**Module Four, Lesson #10: “Your Father Knows What You Need”**

**The Last Four Petitions of the “Our Father.”** CCC 2828-2865

# Prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas

**Grant me grace, O Merciful God,**

**to desire ardently all that is pleasing to Thee,**

**to examine it prudently, to acknowledge it truthfully,**

**and to accomplish it perfectly**

**for the praise and glory of Thy Name. Amen.**

**Outline of Lesson**

Review of Lesson Nine “Pray to Your Father Who Is in Secret” 2803-2827

Petition 4: “Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread” 2828-2837

Petition 5: “And Forgive Us Our Trespasses,

as We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us” 2838-2845

Petition 6: “And Lead Us Not Into Temptation” 2846-2849
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**Our Aim:** to “utter this prayer and endeavor to live out the virtues [asked for in each petition], both to know and enjoy the happiness to which all are called and which is constituted by union with the God of Jesus Christ.” --William C. Mattison III, “The Lord’s Prayer and an Ethics of Virtue: Continuing a History of

Commentary.” *The Thomist* 73.2 (April 2009), 279-312.

**I. Review of Lesson Nine “Pray to Your Father Who Is in Secret” 2803-2827**

● Various **ways of grouping.** Commonly:three ascending, heaven-oriented “theological” petitions + four temporally-oriented petitions beseeching the Father’s descending favor for reaching heaven.

● **Virtues** (perfections / habitual readiness of our powers of knowing & willing to see and choose consistently, readily, joyfully for the True Good) may be associated with each petition.

● **Petition 1:** **“Hallowed be thy Name.”** Foundation: May God’s glory be manifest to creation, may his Name be hallowed through the accomplishment of his redemptive will—and may we participate by immersion in the Spirit who effects that saving will.

**Virtue = Faith** in who God Is and how he acts.

● **Petition 2:** **“Thy Kingdom come.”** Prayer for the full accomplishment of God’s saving action—the on-going revelation of his reign begun in “the fullness of time,” perduring now, to be fully manifest at the Second Coming of Christ Jesus—and for the grace to engage the battle for God’s reign in our own lives and in the evangelization of the world.

A Eucharistic petition for the **virtue of confident Hope** in God’s effective will.

● **Petition 3:** **“Thy will be done.”** Prayer then for the salvation of the world, first accomplished in the freely-willed, obedient suffering and offering of the Son, now extended by the union of our wills with his. A prayer for the fruition now on earth of the **virtue of Love (Charity**), THE activity of free creatures made in the imago Dei, made for heaven; a prayer to be made fit for home.

● Now, having secured our gaze on and ordered our desire **toward the object / goal of our lives**—The Triune God, eternal life of heaven, Beatitude—there are four petitions beseeching his **assistance for the journey** to that goal.

● Note the **plural form**: “give *us* bread…, forgive *us* sin…, lead *us* not into temptation…, deliver *us* from evil (one)….” This is not simply a “royal we,” but is our effective mediation for all the world, the unjust as well as the just.

● These are not craven, self-centered expression of wants, but **free, child-like expressions of trust** rooted in our Spirit-filled instinct that **God, as Loving Father, IS the source of all that is Good.** They therefore imply great **gratitude** rooted in **humble poverty of spirit**:

“And I tell you, ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" Jesus, Luke 11:9-13

***“Your Father knows your needs before you ask him.”*** Jesus, Matt 6:8

**Petition 4: “Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread” 2828-2837**

**Gift** = fortitude, willingness to suffer loss for greater good, persevere steadfastly (both Aug & Aquinas)

**Beatitude** = “those who hunger & thirst for righteousness (greater good) => satisfied”

**● “Bread” = ALL necessary goods, material and spiritual.**

**●** Our need for Bread **unites us with all those impoverished in any way**.

Therefore, this is a cry for justice and a prayer for increased awareness of solidarity, sense of responsibility, and motivation to expend ourselves for the good of the world.

