

Running Head: PRAYING THE OUR FATHER WITH CARMELITES AND
CATHOLIC WORKERS

Praying the Our Father in the Context of a Carmelite Community and a Catholic Worker
Community

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Abstract

All Christians, whether in active movements or contemplative orders pray the Lord's Prayer. When this prayer is prayed contemplatively it helps to bring about a complete transformation of the inner man. When it is prayed and acted on in the world it helps bring about transformation in the world. Catholic Workers and Carmelites both pray the Our Father in very different ways and live their lives in very different ways, but when the two ways come together then each way is at its very best. When the prayer is prayed interiorly it gives God complete access to the soul. When it is directed outwardly it gives God access to the world and sets a course of discipleship for the follower of Jesus.

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INTRODUCTION

All Christians should endeavor to live in allegiance to Jesus Christ and serve him faithfully from a pure heart and a good conscience. (Waijman, 1999, p.47) Through time and experience, Christians have come to discover that there are many different ways of doing this. Prayer is an indispensable part of all of these ways. The study of Eastern religions reveals that there are three ways to approach God; (1) the way of devotion, (2) the way of knowledge, and (3) the way of action. (Fenton, 1993, p. 79) In the Catholic faith, two groups of people who seek to serve God in different ways are the Carmelites and the Catholic Workers. Each group uses a different approach to God and to prayer. Both groups pray the Our Father and endeavor to conform their lives to it, yet in such different ways. Prayer, in general, and the Our Father, specifically, are central to both the identity and mission of each group.

The Carmelites follow the way of devotion. Their emphasis is on prayer, contemplation, and mystical union with God. Their purpose is to know God in order that God may be known in the world, or to say it another way, to seek the face of God for the sake of the world. (Deeney, 2009, p. 9) To Carmelites, praying the Our Father leads them on an internal journey to God who dwells in the center of the soul. Truly praying the Our Father is sufficient to lead a person to profound union with God interiorly and complete transformation of the inner man. Then one can truly work to do the will of God on Earth even as it is in heaven.

The Catholic Worker movement follows the way of action. They seek to approach God and change the world through active compassion. They seek to find God in the affliction and suffering in the world. They endeavor to suffer along with those who suffer, to stand with those who are the most despised and rejected, to love the enemies, and to find God in the midst of this suffering. Their transformation is accomplished by their joining with God in his purposes in the world. He is a God who liberates the oppressed. Catholic Workers seek to join with the suffering Christ in the world. God enters into this suffering, and profound union with God and others is the result. The Our Father leads them into a way of praying and working for a just world.

Both the Carmelites and the Catholic Workers pray the Our Father in valid ways. Both groups could grow and benefit from an understanding of and appreciation of the other. The Our Father is the one prayer that is prayed by virtually every Christian group. As such it has great unifying potential. It is the one prayer that contains within itself each of the three approaches to God and in some ways unifies all of Christianity. The Our Father can help these two groups to come together in understanding and in unity of purpose.

Christian Prayer Basics

Before going too deeply into the Our Father, some basic understanding of Christian prayer in general will be helpful. From a Christian perspective, being human is essentially about being in relation to God. It is clear then, that speaking with, and listening to God is an essential part of it. (Benedict, 2007, p. 128) God's love for each individual is totally personal and unique. This totally personal and unique relationship is so mysterious that it cannot be divulged to other humans. Prayer also has a communal aspect to it. In the act of prayer the totally personal and the communal must always pervade each other. Prayer and our relationship to God carry with them public responsibility. (Benedict, 2007, p. 129)

For the Christian, relationship to God should be present as the bedrock of the soul. For this to happen, the affairs of our lives must be constantly related back to it. The more the depths of our souls are directed toward God, the better we will be able to pray. The more prayer is the foundation of our entire existence, the more we will become men and women of peace. The more we can endure pain, the more we will be able to understand others and open ourselves to them. This orientation pervasively shaping our whole consciousness, this silent presence of God at the heart of our thinking, our meditating, and our being is what we mean by “prayer without ceasing.” This ultimately is what we mean by love of God, which at the same time is the condition and driving force behind love of neighbor. (Benedict, 2007, p. 130)

Prayer really is being in silent inner communion with God. The more God is present in us the more we will be able to be present to him when we speak the words of our prayers. The opposite is also true; praying actualizes and deepens our communion of being with God. (Benedict, 2007, p. 130)

In praying the Psalms or liturgical prayer in general, the Word goes ahead of us and our minds must adapt to it. God provides the words of our prayer and teaches us to pray. Through the prayers that come from God he enables us to set out toward him. This also says something about Christian mysticism. It is not, in the first place immersion in the depths of oneself, but encounter with the Spirit of God in the word that goes ahead of us. (Benedict, 2007, p. 131) This encounter is a becoming one with the living God who is always both within us and above us.

In the gospel of Luke the disciples found Jesus at prayer and asked him to teach him how to pray. (Brooks, 1992, p. 8) This gospel assigns a very special place to Jesus’ prayer. His whole ministry arises from and is sustained by prayer. In the Our Father we are led into the personal prayer life of Jesus. He invites us to be involved in his interior dialogue of love with the Father and the Spirit. In this prayer Jesus draws our human

hardships deep into God's heart. This also means that the words of the Our Father are signposts to interior prayer. They provide a basic direction for our being, and they aim to configure us to the image of the Son. (Benedict, 2007, p.132) The Our Father seeks to form our being and to train us in the inner attitude of Jesus. This formation is meant to reach down into the depths of our being far beyond the words. This prayer embraces all of man's being in all ages.

