

An excellent treatise on the Lord's Prayer

by Saint Cyprian, Bishop & Martyr

The full original text is from this book:

ST. CYPRIAN ON THE LORD'S PRAYER

AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION,

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Liturgy of Hours readings quoting parts of Saint Cyprian's Treatise

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#1-Office of Readings June 14th, 2026

Second reading

From a treatise on the Lord's Prayer by Saint Cyprian, bishop and martyr

Let your prayer come from a humble heart

When we pray, our words should be calm, modest and disciplined. Let us reflect that we are standing before God. We should please him both by our bodily posture and the manner of our speech. It is characteristic of the vulgar to shout and make a noise, not those who are modest. On the contrary, they should employ a quiet tone in their prayer.

Moreover, in the course of this teaching, the Lord instructed us to pray in secret. Hidden and secluded places, even our own rooms, give witness to our belief that God is present everywhere; that he sees and hears all; that in the fullness of his majesty, he penetrates hidden and secret places. This is the teaching of Jeremiah: *Am I God when I am near, and*

not God when I am far away? Can anyone hide in a dark corner without my seeing him? Do I not fill heaven and earth? Another passage of Scripture says: *The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, observing both good and wicked men.*

The same modesty and discipline should characterize our liturgical prayer as well. When we gather to celebrate the divine mysteries with God's priest, we should not express our prayer in unruly words; the petition that should be made to God with moderation is not to be shouted out noisily and verbosely. For God hears our heart not our voice. He sees our thoughts; he is not to be shouted at. The Lord showed us this when he asked: *Why do you think evil in your hearts?* The book of Revelation testifies to this also: *And all the churches shall know that I am the one who searches the heart and the desires.*

Anna maintained this rule; in her observance of it she is an image of the Church. In the First Book of Kings we are told that she prayed quietly and modestly to God in the recesses of her heart. Her prayer was secret but her faith was evident. She did not pray with her voice, but with her heart, for she knew that in this way the Lord would hear her. She prayed with faith and obtained what she sought. Scripture makes this clear in the words: *She was speaking in her heart; her lips were moving but her voice could not be heard; and the Lord heard her prayer.* The psalmist also reminds us: *Commune within your own hearts, and in the privacy of your room express your remorse.* This is the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Through Jeremiah he suggests this: *Say in your hearts: Lord, it is you that we have to worship.*

My friends, anyone who worships should remember the way in which the tax-collector prayed in the temple alongside the Pharisee. He did not raise his eyes immodestly to heaven or lift up his hands arrogantly. Instead he struck his breast and confessing the sins hidden within his heart he implored the assistance of God's mercy. While the Pharisee was pleased with himself, the tax-collector deserved to be cleansed much more because of the manner in which he prayed. For he did not place his hope of salvation in the certainty of his own innocence; indeed, no one is innocent. Rather he prayed humbly, confessing his sins. And the Lord who forgives the lowly heard his prayer.

#2-Office of Readings June 15th, 2026

Second reading

From a treatise on the Lord's Prayer by Saint Cyprian, bishop and martyr ***Our prayer is communal***

Above all, he who preaches peace and unity did not want us to pray by ourselves in private or for ourselves alone. We do not say "My Father, who art in heaven," nor "Give me this day my daily bread." It is not for himself alone that each person asks to be forgiven, not to be led into temptation or to be delivered from evil. Rather, we pray in public as a community, and not for one individual but for all. For the people of God are all one.

God is then the teacher of harmony, peace and unity, and desires each of us to pray for all men, even as he bore all men in himself alone. The three young men shut up in the furnace of fire observed this rule of prayer. United in the bond of the Spirit they uttered together the same prayer. The witness of holy Scripture describes this incident for us, so that we might imitate them in our prayer. Then all three began to sing in unison, blessing God. Even though Christ had not yet taught them to pray, nevertheless, they spoke as with one voice.

It is for this reason that their prayer was persuasive and efficacious. For their simple and spiritual prayer of peace merited the presence of the Lord. So too, after the ascension we find the apostles and the disciples praying together in this way. Scripture relates: *They all joined together in continuous prayer, with the women including Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.* They all joined together in continuous prayer. The urgency and the unity of their prayer declares that *God, who fashions a bond of unity among those who live in his home,* will admit into his divine home for all eternity only those who pray in unity.

My dear friends, the Lord's Prayer contains many great mysteries of our faith. In these few words there is great spiritual strength, for this summary of divine teaching contains all of our prayers and petitions. And so, the Lord commands us: *Pray then like this: Our Father, who art in heaven.*

We are new men; we have been reborn and restored to God by his grace. We have already begun to be his sons and we can say "Father." John reminds us of this: *He came to his own home, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who received him, who believe in his name, he gave the power to become children of God.* Profess your belief that you are sons of God by giving thanks. Call upon God who is your Father in heaven.

#3-Office of Readings June 16th, 2026

From a treatise on the Lord's Prayer by Saint Cyprian, bishop and martyr
May your name be hallowed

How merciful the Lord is to us, how kind and richly compassionate! He wished us to repeat this prayer in God's sight, to call the Lord our Father and, as Christ is God's Son, be called in turn sons of God! None of us would ever have dared to utter this name unless he himself had allowed us to pray in this way. And therefore, dear friends, we should bear in mind and realize that when we call God our Father we ought also to act like sons. If we are pleased to call him Father, let him in turn be pleased to call us sons.

