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Christ Teaches Us to Pray

[St. Cyprian](#)



This excerpt from a treatise on the Lord's Prayer by Saint Cyprian of Carthage, bishop and martyr (Cap 1-3: SCEL 3, 267-268), is used in Roman Office of Readings for Tuesday of the first week of Lent, with the accompanying biblical reading taken from Exodus 6:29-7:25. It discusses one of the three pillars of Lenten penance, namely, the importance and power of prayer. For his entire treatise on the Our Father, [click here](#).

Dear brothers, the commands of the Gospel are nothing else than God's lessons, the foundations on which to build up hope, the supports for strengthening faith, the food that nourishes the heart. They are the rudder for keeping us on the right course, the protection that keeps our salvation secure. As they instruct the receptive minds of believers on earth, they lead safely to the kingdom of heaven.

God willed that many things should be said by the prophets, his servants, and listened to by his people. How much greater are the things spoken by the Son. These are now witnessed to by the very Word of God who spoke through the prophets. The Word of God does not now command us to prepare the way for his coming: he comes in person and opens up the way for us and directs us toward it. Before, we wandered in the darkness of death, aimlessly and blindly. Now we are enlightened by the light of grace, and are to keep to the highway of life, with the Lord to precede and direct us.

The Lord has given us many counsels and commandments to help us toward salvation. He has even given us a pattern of prayer, instructing us on how we are to pray. He has given us life, and with his accustomed generosity, he has also taught us how to pray. He has made it easy for us to be heard as we pray to the Father in the words taught us by the Son.

He had already foretold that the hour was coming when true worshippers would worship the Father in spirit and in truth. He fulfilled what he had promised before, so that we who have received the spirit and the truth through the holiness he has given us may worship in truth and in the spirit through the prayer he has taught.

What prayer could be more a prayer in the spirit than the one given us by Christ,

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by whom the Holy Spirit was sent upon us? What prayer could be more a prayer in the truth than the one spoken by the lips of the Son, who is truth himself? It follows that to pray in any other way than the Son has taught us is not only the result of ignorance but of sin. He himself has commanded it, and has said: "*You reject the command of God, to set up your own tradition.*"

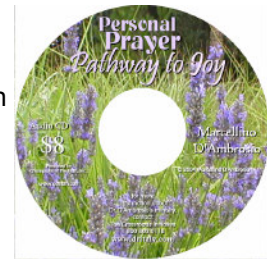
So, my brothers, let us pray as God our master has taught us. To ask the Father in words his Son has given us, to let him hear the prayer of Christ ringing in his ears, is to make our prayer one of friendship, a family prayer. Let the Father recognize the words of his Son. Let the Son who lives in our hearts be also on our lips. We have him as an advocate for sinners before the Father; when we ask forgiveness for our sins, let us use the words given by our advocate. He tells us: Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you. What more effective prayer could we then make in the name of Christ than in the words of his own prayer?

Personal Prayer: Pathway to Joy

Marcellino D'Ambrosio, Ph.D.

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Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio has taught spiritual theology academically, but, more importantly, he's had plenty of practice applying that tradition to everyday life. With a family of seven, a business, and a non-profit corporation to run, he knows the challenges that a busy, active life can pose to the Christian who wants to pray. In this talk, he lays down principles and gives practical suggestions on how busy laypeople can develop a prayer life that leads to joy and personal transformation.



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