Great men and women of prayer through the centuries have been given the gift of an interior union with the Lord that enabled them to descend into the depths beyond the word. This continues to happen to us again as we go out to meet the Son, open up to him, and submit to the guidance that comes from him. In this way each individual learns the particular way the Lord wants to pray with him.

The Our Father

The Our Father as Matthew has it contains seven petitions. Three are "thou" petitions while four are "we" petitions. The first three concern the cause of God in the world, while the next four concern our hopes, needs, and hardships. (Benedict, 2007, p.134) These correspond with the two parts of the great commandment to love God and love neighbor. These petitions are directions toward the path of love which at the same time is the path of conversion.

With this introduction to Christian prayer in general and the Our Father in particular, we can proceed to a consideration of how the Our Father is prayed in the Carmelite community and then in the Catholic Worker community. First the Carmelites will be considered.

Carmelite Tradition

In Carmelite understanding, prayer and contemplation primarily involve meeting God in the depths of one's own being. Contemplation is really God's work. It is God's self communication to the soul that is prepared through prayer and self denial to receive an

inflow of God's life. This self communication of God into the soul both purifies and transforms the whole person. Contemplation elevates human potential to its greatest possible effectiveness. This profound transformation of the entire personality radically prepares one for faithful and effective service to God's people. Contemplation makes one a "new creation" with a new heart and a new spirit, attentive always to God's presence, fit to be God's instruments in remaking the world. (Culligan, 2000, p. xvi)

Carmelites think of the contemplative life as a love affair with God that transforms their entire lives. As lovers, God and the human soul become filled with each other. They take on each others life. Contemplation enables a person to see themselves, others, and the world through the eyes of God. Contemplation enables one to see the beauty of God's creation while at the same time seeing the suffering in the world without illusion. (Culligan, 2000, p. xvi) Contemplation is seen as a path of individual and social transformation. The enormous power of contemplative transformation, the power to transform human consciousness, should be taught and lived in order for God's will to be done on Earth as it is in heaven. This is the Carmelite way of changing the world.

The Our Father fits prominently into contemplative transformation. When the Rule of St Albert was written in 1206 - 1214 a provision was made for the brothers who could not read in order to pray the Psalms. They could pray the Our Father a certain number of times at the designated hours of prayer. This discipline of prayer was and is considered to be sufficient to open up one's heart to allow God access in order to achieve transformation of the inner man. The Our Father was, and is now, the prayer of the multitudes, giving the individual access to God as well as giving God access to the individual. (Waaajman, 1999, p. 103)

The word "mystic" comes from the root word "mystery." A Christian mystic is one who has journeyed deeply into mystery. St Teresa of Jesus, a mystical doctor of the church, and a Carmelite, states that "the entire path of prayer may be found in these few words of

the Our Father.” (Kavanaugh, 2000, p. 416) She further states that in the Our Father “the Lord has taught us the whole way of prayer and of high contemplation from the beginning stages, to mental prayer, to the prayer of quiet, and to that of union....” (Kavanaugh, 2000, p. 413)

St Teresa taught her nuns the entire pathway of prayer through the Our Father based on her own experience with this prayer. In her book, *The Way of Perfection* she expounds on the Our Father and the pathway of prayer. She states that “...it is very possible that while you are reciting the Our Father ... the Lord may raise you to perfect contemplation.” (Kavanaugh, 2000, p.269) For her, the one essential ingredient of prayer, whether vocal prayer, mental prayer, or contemplation is communion with God. What follows in this paper is a brief summary of St Teresa’s experience with the Our Father.

“Our Father.” In these first words St Teresa encounters God with the eye of faith and is inwardly illumined by the spirit. This is a participation in the divine nature, a participation in the life of mutual love. These words show us God’s desire, that all humans should form one family and treat each other as brothers. This is union. This union is with God, with humankind, and with all of creation. In these first words God gives us everything that can be given. We are one with God, with each other, with all those who have gone before us, and with all those who will follow us. ((Kavanaugh, 2000, p. 295) This is the prayer of union.

“Who art in heaven” These words show us where to seek God. We are to seek him where he is; in heaven. But where is heaven? Heaven is wherever God is. God’s indwelling in the soul is the truth which was the basis of St Teresa’s whole spiritual teaching. (Marie-Eugene, 1953, p. 18) The Our Father leads a person on an interior journey to finding God at the center of the soul culminating in complete transformation of the person and profound union with God. The person then serves God in the world but it is no longer just the person. The person now sees with the eyes of Christ, hears with the

ears of Christ, and feels with the feelings of Christ.

