

SCREEN: blank red background

ME: A couple times each week, I get emails from total strangers who want to give me money....and lots of it.
And thank goodness I check my spam folder, otherwise I'd miss them.
One was an email telling me that a long lost relative (*I never heard of*) had died and left his entire inheritance to me...millions of dollars!
All I had to do to claim it was wire a few thousand dollars.
Tempting, if only it were true!

WE: Okay, I know you've gotten these too.
If you have a phone or internet access you can expect scams.
They've become more sophisticated and convincing,
but scams are nothing new.
They work by playing upon people's desire for wealth
and thinking that it will make us happy.
We all wish that riches or good fortune would fall into our laps,
but it won't.
So expecting it to happen is only a pipe dream.

SCREEN: The Classics main screen

This summer we are hearing some classic bible stories.
Ones we first heard as kids but have heard many times over the years.
Today's Gospel gives us Jesus's answer on how to be truly happy in life.
And what he offers his followers is treasure that is real and lasting.
Let's get started.

GOD: Now, in the interest of full disclosure,
some of what I'll say comes from our friends at Nativity Catholic Church, in Timonium.
They just concluded an amazing message series on the Lord's Prayer.
So I am going to 'borrow' some of their insights.
Today's Gospel told us that this is how the Our Father came about:

**SCREEN: Jesus was praying in a certain place,
and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him,**

"Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples."

He said to them, *"When you pray, say....*

And he gave them the words we now know as The Lord's Prayer.

Now, the version we heard today's is shorter than the one we all know,

but I am going to be referring to the version which we all know.

The Our Father is one of the first prayers most of us memorized.

We've prayed it so many times that the words come pouring out,
with little or no thought.

My hope is that after today you'll never pray it in the same way again;

that you'll have a newfound appreciation of the treasure Jesus gave his followers.

It's more than a prayer; it's a powerful instruction for living,

And the power starts with the very first words:

SCREEN: Our Father

Our Father.

But the title 'Father' might not be the best English translation.

To my ears, 'Father' sounds very formal and stiff.

I never addressed my dad as "father".

"Father, may I borrow the car?"

"Father, can I have my allowance now?"

For me, it was always, "dad".

Jesus wants us to see God as he did;

not as distant or cold, but as intimate, loving and personal.

And like him, Jesus wants us to turn to God our Father, every day

pouring out our troubles, our cares, our worries and fears.

Because we're family!

So with the first two words, Jesus is inviting us into

the same loving relationship with his Father that he has.

SCREEN: Who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name

Then Jesus tells us we should acknowledge

where God lives and who God is:

“Who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.”

So God is the creator of heaven and earth and we are his creatures.

Jesus is teaching us to always remember

that God made us and because God made us our lives are holy.

He also wants us to know that God has the power to answer any prayer,
no matter how desperate or audacious.

And why would God listen to us and answer us?

Because he loves us.

He’s our Father, we’re his children.

SCREEN: Thy kingdom come, thy will be done

“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.”

I know I told you this before but one of my spiritual directors in the seminary
taught me that the heart and soul of this prayer is in these four words:

thy will be done.

He said that this phrase may just be the most perfect prayer
any disciple can pray.

Thy will, God!

Not my will, but your will!

I want the pain I’m going through to end now...thy will be done.

I want healing in my marriage now, I want my child to come to Mass....

thy will be done.

My friend needs a job, our government needs fixing...thy will be done.

God who created us knows us better than we know ourselves.

So God knows what is best for us.

Our goal as disciples is to conform our will to God’s will.

It’s not wrong to ask God for specific things,

but the attitude of every prayer request should be,

“Thy will be done!”

These are the exact words Jesus prayed on the night before he died.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, knowing his death was just hours away,

he prayed saying “*Father, if it is possible, take this cup (this suffering) away from me. But not my will, your will be done.*”

If this was Jesus’s prayer in his hour of greatest need,
it should be our prayer too.

It’s God’s ways and God’s will before our own.

SCREEN: Give us this day our daily bread

“*Give us this day our daily bread.*”

At this point the prayer gets very specific and practical.

Every human being has needs; we have physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

By nature and design, we are needy.

Because of the fast paced culture we live in,
we can rush headlong to satisfy our needs.

But at the end of the day, who is in charge?

It’s God.

God is our creator, our redeemer, and our sanctifier.

We cannot create anything entirely of our own initiative.

Everything in our lives; food, cars, homes, possessions -
everything material comes from God.

God is the ultimate source of all,
so every time we pray these words we are being called
to acknowledge God as the giver of everything.

Now here’s another powerful point about the Lord’s Prayer.

Think of the words Jesus told us to use:

OUR, US.

OUR Father, OUR bread.

Give US, forgive US, deliver US.

He could have easily said:

MY FATHER, MY BREAD, GIVE ME.

But he chose the plural to make the point that our needs
are met in community, in relationship with others.

So in this prayer, Jesus is not just inviting us into a relationship with God the Father, but with others.

Our culture likes to celebrate the rugged individualist.

The person who goes through life all alone.

It's an attractive myth.

But it is a myth.

And it is not how Jesus wants his followers to approach faith or life.

God is a community of persons: Father, Son, and Spirit.

And God the Son, created a community called the Church.

When it comes to our faith, we cannot practice it alone.

It's the reason we are continually encouraging you

to get involved in ministry and mission and to join a small group.

God feeds you and supplies your needs in community.

Just as God feeds and supplies your needs in community

God wants you to do the same.

So even when it comes to asking God for forgiveness,

Jesus teaches us that the mercy we receive from our Father

must be shared with those around us.

SCREEN: **Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us**

He tells us to pray: *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.*

He's saying that his followers must be conduits, vessels of

God's mercy to others who've hurt us.

Every time we pray this part of the prayer we should think

very specifically, *'Who has hurt me? Who do I need to forgive?'*

So many people really struggle to actually say the words *"I forgive you."*

And it can be hard to forgive someone who doesn't think they've done something hurtful.

But we have to forgive for our own well being.

As the saying goes, if you don't forgive, you are just letting someone live rent free in your head.

What if we didn't ask God to forgive us unless we made a real effort

to forgive those around us?

Jesus knows that forgiving others actually brings US peace.

It we take Jesus seriously on forgiveness, this is a truly life changing concept, and not just in theory.

He gave us the most incredible example by forgiving his own executioners as he hung upon the cross.

SCREEN: Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

And in concluding this beautiful prayer,

Jesus ends calling us to again acknowledge God's power:

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

God alone can protect us, save us, and deliver us.

This week, I encourage you to pray this prayer every day.

Maybe focus on a word or phrase that you need to see in a new way.

Perhaps focus on the word **GIVE** - acknowledge God as the source of all you have.

Perhaps the word **OUR** - think of how is God calling you to connect with others.

Maybe the word **DAILY** - ask God to help you see the ways

he comes to you as you go about your day.

Or **FORGIVE** - what do you need to be forgiven for, who do you need to forgive?

Later in the Mass, we will pray the Lord's Prayer together.

When we do, let's give extra special attention to the words we pray together.

And let's resolve to never pray Jesus's treasured gift to us in the same way again.

For now I will conclude my message with a prayer for all of us.

If you feel so inclined, I invite you to bow your head and close your eyes.

Heavenly Father, Our Father, thank you for sending your Son Jesus.

He taught us who you are and who you call us to be.

Deepen our appreciation for his gift of the Lord's Prayer.

Remind us to be like your Son; to turn to you daily,

and to acknowledge your power and love in our lives.

Inspire us to build your Kingdom here, that one day we may rejoice

in our true home, your Kingdom of heaven. Amen. +