● Because “man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God,” this is also a prayer for alleviating the famine of the spirit by the proclamation of **the Gospel, the Good Word**…

● …and is a **cry for the presence of the Bread of Life, the Word Incarnate in the Eucharist**, the very Body and Blood of the Living God, apart from Whom “you have no life in you” and in Whom we “will live forever” (John 6:32-33, 35, 48, 51-53, 58).

● **“This day”** = not only each of our own temporal days today, but the “Today” of the Lord, the Day of the Resurrection, the Day of Salvation (“*Hodie*! Today!”)—any day in which HE is present in our midst (cf. 2836, 349, 1085, 1165, 2659). **By virtue of the Bread of Life, our daily days already participate in the Great Today of Heaven.**

If you receive the bread each day, each day is today for you. If Christ is yours today, he rises for you every day. How can this be? "You are my Son, today I have begotten you." Therefore, "today" is when Christ rises.127 127 St. Ambrose, *De Sacr.* 5,4,26:PL 16,453A; cf. *Ps* 2:7.

● **“Daily”** = unique word in New Testament (*hapax legomenon*):

*epi-ousios / super-substantialem*

1. “Today give us ***today’s*** ***essential*** sustenance, that which we need **NOW**…” =

“we express our trust in you to give us the essentials needed now, exactly what we need”

2) “This day give us ***ALL we need* / *all that is necessary*** to sustain us…” =

necessary “bread” in broadest sense: Wisdom, virtue, Gifts of the Spirit…

3) “This day give us the ***epi-ousios* / *super-essential*** Bread…” =

the super-natural Bread, i.e., the Eucharist, Christ himself.

4) “This day give us the True Manna for the ***Today-to-be-fulfilled***, i.e., for the morrow, heaven, the **True Sabbath** (Israelites gathered the Sabbath rest’s manna on the day before).

● **Possible cardinal virtue:**

**1) temperance** (only what is necessary, no superfluous indulgence)

**2)** **prudence** (Godly wisdom, sound practical judgment by seeing as God sees) = the chief patristic emphasis is that“bread” = wisdom and The Wisdom (Christ) / Eucharist.

**Petition 5: “And Forgive Us Our Trespasses,**

**as We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us” 2838-2845**

**Gift** Counsel (Aug) Knowledge (of good & evil) (Aquinas)

**Beatitude** Merciful => will receive mercy Mourn (for sin) => will be comforted

● “Forgive us our trespasses…” = perhaps included in “Hallowed be Thy Name” (i.e., make us holy, too, by granting us your mercy)…

…but there is a condition: “as.” “As” = “when / in manner which” we must be willing to forgive!

**The “as” expresses our willingness to participate in the forgiveness of God we are asking for (since that forgiveness changes us from within)!**

1. “Father, like the prodigal son, we are still sinners who should know and live better than we do, but who also know we can come to you with confident hope for your mercy. So, Father, give us the mercy we don’t deserve…”
2. “…as we forgive others who have been unjust to us and extend them the mercy that they don’t deserve—just as you do to us and to them.” (St. Stephen)

In other words: **“Father, make us holy—able to forgive as you forgive—by forgiving us, since we’re genuinely willing to receive that life-changing grace of forgiveness/ holiness and, see, forgive others as you forgive!”**

● Our real transformation in holiness (God-likeness) comes through the transformation of our inner man, i.e., when we can love and forgive others as our Father has done. But we cannot do this on our own power; human power to forgive is limited, and on our own we cannot! We need grace-mercy-forgiveness—and THAT changes us. Are we willing to do/ receive THAT? **The moment of our willed “I forgive you” is the simultaneous “yes” surrender to God’s grace! “I forgive you” are words of reception to the Spirit, words of conversion.**

● We need grace of forgiveness, but can only truly receive it if open to grace to forgive others—**even unto enemies (those closest to us):** if we want to receive the gift we don’t deserve (but think we do), then we must be willing to extend the gift to one whom we don’t think deserves it.

If willing for our love to have no limit, we can receive then the limitless love of God: our forgiving expands our capacity to receive. Conversely, if we are unwilling to forgive others as he has done, we are therefore unwilling—because we are unable—to receive that which we are asking for.