St Teresa says “All one need do is go into solitude and look at him within oneself, and not turn away from so good a guest, but with great humility speak to him as you would a father...” (Kavanaugh, 2000, p. 299) She goes on further to say “wherever his majesty is present all glory is present.” (Kavanaugh, 2000, p. 299) God is everywhere, and where the king is, there is his court. In this sense we are never alone with God in prayer. His court attendants would never leave him alone, and not only that, but they also beseech him on our behalf. According to St Teresa we belong to a community without number. She at times in her prayer experienced the presence of the Blessed Virgin, angels, and saints. The communion of saints may intervene in prayer in an entirely personal manner. She says “turn your eyes inward, and look within yourself, and find your master.” (Kavanaugh, 2000, p.284) She urges us to see and be present to the one with whom we speak. This presence to Christ is what Christians must always bring to prayer. It is not so much a technique she teaches but a relationship. In order for one to grow in prayer, this presence must become a habit. This is the prayer of recollection because one collects all of his senses and draws them within to be present to God.

“Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come.” In her experience with this prayer, St Teresa combines these two petitions even though the church does not do so in its understanding. Her reason for this is that we do not know how to hallow God’s name. However in contemplation one is given a foretaste of heaven. It is in this foretaste that one learns how God’s name is hallowed in heaven. In heaven,

“one will no longer take account of Earthly things, but have a calmness and glory within, rejoice in the fact that all are rejoicing, experience perpetual peace, and a wonderful inner satisfaction that comes from seeing that everyone hallows and praises the Lord and blesses his name and that no one offends him. Everyone loves him there, and the soul itself doesn’t think about anything else than loving

him; nor can it cease loving him because it knows him.” (Kavanaugh, 2000, p. 328)

This was her experience in prayer and she felt that God had given her a clear foretaste of heaven and how God’s name was hallowed there. The effect of this contemplation is to produce an inner yearning that God’s name be hallowed, an inner yearning for God’s kingdom to come, because the soul has seen it and experienced it within. Reciting these words of the Our Father, “hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,” expresses Christ’s inner yearnings which become our inner yearnings. This gift of contemplation is illumination.

“Thy will be done on Earth even as it is in heaven.” The inner transformation that is occurring as these petitions are being granted to the praying soul continues on in this petition. Once the Earth has become heaven within, the possibility is there for God’s will to be done in one. The focus of God’s will is not on riches, delights or honors, the objects of greed, concupiscence, and pride, but a life configured to Jesus’ life. (Kavanaugh, 2000, p. 366)

There is a great gain that comes from freely abandoning one’s will to the will of God and an equally great loss when we fail to carry out what we offer to God in this petition. The great gain that is given is union with God. We pray that God will grant us his help in completely surrendering our will to his. This is the complete gift of self to God. Jesus instructs us to recite these words of the Our Father so that God will enable us to conform our lives to his will. This is all the way up to and including death on a cross. (Kavanaugh, 2000, p. 357) St Teresa says “Everything I have advised you about in this book is directed toward the complete gift of ourselves to the creator.” (Kavanaugh, 2000, p. 364) This complete gift of ourselves to God is the greatest thing we can do. What

more could a human do? God grants us union with him in this petition. “Give us this day our daily bread.” St Teresa acknowledges that this petition includes both physical bread and spiritual bread, but since her task was to teach and write on prayer her emphasis is on the spiritual. From this perspective, this is a petition that we might be filled with God today and every day until the end of time. This petition is a petition for a daily awakening to take place within us. This awakening is an illumination of Christ present within us by way of the eucharist. Since Jesus has chosen to remain with us in this way it is also he who asks to be with us this day. (Kavanaugh, 2000, p. 378)

One of St Teresa’s meditations on this subject is to see Jesus entering our house to be with us. (Kavanaugh, 2000, p. 385) Our response is to remain with him within for as long as possible. It has been said that if one were able to boil down all of the yearnings and all of the cries of the human heart into their most essential and foundational need it could be expressed in the three simple words, “Be with me.” This petition from the Our Father addresses the deepest need we have.

This also implies a movement or direction. It is God coming within us and then us entering within to be with him. This petition acknowledges God’s desire to be with us and within us, and our desire to be with him today and everyday. This is God’s love for us. This is a complete giving of God for our well being. We are transformed into this complete giving of ourselves for others.

“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” St Teresa says,

“The prayer of union bears with it a clear sign or effect: the desire and ability to forgive an offender immediately and with great ease, and the readiness to remain on good terms with others, even those who have given offense. Those individuals who have come so close to Divine Mercy have a keen cognizance of the extent to which God has forgiven them....” (Kavanaugh, 2000, p. 410) “In cases where

the wound is so deep and painful that it is currently impossible to be free from bitterness caused by the offense the will is still there to forgive. The pain can be offered up to God. The eucharist gives fortitude for such efforts". (Kavanaugh, 2000, p.410)

St. John of the Cross taught that attachments to worldly things keep us tied to the Earth and prevent us from flying to God. This petition is a great purgation. We are purged from our own guilt. We are purged from the sadness, anger, and bitterness we carry when we do not forgive others. We are freed from these attachments and able to fly to God. (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 597)

"Lead us not into temptation." This petition is a prayer that we will not leave this deep place of God and choose a more superficial or shallow way of being and living. There are movements within our soul of being drawn toward God or being drawn away. These movements show us that we are both open to God and vulnerable to temptation. The gift of this petition is humility. We are utterly in trouble and can accomplish nothing in the spiritual life without God's help. (Kavanaugh, 2000, p. 426) According to St Teresa, the definition of humility is truth. The truth of this petition is one of the great truths of our being and nature. This petition is a great purgation for us. It purges us of a great deception concerning our own virtues and strengths and leaves us with a more genuine knowledge of self. (Kavanaugh, 2000, p. 421)

"Love is always a process involving purifications, renunciations, and painful transformations of ourselves and that is how it is a journey to maturity. In order to mature, in order to make real progress on the path leading from a superficial piety into profound oneness with God's will, man needs to be tried". (Benedict, 2007, p.162) Will we make these renunciations and purifications? That is the trial. There is a knowingness deep within us. This deep knowing is a participation in the knowledge and wisdom of God. We call this conscience. (Benedict, 2007, p. 148) This whole prayer of the Our

Father is calling us to live from a deeper place of being, to live from the center where God dwells.

