

## **Fourth Sunday of Lent – Traditional Prayer and Prayer in the Spirit**

Jesus was praying at a certain place, and when He ceased, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.' (Lk 11:1) The Lord's Prayer (or *Our Father*) is perhaps the greatest example of a traditional Christian prayer; both because of its author and the value of the words it contains. The Catechism of the Catholic Church dedicates the second of its two sections in "Part Four: Christian Prayer" exclusively to teach us about the Lord's Prayer. If you have never opened the Catechism of the Catholic Church, please read this section on the Lord's Prayer for Lent.

The Catholic Church has a rich treasury of traditional prayers for our benefit. These prayers should also be valued both for their authors and their contents. Our traditional prayers have been provided to us by great saints, popes, bishops, mystics, martyrs, priests, religious sisters and brothers, and other holy men and women who love our Faith and were open to the work of the Holy Spirit. Prayers by authors such as these can certainly bring us closer to Jesus and help us in our daily trials. I am frequently amazed when some phrase in a prayer seemingly leaps off the page of a prayer book and says exactly the words I need to hear at that moment.

"Prayer in the Spirit" is the spontaneous form of prayer, either internal or spoken, that is not scripted or written down. This is the most intimate type of prayer and in some ways the most difficult as we likely are not as spiritually developed as the authors of our traditional prayers. Pope Benedict XVI taught us about this difficulty to pray in the spirit during a General Audience in 2012:

[St. Paul] says: this very lack of words, this absence of words, even the desire to enter into contact with God is a prayer that the Holy Spirit not only understands, but carries, interprets, to God. It is precisely our weakness which becomes, through the Holy Spirit, true prayer, true contact with God. The Holy Spirit is almost the interpreter who makes God and us ourselves understand what we want to say.

In prayer we experience, more so than in other dimensions of life, our weakness, our poverty, our being created, because we stand before the omnipotence and the transcendence of God.

([http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_aud\\_20120516.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20120516.html))

It is a healthy process to acknowledge our limitations and weaknesses before God. The reassurance of knowing that the Holy Spirit is working on our behalf in assisting in our efforts to pray should be a great encouragement to pray more often. Each one of us is individually known and loved by God. Any effort we make to reach out to Him in Prayer and even the very desire to pray is an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to transform us into the saints that God wants us to be. We can also count on the saints who have gone before us to intercede for us, particularly when we use their words to glorify God and ask for His help!

*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth.*