Opinion
Spirituality
Soul Seeing



A 15th-century French miniature depicts Jesus teaching the Our Father. (Courtesy of the New York Public Library)

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One day in a place where Jesus had just finished praying, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say Father, hallowed be thy name." (Luke 11:1-2)

Pope Francis made news recently when he implied that some of the language in the Lord's Prayer needs polishing. The line "lead us not into temptation," for instance, "is not a good translation," he answered in a radio interview about a new French translation of the prayer.

"I'm the one who falls," the pope observed. "But it's not [God] who pushes me into temptation to see how I fall. No, a father does not do this. A father helps us up immediately."

The Lord's Prayer, or the Our Father, is my favorite prayer. I've been saying it in the words I was taught for more decades than are on a rosary. I get what the pope is talking about. But the familiar words of this prayer have become a starting point for longer meditation. Here is what I have come to see and hope to realize when I pray.

Our Father. God is my source, my father in heaven, my mother on earth, and wherever I go God goes too. "I live and move and have my very being in God" (Acts 17:28). God is love (1 John 4:16), and so I am literally *in love*. And God is not only *my* dwelling place (Psalms 27:4) but everyone else's, too, which means our natural state is to live in peace and harmony with each other. I pray to see my neighbor today with the eye of our shared soul (Mark 12:30-31).

Who art in heaven. The kingdom of heaven is here and now, closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet (Luke 17:20-21). I pray to realize that the purpose of prayer is not to get something or make something go away but simply to "dwell in the shadow of the Most High" (Psalms 91:1), to be still and know that *I AM* is God (Psalms 46:10, Exodus 3:14, John 8:58) and that we are all images and likenesses of the one *I AM* (Genesis 1:27, Luke 22:19). I pray that the scales that blind me to the love that is in me and surrounds me and unites me with everyone else get swept aside like the tables at the entrance of the temple (Matthew 21:12). God, bring me into your temple and let me see (John 1:39) where you are.

Hallowed be thy name. God's signature is on everything he made. Everything in creation is a sign that points to its spiritual source: the creator of all beauty,

harmony, power and grace. I walk on holy ground (Exodus 3:5). I pray to honor God's creation.

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Thy will be done. This is my favorite line. My soul sometimes whispers, or cries it. I need to know that God's will for me is better than anything I can imagine. Love doesn't want to hurt me. God's will is to bless me (Romans 12:2). The very first sentence of the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches: "God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created us to make us share in his own blessed life." Thank you, God (1 Timothy 4:4), I can relax now (Psalms 23:2).

Thy kingdom come. It's come. It's in our midst (Luke 17:20-21). I can see it if I have eyes to see, I can hear its silent music if I listen to its still small voice (Matthew 13:16.) The kingdom of Love is not of this world (John 18:36). I can only see what the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins called "the dearest freshness deep down things" when I understand that the kingdom of God is not material but spiritual. To behold the reign of God requires an alchemy of the heart.

On earth as it is in heaven. Heaven is not a place far away but a quality of awareness. What happens in my consciousness manifests in my life, as words, behaviors, conditions, a mode of being in the world. The ideas I cultivate make heaven or hell. What I think of my neighbor I will do unto them, and what I do unto them I do, literally, unto myself (1 Corinthians 12:26). God, purify my awareness (Matthew 5:8).

Give us this day our daily bread. "Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body' " (Matthew 26: 26). I am in God because I am in Jesus, and Jesus is in me (John 14:20). I pray to feast on Jesus' life and teachings and drink of his love so that I may walk and talk and be like him. This is life eternal, to come to know God and Jesus Christ whom love has sent (John 17:3).

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Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. We cannot let go of the guilt we feel born with until we see our neighbor, even our

enemy, as our very self (Matthew 22:39) and in forgiving them we forgive ourselves. When Jesus saved the adulteress about to be stoned, he didn't say, "Sin no more and I will not condemn you." He said, "I do not condemn you. *Now* go and sin no more." Guilt makes sin, and sin makes guilt, and guilt makes more sin to escape more guilt. Forgiveness makes love, and inspires us to forgive others. Love begins, and grows, with forgiveness, unearned and freely given. Forgiveness is perfect love, and perfect love drives out guilt and fear (1 John 4:18-20).

And lead us not into temptation. "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone" (James 1:13). When we ask God for our daily bread, he does not give us a bag of stones (Matthew 7:9). When temptation taunts, God lifts us up on angels' wings (Psalms 91: 11-12).

But deliver us from evil. I cannot save myself, I cannot save anyone. Only Love can save us (2 Timothy 4:18). I surrender my will to God's (Mark 8:35). I ask God to set me free from the destructive idea of a false self I make up in order to survive but in fact destroys me, so I may instead dwell in the shelter of the Self that sets me free (Psalms 91, John 8:32). God's will is to deliver me safely into his kingdom (2 Timothy 4:18).

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. This is the last line of the Lord's Prayer in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer (Matthew 6:13). Mikey likes it.

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