

In Nomine Iesu

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St. Matthew 6:9-13

Jesus said: "Pray then like this: '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.'"

Lord God, heavenly Father, we give thanks to You that of Your mercy and compassion You caused Your Son to become incarnate, and through Him redeemed us from sin and everlasting death: We beseech You, enlighten our hearts by Your Holy Spirit, that we may ever be thankful for such grace, and comfort ourselves thereby in all tribulation and temptation, and at last obtain eternal salvation; through the same, Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen. (ELH p. 148)

"Hallowed Be Thy Name"

We pray to our Father who is in heaven, just as Jesus taught us to do. But why did He teach prayer to the Father and not to Himself or to the Holy Spirit? It is not because the Father is more powerful or is greater than the Son and the Spirit. They are equal in power and glory and honor. But although the three Persons are one God, yet each Person also has unique work to be carried out. For example, it was only the Son who took on flesh, suffered, and died; the Father and the Holy Spirit did not. But the Father and the Holy Spirit are still participants with the Son in the story of salvation which began so long ago and continues for you today.

Jesus explains the part the Father played in your salvation. *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life"* (Jn. 3:16). Christmas is as much about the Father's love in sending His Son as it is about the Son becoming Man to save us. God was willing to send His Son to die in order that you would live. This is why we hallow the name of God the Father. We honor Him by listening to His Word. We humbly acknowledge our sins. We pray for His pardon. We glorify His name by believing in the Son whom He has sent.

By faith in His Son's atoning work, we are brought into the holy Family of God. Jesus is our Brother according to the flesh, and God is our Father who now hears all of our requests, prayers, and petitions spoken in the name of His Son. For these tidings of comfort and joy, we sing praises to the Lord.

#126, vv. 2, 4 - "God Rest You Merry"

“Thy Kingdom Come”

When we pray “Thy kingdom come,” we might have visions of God defeating the evil powers and wicked rulers of this earth, shaming those who promote lies and attack His Word, and delivering His people from all trouble and persecution. But that does not happen, at least not yet. God’s kingdom does not come with earthly power and glory. His power and glory are hidden just as they were at the first Christmas. God’s Son came down to earth in all humility. He was born of a poor virgin woman. His bed was a manger. His first visitors were lowly shepherds.

The coming of God’s kingdom did not look like much, and yet there in that Bethlehem manger lay the One who would go to battle not against the earthly authorities but against the spiritual ones. He came to subdue the wicked scheming of the devil and demons. He came to satisfy the debt of sin. He came to conquer death. No sinner could be convinced of this by what his eyes see. It is only by faith that we know that God’s kingdom came to earth with Christ.

And it is by faith that we know His kingdom still comes to us now through the means of grace. God the Father sends the Holy Spirit through His Word, who brings to you and me the rich blessings obtained for us by Jesus. His kingdom still comes humbly – through the voice of your sinful pastor, through the water and Word of Baptism, through the bread, wine, and Word of the Lord’s Supper. But do not let looks deceive you. God still visits His people in these wondrous ways, and the power and glory we now perceive by faith, we will see with our own eyes on the Last Day.

#123, vv. 1-5 – “From Heaven above to Earth I Come”

“Thy Will Be Done”

The Father’s will was done when Caesar Augustus issued the decree that sent Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem in fulfillment of Micah’s prophecy (5:2). His will was done when the holy family escaped from the murderous rampage of King Herod (Mt. 2:13-15). His will was done when Jesus grew in wisdom and stature in Nazareth (Lk. 2:52). His will was done as His only Son went up to Jerusalem to be delivered over to the Gentiles, mocked, flogged, and crucified (Lk. 18:32-33). His will was done when Jesus rose again from the dead on the third day. His will was done as Jesus ascended into heaven and was seated at His right hand.

And the Father’s will is still done here on earth as it is in heaven. He continues to control the earthly authorities for His purposes just as He did with Caesar Augustus. He continues to frustrate the plans of the devil, so that the Word of grace keeps spreading throughout the world. He continues to forgive your sins and strengthen your faith because He wants you with Him in heaven. If God did not will these good things for you and for the world, we would be utterly without hope. But as it is, we have every hope in Him who lovingly wills our salvation.