● **God’s forgiveness IS God’s justice; his justice IS his mercy.** There is a new measure for fairness here: God-likeness. “Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect!” (Matthew 5:48). “Father, forgive them; they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). “A new commandment I give you: Love as I have loved you” (John 13:34).

● Forgiveness entails **purification of memory** = to see more truly (as God sees) what has been done to us (and what we have done) and to respond to it more completely, i.e., in light of how HE perceives every dimension. There is no evil so great that God cannot bring good out of it. 2843 Such inner transformation is possible only with God: “**With God all things are possible**” (Matt 19:26)

● **Possible cardinal virtue: Justice / right relationship** (giving others their due by virtue of who they are and who we are). God’s justice is mercy.

**Petition 6: “And Lead Us Not Into Temptation” 2846-2849**

**Gift** Understanding (mysteries of faith) (Aug) Piety / respect (Aqu)

**Beatitude** Pure of heart => see God Meek => inherit the earth

**Apparent conundrum, but:**

● “God cannot be tempted by evil, and he himself tempts no one” (James 1:13)

● Therefore: “Do not allow us to be conquered by temptation” = both “do not allow us to enter into it (especially by our own fault)” and “help us not to yield whenever it comes, regardless of circumstances.”

● 1) NOT to be quick in doing good (omission); 2) NOT to avoid doing evil (commission) by world (obtuse spirit), flesh (un-governed desire), Satan (pride)

● **Why do temptations come?**

1) We are at **spiritual war** = the condition of the “already but not yet.”

2) We still have **affections for sin** that we must decide in the heart to forsake = we still need purification and singleness of heart. “Where treasure is, so also the heart” (Matt 6:21).

3) God allows trials **in order to strengthen us** in saying “no” to our more or less disordered desires = we still need ordering of will and control of desires.

● This is fundamentally a **prayer for vigilance, for strength & ordering of will over disordered desire, and for discerning wisdom**:

“Be sober (controlled), be vigilant (watchful), for your adversary the devil prowls like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith…” (I Peter 5:8-9a).

● “Custody of the heart”…for final perseverance.

● **Possible cardinal virtue: Temperance** (self-control, moderation of appetites) and the **prudence** (sound judgment, right reason for virtuous action, mature common sense) to discern circumstances that might be the near occasion of sin.

**Petition 7: “But Deliver Us From Evil [the Evil One]” 2850-2854**

**Gift**  Wisdom (Aug) Fear of God (Aqu)

**Beatitude** Peacemakers => children of God Poor in spirit => the Kingdom

● We want to be children of our Father (not of father of lies); we want to inherit the Kingdom (not the realm of the dead).

● Jesus to the Father: “I am not asking you [Father] to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one” (John 17:15)…as Jesus himself prayed in his combat against Satan. The evil is not abstract; evil is person-al: Satan.

● We do not dread Satan, for his defeat is already accomplished by Jesus’ “once for all” victory; in this spiritual battleground of the “already but not yet,” we pray **for God’s gracious keeping us from Satan’s vengeful attempts** to wound and destroy anyone & anything of God.

● This is a prayer for deliverance from all the evil **effects** of the war, material & spiritual = peace, Beatitude, Blessing, heaven! Therefore, chiefly for

1) consolation in affliction

2) blessing after affliction

3) growth by means of affliction

● This is a prayer to be **joined to Christ’s battle** and to arrive victorious to the end in him; it is a prayer for complete fruition of Jesus’ work and for full immersion in the Spirit.

**“The Spirit and the Bride say ‘Come’”** (Rev. 22:17).

● **Cardinal virtue: Fortitude** (toughness, perseverance, courage, willingness to suffer loss of a good for greater good still = for heaven, God’s glory, the right & true).

**The Final Doxology 2855-2856**

● “For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever” = a return, by acclamation, to the first petitions. A confession that all will be accomplished, for God is God, and there is none like him. It is ***the song of heaven sung now***.

● “Amen!” So be it. A confession of trust, a declaration of assent.

Augustine on the Perfect Prayer.

“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. For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, now and forever.” Amen.