for Jesus’ return, which is how Tertullian and Augustine interpreted it, and a desire for a God’s Kingdom within us, which was Origen’s view. So, the new covenant of the heart created by Jesus’ death, fed by the Eucharist, and guided by the Holy Spirit (Gal.5:22f and Rm.8:9) is God’s Kingdom.

Third, **thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven** is not asking God to do is Will on earth as he can surely do this whenever he wishes! Rather it is a petition that we do his Will perfectly. Tertullian’s interpretation is that it asks God both to make us aware of his Will and to give us the capacity to carry it out. We may also see it, therefore, as a prayer to the Holy Spirit.

The first three petitions may also have an indirect Trinitarian meaning: