

**FEBRUARY 2009 G.R.A.C.E. MONTHLY SESSION
CATECHETICAL AREA: PRAYER AND SPIRITUALITY
SPECIFIC CATECHETICAL THEME: THE LORD'S PRAYER**

ADULT SESSION:

--Break into three mini-sessions, rotate from one to another.

1) Focus on the first part of the Lord's Prayer, especially "Thy kingdom come."

-- Goal: Lead participants towards an understanding that when we pray we are centered on God for God's own sake and are asking for an openness to let God's kingdom, which is already present in God, break through to the here and now.

2) Focus on the second part of the Lord's Prayer, especially "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

--Goal: Unpack the meaning and importance of forgiveness in an adult spirituality

3) Focus on the practice of *lectio divina*, using the Our Father as the "text".

--Goal: Help participants learn about and experience firsthand how the lectio divina model can deepen an adult's prayer and spirituality.

**MINI-SESSION #1: THE LORD'S PRAYER AS PATTERN FOR ALL PRAYER:
THY KINGDOM COME**

Catechetical Goal

Lead parishioners towards an understanding that when we pray for “Thy kingdom come” we are centered on God for God’s own sake and are asking for an openness to let God’s kingdom, which is already present in God, break through to the here and now.

POINTS

TO HIT

ON BEFORE GOING INTO KINGDOM

- Our = communal: no me or mine. No one is left out when we pray “Our Father” Every person is created by God and every person is loved by God
- When we pray it sincerely “our divisions and oppositions have to be overcome” (CCC 2792)
 - Father—Abba— relationship
- Heaven does not mean a place (space) but a way of being; it doesn’t mean that God is distant, but majestic. God is not “elsewhere” but God transcends everything (CCC 2794)
- Hallowed means holy, only God makes holy. Used in the Lord’s Prayer, asking the Father that his name be made holy draws us into his plan of loving kindness for the fullness of time (CCC 2807) When we pray that God’s name be hallowed, we also mean that it should be hallowed in us through our actions, for God’s name is blessed when we live well. (CCC 2814)
- Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven: connection between earth and heaven, in Christ heaven and earth are reconciled. Jesus teaches that one enters the kingdom of heaven not by speaking words, but by doing “the will of my Father in heaven.” (CCC 2826)
- The first series of petitions carries us towards God and is centered on God for God’s own sake, “*thy name, thy kingdom, thy will*”. It is a characteristic of love to think first of the one whom we love. (CCC 2804)

NOW LET’S LOOK AT “THY KINGDOM COME”

Let's hear what Jesus tells us about the kingdom in some parables (*remind them of how Jesus used parables often to teach*)

“He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches”

(Matthew 13:31-32)

“He told them another parable: the kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened” *(Matthew 13:33)*

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field” *(Matthew 13:44)*

They are short enough and on the same subject, so I might have them read all of the parables together and then pull out meaning.

- *What is Jesus trying to teach us about the kingdom in these passages?*

I'd touch on the main points of the parables:

- Parables of mustard seed and leaven use everyday things to illustrate the dynamic of the kingdom of God. The activity of God in the ministry of Jesus seems as small as a mustard seed or as a little yeast, but its result is the fullness of God's rule will be very great. The kingdom already has a present dimension and that the process moving toward its fullness has in some way been inaugurated. *(From Commentary)*

- The parable of the treasure illustrates the zeal with which the kingdom should be pursued. Expressed is the great value of the kingdom, the joy that it brings, and the total commitment that it deserves. (*From Commentary*)

There is an element of surprise or mystery when God's kingdom breaks through—the smallest seed becomes the biggest tree; the little bit of yeast raises up loaves of bread; the joy and excitement of finding a treasure in the earth.

(From my memory of what Fr. Dave said in our meeting.)

Then I'd ask:

- *When have you seen the kingdom breaking through?*

Remember how often Jesus spoke of the kingdom:

- As Jesus begins his mission, he states, "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." (*Mark 1:15*)
- When Jesus reveals the kingdom, he does it by proclaiming God's word, healing the sick and suffering, and forgiving sins.