We should live like the temples of God we are, so that it can be seen that God lives in us. No act of ours should be unworthy of the spirit. Now that we have begun to live in heaven and in spirit, all our thoughts and actions should be heavenly and spiritual; for, as the Lord God himself has said: *Those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be despised.* And the blessed Apostle wrote in his letter: *You are not your own; you were bought with a great price. So glorify and bear God in your body.*

We go on to say, May your name be hallowed. It is not that we think to make God holy by our prayers; rather we are asking God that his name may be made holy in us. Indeed, how could God be made holy, he who is the source of holiness? Still, because he himself said: *Be holy, for I am holy*, we pray and beseech him that we who have been hallowed in baptism may persevere in what we have begun. And we pray for this every day, for we have need of daily sanctification; sinning every day, we cleanse our faults again and again by constant sanctification.

The apostle Paul instructs us in these words concerning the sanctification which God's loving kindness confers on us: *Neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such indeed you were. But you have been washed, you have been sanctified, you have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.* We were sanctified, he says, *in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.* Hence we make our prayer that this sanctification may remain in us. But further, our Lord who is also our judge warns those who have been cured and brought back to life by him to sin no more lest something worse happen to them. Thus we offer constant prayers and beg night and day that this sanctification and new life which is ours by God's favor may be preserved by his protection.

#4-Office of Readings June 17th, 2026

From a treatise on the Lord's Prayer by Saint Cyprian, bishop and martyr ***Your kingdom come. Your will be done***

The prayer continues: *Your kingdom come.* We pray that God's kingdom will become present for us in the same way that we ask for his name to be hallowed among us. For when does God not reign, when could there be in him a beginning of what always was and what will never cease to be? What we pray for is that the kingdom promised to us by God will come, the kingdom won by Christ's blood and passion. Then we who formerly were slaves in this world will reign from now on under the dominion of Christ, in accordance with his promise: *Come, O blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom which was prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

However, my dear friends, it could also be that the kingdom of God whose coming we daily wish for is Christ himself, since it is his coming that we long for. He is our resurrection, since we rise again in him; so too he can be thought of as the kingdom of God because we are to reign in him. And it is good that we pray for God's kingdom; for though it is a heavenly kingdom, it is also an earthly one. But those who have already renounced the world are made greater by holding positions of authority in that kingdom.

After this we add: *Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*; we pray not that God should do his will, but that we may carry out his will. How could anyone prevent the Lord from doing what he wills? But in our prayer we ask that God's will be done in us, because the devil throws up obstacles to prevent our mind and our conduct from obeying God in

all things. So if his will is to be done in us we have need of his will, that is, his help and protection. No one can be strong by his own strength or secure save by God's mercy and forgiveness. Even the Lord, to show the weakness of the human nature which he bore, said: *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me*, and then, by way of giving example to his disciples that they should do God's will and not their own, he added: *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will*.

All Christ did, all he taught, was the will of God. Humility in our daily lives, an unwavering faith, a moral sense of modesty in conversation, justice in acts, mercy in deed, discipline, refusal to harm others, a readiness to suffer harm, peaceableness with our brothers, a wholehearted love of the Lord, loving in him what is of the Father, fearing him because he is God, preferring nothing to him who preferred nothing to us, clinging tenaciously to his love, standing by his cross with loyalty and courage whenever there is any conflict involving his honor and his name, manifesting in our speech the constancy of our profession and under torture confidence for the fight, and in dying the endurance for which we will be crowned—this is what it means to wish to be a coheir with Christ, to keep God's command; this is what it means to do the will of the Father.

#5-Office of Readings June 18th, 2026

Second reading

From a treatise on the Lord's Prayer by Saint Cyprian, bishop and martyr
After the gift of bread we ask pardon for our sins

As the Lord's Prayer continues, we ask: *Give us this day our daily bread*. We can understand this petition in a spiritual and in a literal sense. For in the divine plan both senses may help toward our salvation. For Christ is the bread of life; this bread does not belong to everyone, but is ours alone. When we say, our Father, we understand that he is the father of those who know him and believe in him. In the same way we speak of our daily bread, because Christ is the bread of those who touch his body.

Now, we who live in Christ and receive his eucharist, the food of salvation, ask for this bread to be given us every day. Otherwise we may be forced to abstain from this communion because of some serious sin. In this way we shall be separated from the body of Christ, as he taught us in the words: *I am the bread of life which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats my bread will live for ever and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world*. Christ is saying, then, that anyone who eats his bread will live for ever. Clearly they possess life who approach his body and share in the Eucharistic communion. For this reason we should be apprehensive and pray that no one has to abstain from this communion, lest he be separated from the body of Christ and be far from salvation. Christ has warned of this: *If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood you will have no life in you*. We pray for our daily bread, Christ, to be given to us. With his help, we who live and abide in him will never be separated from his body and his grace.