“Deliver us from evil”. This last petition takes in all the evils to be found in the world as well as the evil within one’s own heart. We look to God as the only power that can save us from the evil that surrounds us. Violence, war, greed, domination, traffic in drugs, weapons and human beings are all around us, and threaten us. Also are the ideologies of the day which threaten us, such as the ideology of success, of well being that tells us that “God is just a fiction, he only robs us of our time and our enjoyment of life. Don’t bother with him. Just squeeze as much out of life as you can”. (Benedict, 2007, p.166) This petition tells us that it is only when you have lost God that you have lost yourself. So long as the dragon cannot wrest God from you your deepest being remains unharmed, even in the midst of all the evils that threaten us. (Benedict, 2007, p. 166)

Cyprian, the martyr bishop said, “When we say ‘deliver us from evil’ then there is nothing further left for us to ask for. Once we have asked for and obtained protection against evil, we are safely sheltered against everything the devil and the world can contrive. What could the world make you fear if you know you are protected in the world by God himself?” (Benedict, 2007, p. 166)

In this petition we also ask that we be delivered from the evil within us. There is a dark and shadowy side within each of us which wants to remain hidden from God as well as from ourselves. Thomas Merton says that each of us is shadowed by an illusory person, a false self. Speaking of himself, Merton writes, “This is the man I want myself to be but who cannot exist, because God does not know anything about him, and to be unknown to God is altogether too much privacy. My false and private self is the one who wants to exist outside the reach of God’s will and God’s love, outside of reality and outside of life. And such a life cannot help but be an illusion.... A life devoted to the cult of this shadow is what is called a life of sin”. (Culligan, 2000, p. 106)

St. Teresa teaches that one of the primary steps in the spiritual life is to have a true knowledge of oneself, to be able to recognize these movements and energies which move within ourselves and pull us toward satisfaction which cannot satisfy. This self knowledge is a great awakening and a great illumination which is a fruit of our prayer and our journey into God. (Culligan, 2000, p. 106) Allowing God to drain these energies of their power is a great purgation and transformation.

It is clear that these petitions of the Our Father, when prayed contemplatively as the Carmelites do, bring a person deeper and deeper into a profound union with God. This, however, is never done just for the sake of the individual, but for the sake of the Church and the world. Since the God the Carmelites are praying to, contemplating, and seeking union with is the reigning God, the God opposed to all suffering and injustice, to all that dehumanizes, the God who continually sends forth his spirit to complete his reign. This God is a restless God, whose history of creating-reconciling-saving is not yet finished. This is a God who is still sending forth his mighty spirit to empower us as prophets to denounce the world of dis-grace and announce the world of grace. This is a God whose spirit calls us to be iconoclastic and parabolic, that is, to build the reign and challenge every idol of our culture that is opposed to that reign, every false god that dehumanizes and enslaves human beings. In the words of, Moltmann, “peace with God means conflict with the world...” (Culligan, 2000, p. 62)

One can only be a prophet because one has first tasted the divine. Prophets experience the divine absence in history because they have first tasted the divine presence. The experience of the divine presence compels the prophet to denounce its absence, the reign of Satan, and to announce a new future, the reign of God. One cannot rest tranquilly in the God of Israel, the God of Jesus, because God himself is not resting tranquilly. The Christian mystic is called to be a prophet. The mystic in action is the prophet. (Culligan,

2000, p. 62) Some modern day examples include Oscar Romero, Titus Brandsma, Daniel Berrigan, and Mother Teresa.

Contemplative life must lead to prophetic life, for not to be prophetic and countercultural is to reinforce the status quo, the reign of the absence of God. Carmelites pray to a God with whom they are passionately in love. This God is passionately in love with her creation and passionately involved with bringing her reign to completion. Contemplative prayer leads to prophetic action. This is the way of Carmelite prayer.

Catholic Worker Tradition

The next part of this paper will examine how a Catholic Worker community would pray and live the Our Father. Catholic Worker communities are heavily involved in working for peace and justice in the world. This emphasis is reflected in how they pray.

“Our Father who art in heaven”. The first thing one must do is understand the word “Father” and what it means to be a child of this Father. Jesus is the one who must teach us what “Father” really means. In his discourses the Father appears as the source of all good. “But I say unto you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be the sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good (Matt. 5:44–45). The love that endures until the end, which the Lord fulfilled on the cross in praying for his enemies, shows us the essence of the Father. He is this love. Because Jesus brings it to completion; he is entirely “son” and he invites us to become sons according to this criterion. (Benedict, 2007, p. 137) According to this criterion we are sons to the degree that we love our enemies.

To become sons according to this criterion is very much a part of the Catholic Worker identity and way of being in the world. The Catholic Worker understands that the words of Jesus are spiritual as well as political. His words always deal with our interior relationship with God and with our external relationships with others, our outward actions in the world.

Love of enemies is central to Catholic Worker behavior, internal disposition, and prayer petition. What this looks like is refusing to do violence to our enemies or anyone else, offering spiritual and corporeal works of mercy to our enemies and to all others, praying for our enemies and all others, and refusing to cooperate with those forces which are promoting violence and destruction in this world. This love of enemies goes beyond Christian pacifism. It is not only a refusal to kill or do violence; it also includes doing the works of mercy.

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the United States declaration of war the Catholic Worker published a banner headline:

“We Continue Our Christian Pacifist Stand.” (Forest, 1984, p.74) “We will print the words of Christ who is always with us’ Dorothy Day wrote in an editorial, even to the end of the world. ‘Love your enemies. Do good to those that hate you, and pray for those who persecute you and calumniate you, so that you may be the children of your Father in heaven, who makes his sun to rise on the good and the evil, and sends rain on the just and the unjust....’ Our manifesto is the sermon on the mount, which means that we will try to be peacemakers. Speaking for many of our conscientious objectors, we will not participate in armed warfare or in making munitions, or buying government bonds to prosecute the war, or urging others to this effort.” (Forest, 1984, p75)

“Opposition to the war, she went on, had nothing to do with sympathy for America’s opponents in the war. We love our country.... We have been the only country in the world where men and women of all nations have taken refuge from oppression. But the means of action the Catholic Worker movement supported were the works of mercy rather than the

works of war. 'I would urge our friends and associates to care for the sick and the wounded, to the growing of food for the hungry, to the continuance of all our works of mercy in our houses and on our farms.'

(Forest, 1984, p. 75)

Standing with the non-violent Jesus who died loving his enemies is the Catholic Workers understanding of calling God "Father" in this prayer.

"Hallowed be thy name." God revealed his name to Moses in the context of liberating the children of Israel from Egypt. He refused to remain anonymous, but gave his name and then stood up against oppression. When we unite ourselves with the purposes of God by standing up against oppression and working for a just world, then God's name is manifested through us in the world.

"When we pray that God's name may be holy, we do not presume that our prayer makes it holy; rather we pray that the holiness of his name may become evident in our lives." (Crosby, 1977, p. 38) Our life is a process of seeking our name, and a search for who I am and what I am to do. "This search led Moses to the mountain, unwilling to let the society of his day place its name on him." (Crosby, 1977, p. 38) In Moses' search we see that God's revelation of himself through his name is inseparable from the process of liberation. As we participate in this process, we come to know God.

The children of Israel cried out to God because of their bondage. God heard their cries, cared for them, and called them out of bondage into liberation, revealing his name in the process. This experience of God's seeing, caring for, and calling them, created the foundation for Israel's religious experience. Out of this religious experience, Israel was to respond to God's call by identifying with his care and by seeing him as it was seen. This contemplative experience of God's seeing it, caring for it and calling it became the foundation for Israel's contemplative ministry, enabling it to respond to God's call, identifying with him in his care for the world and by entering into the vision of God.

(Crosby, 1977, p. 42)

The religious experience of Israel becomes the basis of our religious experience as well. Our contemplation, which results from our experience of God's contemplating us, caring for us, and calling us, enables us to enter into the world with a ministry wherein we respond to God's call by caring for his people to the point that we come to know God. In this rhythm, we participate in God and he in us. This is the rhythm of contemplation and action. (Crosby, 1977, p. 42)

Jeff Diedrich, a member of the Los Angeles Catholic Worker for 40 years now, said in an interview "I do not pray on the mountain top – I do not pray in the wilderness – I do not pray at the seashore. I pray in the soup kitchen. I pray when I am terrified by the violence of the poor. I pray when I am in conflict with the authorities. I pray when I am in the jail cell.... On the whole, I think that what we do at the Catholic Worker is kind of close to what God might want from people of faith.... I pray that I might not be distracted. I pray that I may not be directed from this place and this path of discipleship." (Appendix 1) This is the rhythm of contemplation and action.

From a Catholic Worker point of view, God's name becomes manifest in the world when we enter into his vision and his purpose standing up against oppression and working for a just world.

"Thy kingdom come." In this petition we pray for the reign of God to come on Earth. Fr. Steve Kelly, a Jesuit priest for more than 27 years and companion in ministry with the Catholic Worker movement, says that in "the Our Father Jesus gives the seed and pattern of the reign of God". (Appendix 2)

He continues, "For a couple of years now... I have been trying to see if the prayer that Jesus gave us fits with or even summarizes the Hebrew spirituality out of which Jesus and his contemporary praying arose.... Biblically, the Hebrew Scriptures provide a durable structure and ethos to prevent disenfranchisement,

abuse, neglect, oppression of the poor. The test of any time or place in the history of salvation is how the widow and orphan are being treated. Who is marginalized, what analysis, biblical and/or moral accounts for that woefulness? God intervenes in history to liberate and heal and intercede. I am conscious of that in prayer.” (Appendix 2)

The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but justice and peace and the joy that is given by the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17) “To know Yahweh is to do justice, to create on Earth the kind of kingdom envisioned by Jesus in the scriptures.” (Crosby, 1977, p. 67) Working and praying for peace and justice is the Catholic Worker way of praying this petition from the Our Father. It not only involves living justly and peaceably, but also non-cooperation with injustice and war making.

In his book, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Pope Benedict says of the disciples of Jesus, “They are people who don’t run with the pack, who refuse to collude with the injustice that has become endemic, but who suffer under it instead. Even though it is not in their power to change the overall situation, they still counter the dominion of evil through the passive resistance of their suffering – through their mourning that sets bounds to the power of evil.” (Benedict, 2007, pp. 86-87) “The mourning of which the Lord speaks is nonconformity with evil; it is a way of resisting models of behavior that the individual is pressured to accept because ‘everyone does it’. The world cannot tolerate that kind of resistance; it demands conformity. It considers this mourning to be an accusation directed against the numbing of consciences. And so it is.” (Benedict, 2007, p. 88)

Catholic Worker communities accept their responsibility to bring conversion to the societal institutions of this world that create and sustain the cry of the poor and the cry of the victims of war. Praying and working for peace, renouncing violence and the works of war, praying and working for justice, and non cooperation with injustice is the Catholic

Worker way of praying for Gods kingdom to come.

“Thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven.” Jesus’ “oneness with the Father’s will is the foundation of his life. The unity of his will with the Father’s will is the core of his very being.” (Benedict, 2007, p. 149) “God’s will flows from his very being and therefore guides us into the truth of our being, liberating us from self destruction through falsehood.” (Benedict, 2007, p. 148) To do the will of God was the whole mission of Jesus, and as his disciples it is also ours. Therefore when we pray this petition we pray that we may come closer and closer to Jesus so that God’s will can defeat the downward pull of our own selfishness. When God’s will is not done in our lives as individuals we are alienated not only from God, but from ourselves and others also. God’s will must be done in our own lives and in our relationships with others.

There is a third level where God’s will must be carried out. It is not only to be accomplished in our individual lives and our interpersonal relationships with others; it must also be accomplished in our structures, our institutions, in the principalities and powers. If our structures are unjust, then God’s will is not being done at that level. Often there is a desire present in individuals that God’s will be carried out in their lives and their interpersonal relationships, (as it should be), but the desire to see that God’s will is accomplished in our structures is lacking. Apathy to the injustice in our structures supports the continuation of that injustice. Jesus’ style of life fulfilled the will of God, if not the world. Since his life contradicted the world’s powers and principalities, it was against their will. To do God’s will is to resist their will. The cross is the consequence for anyone who will be faithful to following God’s will in a world of sin.

If the will of God is to be done on Earth as it is in Heaven, the fulfillment of this will on all levels must be seen as our mission in the world. By having no compromise whatsoever with any form of social injustice, we hear the cry of the poor and become aware of the distress of the voiceless. One rarely becomes a martyr because of one’s own

personal holiness or because of one's godly interpersonal relationships. The prophets and martyrs became so normally by refusing to conform to, and speaking out against injustice in the structures that perpetuated it. To the powers that be this is often seen as insurrection or revolution. John Howard Yoder says

“The cross was the standard punishment for insurrection or for refusal to confess Caesar's Lordship... The disciples cross is not a metaphor for self mortification or even generally for innocent suffering; ‘if you follow me, your fate will be like mine, the fate of a revolutionary. You cannot follow me without facing that fate.’”
(Yoder, 1972, p. 66)

The Catholic Worker way of praying this petition is to pray and work for God's will to be done in all three levels of society; the personal, the interpersonal, and the structural.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” In this petition we pray for our bread and that means we also pray for the bread of others.

In the Catholic Worker tradition, to pray for the bread of others is a constant prayer. There is always prayer, and working for food, and seeking donations for food so that it may be shared with others. Fr. Kolvenbach says, “If we invoke our Father over the Lord's Table and at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, how can we exempt ourselves from declaring our unshakable resolve to help all men, our brothers to obtain their daily bread?” (Benedict, 2007, p.151)

St. Cyprian makes another important observation: Anyone who asks for bread for today is poor. (Benedict, 2007, p.151) This prayer presupposes the poverty of the disciples. It presupposes that there are people who have renounced the world and its riches for the sake of the faith and no longer ask for anything beyond what they need to live. There must always be people in the church who leave everything in order to follow the Lord, people who depend radically on God, whose lives encourage others to trust in God.

Another aspect of this poverty, which is motivated entirely by commitment to God and

his kingdom, is that it is an act of solidarity with the poor of the world. This is one of the great unifying aspects of this prayer. It calls on all of us to be concerned with the suffering of all others, and to do what we can about it. This is the Catholic Worker way of praying and living this petition.

“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”. There is trespass in relation to other men and there is trespass in relation to God. “Every instance of trespass involves some kind of injury to truth and love and thus is opposed to God who is truth and love.” (Benedict, 2007, p. 157) This injury, this guilt, calls forth retaliation. The result of this is a chain of trespasses in which the evil of guilt grows ceaselessly and becomes inescapable. In this petition, we are given the escape from guilt and retaliation, through forgiveness.

Catholic Worker communities are involved in many non-violent campaigns which seek to promote forgiveness and reconciliation between nations, religions, races, families, and individuals. They actively speak out against war and retaliation. They speak out against pre-emptive strikes and call instead for pre-emptive forgiveness.

One other aspect of this petition comes from the version found in the gospel of Luke. In that gospel it says “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors”. John Howard Yoder says “Jesus is not simply recommending vaguely that we might pardon those who have bothered us or made us trouble, but tells us purely and simply to erase the debts of those who owe us money; which is to say, practice the jubilee”. (Yoder, 1972, p. 66) This is a very radical and controversial way of living, but one that is embraced in a concrete way within the Catholic Worker movement. Fr. Crosby says, “As a community draws further away from its original and radical origins, it tends to spiritualize its founding values and ideals, which once were expressed in concrete lifestyle”. (Crosby, 1977, p. 140)

Freedom from guilt and freedom from debt is freedom in a very concrete way.

Working for these very real ways of being for oneself and for all others is the Catholic

Worker way of praying this petition.

“Lead us not into temptation.” In the past, temptations have led people away from God and they continue to do so in the present; therefore we pray that these temptations are not too great for us, that God will help us to withstand them. The temptations which God’s people have had to endure throughout history have always been particular to their time in history. The great saints have all had to stand against the prevailing sins of their time, and as a result their lives stood out as bright lights in the darkness of their particular time. Their lives were often countercultural. To withstand temptation builds depth within the soul and the character of the individual, therefore they are necessary for growth but they are also dangerous. We pray that our own personal selfish desires, leanings, addictions, etc. will not lead us away from God. We also pray that the sins of our time in history will not pull us in and lead us away from God.

Social sin is institutionalized sin. It is sin that is acceptable in our time, but it is still in opposition to the will and reign of God. In 1977 Fr. Crosby said, “There are five isms in particular that Americans ought to be attempting to eradicate from their institutions and the ideology that reinforces them if they are to be faithful to the spirit of Jesus’ unique vision in their own histories.” (Crosby, 1977, pp. 170-171) These five isms that he discusses in his book are sexism, elitism, racism, militarism, and consumerism.

Consumerism will provide a good example. The materialism of our society has not delivered on the promise of happy and meaningful lives. Instead, it has trapped people in a cycle of production and consumption that demands more and more of the person and leaves little time for anything else. We are more than just producers and consumers. The value of a person’s life is not based on how much one produces. The success of a person’s life is not based on how much one is able to consume in one’s life. This only leads to empty, trapped, and unfulfilled lives. To make it even worse is the fact that the majority of the world’s goods are consumed by a small minority of the people. A

relatively small group of people are over-full while the rest of the world goes hungry. In America the temptation many face is simply to fall into the consumer mindset without even choosing it or really being aware of any other way to live. This enslavement is due to unawareness, but is nonetheless enslavement. Emmanuel Mounier said, "One does not free a man by detaching him from the bonds that paralyze him; one frees a man by attaching him to his destiny." (Zwick, 2005, p. 98) The Catholic Worker movement seeks to free people from addiction to consumerism by addicting them to a life of meaning. Living very simply and performing the works of mercy is an alternative they offer to the temptation of consumerism. Living this very counter-cultural lifestyle is one of the ways Catholic Workers pray, "Lead us not into temptation".

"But deliver us from evil." There are so many evils to be delivered from, both individual and societal, that this paper will only touch on one example as well as examine how one can experience liberation from evil as an on-going lifestyle.

In asking God to liberate us from evil, we are asking for God's kingdom, for union with God's will, and that his name may be hallowed on Earth. In a broader sense, we are asking that God set a limit to the evils that ravage individuals and the world. This petition can and should be looked at as an examination of conscience directed at ourselves and at the world and as an appeal to collaborate in breaking the predominance of evils. (Benedict, 2007, p. 168)

We must become aware of our world. "The process of conscientization includes an on-going reflection on any and all enslavements that effect the community as well as those elements that can empower it." (Crosby, 1977, p. 187) Many Catholic Worker communities gather together weekly to reflect on and analyze our culture and the world we live in. This reading of our reality means that we must become critical thinkers, able to reflect on sin in its individual and social manifestations but it must be done in light of faith and grace. Where sin abounds grace is able to abound all the more. Conversion of

individuals, of relationships, and of our structures is the goal. We must understand our world and then ask ourselves what is right with it, what is wrong with it, and how can we help? Then action follows reflection.

After sufficient and on-going reflection, Catholic Worker communities stand against evil and injustice after the manner of Dorothy Day, Ghandi, and Martin Luther King Jr. In a letter from a Birmingham jail Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote, "I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality.... Whatever affects me directly affects all indirectly." (King, 1963, p. 14) Injustice must be brought to the light and resisted wherever it is found. This non-violent resistance must be carried out in such a way that it offers conversion and redemption to our institutions and structures.

One example of this is the stand against the development, stockpiling, and use of weapons of mass destruction. Many Catholic Worker communities have been involved in educating people about this issue and protesting against it for years. These protests are non-violent in nature and designed to bring awareness to the injustice that these weapons represent.

