



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** *St Peter's Square*

Wednesday, 22 May 2019 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today we conclude our series of catecheses on the “Lord’s Prayer”. We can say that Christian prayer arises from the courage to address God with the name ‘Father’. This to say ‘Father’ to God. But it takes courage! It is not so much a matter of a formula, as much as a filial intimacy into which we are introduced by grace: Jesus is the revealer of the Father and he gives us intimacy with him. He “does not give us a formula to repeat mechanically. As in every vocal prayer, it is through the Word of God that the Holy Spirit teaches the children of God to pray to their Father” (ccc, n. 2766). Jesus himself used different expressions to pray to the Father. If we read the Gospels carefully, we discover that these expressions of prayer that come from Jesus’ lips recall the text of the “Our Father”.

For example, on the night of Gethsemane, Jesus prays this way: “Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt” (Mk 14:36). We have already cited this text from Mark’s Gospel. How can we fail to recognize in this prayer, albeit short, a trace of the “Our Father”? In the midst of darkness, Jesus invokes God with the name ‘Abba’, with filial trust and, despite feeling fear and anguish, he asks that his will be done.

In other passages of the Gospel, Jesus insists that his disciples nurture a spirit of prayer. Prayer must be insistent, and above all it must carry the memory of our brothers and sisters, especially when we have difficult relationships with them. Jesus says: “whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against any one; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses” (Mk 11:25). How can we fail to recognize in these expressions, their consonance with the “Our Father”? And the examples could be numerous, also for us.

We do not find the “Our Father” in Saint Paul’s writings, but its presence emerges in that wonderful summary where the invocation of the Christian is condensed into a single word: ‘Abba!’ (cf. Rm 8:15; Gal 4:6).

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus fully satisfies the request of the disciples who, seeing him withdraw and immerse himself in prayer, decide to ask him one day: "Lord, teach us to pray, as John" — the Baptist — "taught his disciples" (Lk 11:1). And so the Teacher taught them to pray to the Father.

When considering the New Testament as a whole, one can clearly see that the first protagonist of every Christian prayer is the Holy Spirit. But let us not forget this: the protagonist of every Christian prayer is the Holy Spirit. We could never pray without the power of the Holy Spirit. It is he who prays within us and moves us to pray well. We can ask the Holy Spirit to teach us to pray because he is the protagonist, the one who makes the true prayer within us. He breathes into the heart of each of us who are Jesus' disciples. The Holy Spirit makes us able to pray as children of God, as we truly are by our Baptism. The Holy Spirit helps us pray in the 'furrow' that Jesus ploughed for us. This is the mystery of Christian prayer: by grace we are attracted to that dialogue of love of the most Holy Trinity.

Jesus prayed this way. At times he used expressions that are certainly far removed from the text of the "Our Father". Let us think about the initial words of Psalm 22 that Jesus uttered on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46). Can the heavenly Father abandon his Son? Certainly not. And yet, his love for us, sinners, brought Jesus to this point: up to experiencing the abandonment of God, his distance, because he took our sins upon himself. But even in his anguished cry, "*my* God, *my* God" remains. In that 'my' lies the core of the relationship with the Father; there lies the core of faith and of prayer.

This is why, starting from this core, a Christian can pray in any situation. He can adopt all the prayers of the Bible, especially of the Psalms; but he can also pray with many expressions that in thousands of years of history have gushed forth from the heart of mankind. And let us never cease to tell the Father about our brothers and sisters in humanity, so that none of them, particularly the poor, may remain without comfort or a portion of love.

At the end of this catechesis, we can repeat that prayer of Jesus: "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes" (Lk 10:21). In order to pray, we have to make ourselves little so that the Holy Spirit may come within us and may be the One to lead us in prayer.

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, especially those from England, Belgium, Tanzania, New Zealand, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Canada and the United States of America. In the joy of the Risen Christ, I invoke upon you and your families the loving mercy of God our Father. May the Lord bless you all!

I offer a special thought to *young people, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds*. Saint Rita of Cascia, whose memorial we celebrate today, was a woman, a bride, a mother, a widow and nun of her time. May today's women, in her example, manifest her same enthusiasm for life and at the same time be capable of the same love that she reserved for everyone unconditionally.