When Jesus commissions the twelve, he sends them to proclaim the kingdom of God and gives them power to heal. (*Luke 9:1-2*)

Spend some quiet time with journal and reflection questions.

End with one of the quotes written out on poster board which we would read aloud:

From adult CCC: "The kingdom is already here because of the redemption of Jesus Christ. But in another sense, it is "not yet" here, since Christ's final transformation of individuals, society, and culture has yet to happen in its fullness."

From Aired Squire, "If we do not wish to be changed in the manner in which God's grace working in us will inevitably change us, then we should not pray, "Thy kingdom come", since we do not really mean it."

MINI-SESSION #2: THE LORD'S PRAYER AS PATTERN FOR A SPIRITUALITY OF FORGIVENESS

Our Father: Adult session on Forgiveness (23 min)

Opening:

Introduce the second half of the Our Father and the 4 petitions in this section that focuses on our needs; **it brings together all the prayers of the community and lifts them up to God.**

- ✦ We ask God to give us (daily bread)
- ✦ We ask God to forgive us
- ✦ We ask God to lead us

We ask God to deliver us

We are only going to focus on the second one... We ask God to forgive us.

First, let's see the different ways we perceive the word forgiveness. (5 min)

One half of group brainstorms on "Forgiveness is..."

The other half of group brainstorms on "Forgiveness is not..."

Each group puts words/phrases on sheet of paper/share with other group.

Input from both sides and facilitator: (5 min)

-This phrase in the Our Father "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." is seen by many as the most challenging part of the Lord's Prayer. These words are to me the ones that take the most courage to utter.

-How do you see their meaning: These words actually invite God to forgive us only to the extent that we are willing to forgive those who harm us. They demand a commitment on our part to forgive, to give the people who hurt us second chances. This is not easy.

-What do we mean when we say we need to forgive ourselves? Is it really forgiveness or is it about letting go of a mistake we made? Can we really forgive ourselves apart from asking God forgiveness for our actions and another for how we might have harmed them? (ex. mom in nursing home) Asking forgiveness

God and other person, and getting it, should allow us to move past our actions and to put the action in the past once and for all.

-What is harder for you...to forgive another, or to ask forgiveness from someone?

What does scripture say about forgiveness: (brief quotes read from cards from group) Name message in Jesus' responses. (5 min)

Matthew 18:21-

"Then Peter came and said to him, Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as 7 times? Jesus said, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.'"

Luke 6:27-

"But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat, do not withhold even your shirt."

Luke 23:33-34

“...they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’”

John 8:5-

“Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.... Woman where are they? Has no one condemned you? She said, No one, sir. And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.”

What is happening in society: **(5 min)**

Use handout on Pope visiting his attacker and the Amish response to the killing of children at school and the Timothy McVeigh incident. Could we do the same as these people? What is the hardest thing about forgiving another?

Reflection questions for journal sheet: (pick one to comment on-**3 min**.)

What is the hardest thing you ever had to forgive in another?

How hard is it for you to forgive others?

Do you hold grudges?

Can you truly forgive and forget?

Do you look on mistakes as failures or as opportunities to learn?

Do you help create a climate in your home, your workplace, your parish in which people can admit their mistakes, knowing they will be forgiven?

How do you feel when you are forgiven?

How do you feel when you forgive another?

How do you feel after you experience the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

✦ End with “Peace be with you”

Mini-Session #3: The Lord's Prayer and the Lectio Divina

Preparation:

Wrap the picture of Jesus and the disciple by the sea and set it on the presider's chair.

Prep music of the Our Father so ready to be played.

Set up chairs to give sense of space for each.

For first group of the day, hand out journals and pencils.

A. Begin by going through the “steps” of receiving and fully appreciating a gift that is so suitable or right for oneself:

--As this is done, do the actions with the “gift” of the picture on the chair.

1. **Receiving** and opening the gift.
2. Spend some time **Discovering** what the gift is all about.
3. **Conversing** about how the gift “fits” in one's life and underlying thanks for the gift.
4. **Appreciating** the rightness of the moment, the gift, and the giver.