“Wexford Carol” duet in place of #161, vv. 1-3 – “O Jesus Christ, Thy Manger Is”

“Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread”

If God did not fail to win your salvation by sending His Son, how could He fail to provide for your daily needs? For most if not all of us here, there is no lack of food for our Christmas celebration, no lack of gifts under the tree, no concern of where we will sleep tonight. For Mary and Joseph, this was a real question. There was no room for them in the inn. Mary was about to give birth. What would they do? Even there in Bethlehem, God provided them a place. It may not have seemed ideal, but it was sufficient. And through that lowly birth in that little town, God brought immeasurable blessings to the world.

You may not have everything you want. You may wonder how you will make payments at the end of this month or in the next. You may worry about having enough for your children, enough for care-taking, enough for retirement. Your prayer for daily bread does not go unheard or unanswered by your heavenly Father. He does not give everything you want in this life, but He promises to give everything you need. Even if you should lose all your earthly possessions through some calamity or disaster, you will not be left wanting. When you lose the means to purchase “daily bread,” He gives it to you through the vocations of your neighbors and friends, your fellow Christians, and the governing authorities.

Your heavenly Father’s love does not stop with spiritual gifts. He also cares about your earthly needs and provides for them in abundance.

#115, vv. 7, 9, 11 – All My Heart Sings and Rejoices”

“Forgive Us Our Trespasses”

What does our world need more than anything else? Not strategies to combat climate change, not expansions or restrictions on international trade, not access to more technology, not even peacefulness and security. What the world needs more than anything else is the forgiveness of sins. That is why the Christ came. The angel said to the shepherds, *“Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”* But then why did the angels also sing about “peace on earth”? Jesus even seemed to directly contradict this idea when He said, *“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword”* (Mt. 10:34).

The peace He came to bring was peace between God and Man – not world peace. The Apostle Paul writes that Jesus *“[made] peace by the blood of His cross”* (Col. 1:20). Through His sacrifice in your place, you have peace with God (Rom. 5:1). All of your sins today, all of your sins in the past year, all of your sins stretching all the way back to your childhood, all of them are forgiven.

But it isn’t just your sins; it’s the sins of your neighbor too. Jesus died for all sinners, including those who have hurt you, betrayed you, or been unkind to you. Your Father wants you to forgive them, not because they deserve it, not when they have proven they are sorry enough, but because He has forgiven you all your sins. Therefore we pray, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

“Infant Jesus” solo in place of #125, vv. 1, 4 – “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

“Lead Us Not into Temptation”

Every child is tempted to focus on the gifts and goodies and games of Christmas instead of the grace of God the Father in sending His Son. Adults also at this time of year are tempted to think that the measure of a good Christmas is their level of happiness or the amount of their holiday bonus. The devil, the world, and our own flesh are working together to pull us away from faith in Christ. They want us to look for fulfillment in our desires and plans instead of in God’s promises. But the end of all those things is shame and despair.

As sinners, we do not pass the test of every temptation. We sin each day. But our Father still loves us. He leads us to repentance, and then to His Son. In Jesus we have forgiveness and salvation. In Jesus we have purpose for this life and the assurance of life forever. In Jesus we also have One who fights for us the battles we could never win on our own, whether those battles are around us or in our own hearts and minds.

#144, vv. 1, 5-6 - “Thy Little Ones, Dear Lord, Are We”

“Deliver Us from Evil”

God sent His Son to deliver us from every evil that we face in this fallen world, evils done against our person, our property, and our reputation. Jesus faced these same evils, but He did not despair or lose sight of what He came to do. From infancy on He kept Himself from participating in the world’s evil, living a life of perfect love and charity. He did not do this for earthly glory and honor. He did this for your benefit, so that you would be credited with His righteousness. He also went to the cross to deliver you from every evil you had done against God in disobeying His Commandments.

God promised Adam and Eve that He would carry out a rescue mission for sinners (Gen. 3:15). This promise saw its fulfillment in the Christ, born in Bethlehem and crucified outside Jerusalem. The final phase of this mission will take place on the Last Day when Jesus comes on the clouds in all His splendor to bring God’s beloved children to Him in heaven. There we will live in the presence of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, to whom belongs “the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

#119 - “Away in a Manger”