After this we ask pardon for our sins, in the words: *and forgive us our trespasses*. The gift of bread is followed by a prayer for forgiveness. To be reminded that we are sinners and forced to ask forgiveness for our faults is prudent and sound. Even while we are asking God's forgiveness, our hearts are aware of our state! This command to pray daily for our sins reminds us that we commit sin every day. No one should complacently think himself innocent, lest his pride lead to further sin. Such is the warning that John gives us in his letter: *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, the Lord is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins*. His letter includes both points, that we should beg for forgiveness for our sins, and that we receive pardon when we do. He calls the Lord faithful, because he remains loyal to his promise, by forgiving us our sins. He both taught us to pray for our sins and our faults, and also promised to show us a father's mercy and forgiveness.

#6-Office of Readings June 19th, 2026

Second reading

From a treatise on the Lord's Prayer by Saint Cyprian, bishop and martyr
We are God's children; let us abide in his peace

Christ clearly laid down an additional rule to bind us by a certain contractual condition: we ask that our debts be forgiven insofar as we forgive our own debtors. Thus we are made aware that we cannot obtain what we ask regarding our own trespasses unless we do the same for those who trespass against us. This is why he says elsewhere: *The measure you give will be the measure you get*. And the servant who, after his master forgives all his debt, refuses to forgive his fellow servant is thrown into prison. Because he refused to be kind to his fellow servant, he lost the favor his master had given him.

Along with his other precepts Christ lays this down even more forcefully with a most vigorous condemnation. He says: *When you stand up to pray, if you have anything against anyone, let it go, so that your heavenly Father may also forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses*. You will have no excuse on the day of judgment, for then you will be judged just as you have judged, and you will suffer whatever you have done to others.

God bids us to be peace-loving, harmonious *and of one mind in his house*; he wants us to live with the new life he gave us at our second birth. As sons of God, we are to abide in peace; as we have one Spirit, we should be one in mind and heart. Thus God does not receive the sacrifice of one who lives in conflict, and he orders us to turn back from the altar and be first reconciled with our brother, that God too may be appeased by the prayers of one who is at peace. The greatest offering we can make to God is our peace, harmony among fellow Christians, a people united with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

When Cain and Abel first offered their sacrifices, God considered not so much the gifts as the spirit of the giver: God was pleased with Abel's offering because he was pleased with

his spirit. Thus Abel the just man, the peacemaker, in his blameless sacrifice taught men that when they offer their gift at the altar they should approach as he did, in the fear of God, simplicity of heart, ruled by justice and peaceful harmony. Since this was the character of Abel's offering, it was only right that he himself should afterward become a sacrifice. As martyrdom's first witness and possessing the Lord's qualities of justice and peace, he foreshadowed the Lord's passion in the glory of his own death. Such, then, are the men who are crowned by the Lord and will be justified with him on the day of judgment.

But Saint Paul and the sacred Scriptures tell us that the quarrelsome man and the troublemaker, who is never at peace with his brothers, cannot escape the charge of internal dissension even though he may die for Christ's name. For it is written: *He who hates his brother is a murderer*, nor can he attain the kingdom of heaven. God cannot abide a murderer. He cannot be united with Christ, who has preferred to imitate Judas rather than Christ.

#7-Office of Readings June 20th, 2026

Second reading

From a treatise on the Lord's Prayer by Saint Cyprian, bishop and martyr
Prayer should be expressed in deeds as well as words

Dear friends, why does the fact that God has taught us such a prayer as this astonish us? Did he not express all of our prayers in his own words of life? Indeed this was already foretold by Isaiah. Filled with the Holy Spirit, he spoke of the majesty and fidelity of God: *The Lord will speak a final brief word of justice, a word throughout the world.* Our Lord Jesus Christ came for all mankind. He gathered together male and female, the learned and the unlearned, the old and the young and taught them his saving doctrine. He did not want his disciples to be burdened by memorizing his teaching; he made a complete summary of his commands such as was necessary for a trusting faith, and could be quickly learned.

Thus he summarized his teaching on the mystery of eternal life and its meaning with an admirable, divine brevity: *And eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent.* Again, in quoting the first and the greatest precept of the law and the prophets, he spoke in the same way: *Listen, Israel, the Lord your God is one Lord, and: you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. The second is like it: You must love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depends all that is contained in the law and the prophets.* On another occasion the Lord said: *Always treat others as you would like them to treat you: that is the meaning of the law and the prophets.*

God taught us to pray not only by his words, but also by his actions. He taught us by his own example for he often prayed on our behalf. The Scripture says: *He withdrew to the wilderness and prayed. And again: He went into the hills to pray and he spent the whole*

night in prayer to God.

Was the sinless Lord praying for himself? No, he was praying and interceding on our behalf. He explained this to Peter: *Behold Satan demanded that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.* Later on he prayed to the Father for everyone: *I am not praying for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their preaching, that they may be one; just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us.* God loves us; for the sake of our salvation he is generous toward us. He is not satisfied with redeeming us by his blood. He also prays to the Father on our behalf. Consider the love exemplified in that prayer. The Father and Son are one; we too are to abide in that oneness.