B. Lectio Divina (“The Divine Reading”) practice to deepen one's prayer and spiritual life.

--Very much the same steps as opening and appreciating a gift.

--Ancient form of reading the Scriptures/Bible prayerfully, letting the Spirit of God connect one's life to what is in the Scriptures.

--Can be a passage from Scripture, an icon or religious image, an event of life, a person—this practice opens up a “divine” or God-centered reading of what is happening and how it can be a gift for our life.

--I will include both the traditional name in Latin for the steps, in case you read more about this way of prayer in our handouts or elsewhere, as well as connecting them to the four steps of receiving and appreciating a gift that we began with. We will then spend some time with these steps, using the Our Father.

1. **READ** (*Lectio*)

--Receive the gift, open it up, accept it as a gift from God

--No God-centered understanding unless we can appreciate that God can use this experience for our good.

2. **MEDITATE** (*Meditatio*)

--Discover what all is here

--Take some time, read or reflect slowly, let the words/picture/event emerge more fully

3. **PRAY** (*Oratio*)

--Converse with God about what you see here, connecting it to concrete aspects of your life and people in your life

--all in an underlying sense of thanksgiving and gratitude

4. CONTEMPLATE (*Contemplatio*)

--Appreciate the moment in total, letting yourself bask in the quiet “rightness” and goodness of the moment

--no words, silence, there is a presence of God here to simply soak in and appreciate.

[5. ACT (*Actio*)]

--Put this awareness into practice, letting yourself be changed and acting differently

--Some have added this fifth step, although traditionally if one truly reached the fourth step or level—contemplation—then one’s sense of life and being is changed and so necessarily implied acting differently in the future.

--in the present world we often separate an inner self from our acting self and so this additional step is a reminder that no prayer is complete until we live it out.

C. Practicing the Lectio Divina with the Our Father.

1. Read

--Focus participants on the presider’s chair, perhaps with the picture on it, or perhaps empty, but have them take 30 seconds before we begin to image Jesus in that chair teaching them personally, as though the first time, the Our Father. Don’t overthink it, just open self to accept this prayer as a gift from the Lord.

--have a good reader speak out the Lord’s Prayer, one phrase at a time, fairly slowly, from behind where people are looking so not focused on the reader but receiving the words as a gift from God, and read the prayer with the following phrasing:

**Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed by 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.
Amen.**

2. Meditate

--Invite participants to now open and unwrap that gift of the Lord's Prayer, word by word, phrase by phrase, letting their imaginations and what is happening in their lives connect to the words, discovering hidden depths and new insights in the words and phrases.

--This would ordinarily take more time than we are allowing here, but we will go through the first part of the prayer again, much more slowly and let your personal life connect to it, trusting that the Spirit of God is part of that, since you have accepted it as a gift from God.

--I will read it very slowly, in the following way, pause after each line, spontaneously add personal reflection where appropriate

--In practice, with scripture or a prayer like Lord's Prayer might find meditation consumes all the time on one word or phrase; then don't need to go further:

3. Pray

--Invite participants to converse with God, to say what is on their mind/heart as we once again go through the Lord's Prayer.

--work with a lector who can wait for prayer to be complete after each section.

--In practice prayer might flow from meditation at any time and you might not find yourself getting past the first word or first phrase, or you might find yourself going to the end before something stirs. You are conversing with God about anything, everything, nothing

--For this experience we will go through the Our Father one section at a time. Let spontaneous conversation with God flow and, if willing, share it out loud. Remember this is the same as having gratitude for the gift and conversing about all the ways the gift connects to your life.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. [pause]

Give us this day our daily bread. [pause]

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. [pause]

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

4. Contemplate

--Invite participants to silent appreciation for the presence of God in them, in their life, sustaining, uplifting, challenging, loving

--point out that in personal practice steps 2-3 flow one to the other spontaneously, and if reach step 4 might find self just peacefully contemplating, or interrupted then back to 2 and 3. Sometimes never really get to contemplation.

5. Action

--use the final three minutes to journal at least one situation, person, you will carry over this Our Father-given sense of God. Where and what situation(s) might change it you do?