In the struggle against injustice, prayer, meditation and contemplation are crucial. Some of us who have been engaged in social justice have been deeply naïve about what has been happening in our own psyches. Our very identities have often been defined by our resistance to evil. It is our way of feeling good about ourselves: if we are against evil we must be good. The impatience that some activists experience with prayer, meditation, and inner healing may itself betray an inkling of what they might find if they looked within. The struggle against evil can make us evil, and no amount of good intentions automatically prevents its happening. "The whole armor of God that Ephesians 6:10-20 counsels us to put on is crafted specifically to protect us against the contagion of evil

within our souls, and its metals are all forged in prayer.” (Wink, 1998, p.126) Finally, in praying “Deliver us from evil,” we must pray that we not lose our faith. We must pray that we do not become discouraged because the problems are too big, there is never enough help, there is never enough funding, etc. “The Christian is threatened by an anonymous atmosphere, by ‘something in the air’ that wants to make the faith seem ludicrous and absurd to him.” (Benedict, 2007, p.175) We pray from the depths of our soul not to be robbed of our faith which enables us to see God, which binds us with Christ who resisted evil while loving his enemies right up to the end. This is the Catholic Worker way of praying this petition.

In conclusion this paper has shown how beneficial the Lord’s prayer is to both a contemplative community, (Carmelites) and an active community, (Catholic Workers). Contemplation must result in active compassion or it is not Christian. Action must come from contemplation or it will not have its roots in God’s love.

Contemplation does not lead us to escape from the world, but to positive ways of action in the world. Urs von Balthasar shrewdly sums up the social effect of contemplation: “Contemplatives are like great subterranean rivers, which, on occasion, break out into springs at unexpected points, or reveal their presence only by the plants they feed from below.” (Ulanov, 2008, p. 134) In praying the Our Father we are brought in touch with, and become a part of the transformative love of God. This transforming love seeks to transform both the hearts of individuals as well as the world they live in. The Our Father is a prayer that provides us with a pathway to God as well as a pathway to correct action in the world. It opens up our interior lives to God, giving him complete access to the depths of our soul. It is the prayer that is prayed by all Christian Communities and as such has tremendous unifying potential. It is the prayer of contemplatives, of actives, and of the multitudes.

Appendix 1

A writing from Jeff Dietrich

I don't have a spiritual life. I hate meditating, it's boring. Going to church is rarely edifying.

On the whole, I think that what we do at the Catholic Worker is kind of close to what God might want from people of faith.

God has never come to me in a vision or through an epiphany.

I pray for people. I pray that all of my flaws, humanness and brokenness – my self indulgence, my desire for comfort, security, adulation and public acclaim and success – as the world sees it, never causes me to deviate from the place God has brought me to and the path she has set me on. I do not pray on the mountaintop – I do not pray in the wilderness – I do not pray at the sea shore. I pray at the soup kitchen. I pray when I am terrified by the vulnerability of the poor. I pray when I am in conflict with the authorities. I pray when I am in the courtroom. I pray when I am in the jail cell.

My mantra: I pray to clear my head, to dispel my inner demons – I pray that I may not be distracted. I pray that I may not be directed from this place and this path of discipleship. I pray for the blessing that this is what God wants.

Appendix 2

A writing from Steve Kelly S. J.

Given that prayer is indispensable for most if not all Christians, I make the following comments as a religious. Catholic Workers are my apostolic companions. It is also important to add that as a priest, I have the privilege of leading prayer. I just want to provide that as a social and personal context for my comments. I haven't completed the prayer. That is, I haven't fully mined the implications and paths it provides for my or our life(lives);

I would like to write as a Jesuit of 27+ years. I've tried to have as a foundation the Our Father and its seven petitions since childhood. Having been influenced and impressed at an early age that this was the prayer that Jesus taught us, it has always meant a lot to me.

For a couple of years now, for personal reasons, I have been trying to see if the prayer that Jesus gave us fits with or even summarizes the Hebrew spirituality out of which Jesus and his contemporary praying arose. I get a little further along if I meditate thus.

Biblically, the Hebrew scriptures provide a durable structure and ethos to prevent disenfranchisement, abuse neglect, oppression of the poor.

The test of time or place in the history of salvation is how the widow and orphan are being treated. Who is marginalized, what analysis, biblical and/or moral accounts for that woefulness? God intervenes in history to liberate and heal and intercede. I am conscious of that in prayer.

In my time with the Catholic Workers, I have been affected by the same kindred type of barometer as that of the Hebrew biblical ethic. This applies to any project or endeavor public or private, namely, how it affects the poor. As well Dorothy Day summed up (or

quoted another thinker/writer) that God created enough for everyone to be sustained. Humans have been tempted to war-making. But there isn't enough for both eating and war-making. I think Peter Maurin has summed up many principles of the Our Father in his notion that greed really is the temptation that leads to squandering, hoarding, abuses that are threatening to what is proper to human survival. Does the lived-out Our Father fulfill the Decalogue?

In my imagination while praying the Our Father, Jesus gives the seed and pattern of the reign of God. While the contemplatives, and if you stretch the dialogue between the Martha and Mary incident, have it correct that prayer is indispensable and should have priority and thus come first, realizing that we need prayer. That is actually an understatement. To repeat myself, prayer is indispensable. Knowing in both imagination and how the gospels turn out, prayer lead Jesus. This can't be understated or underestimated. Prayer, it could be said, subject to misunderstanding, starts things for the person trying to be good. For the person in need of healing it is balm for the soul.

But we humans find ourselves perishing in a mileau of sin. Here is one way to say it in the distilled experience of Dom Helder Camara of the extremely impoverished Archdiocese of Recife, Brazil: "when I feed the poor, they call me a saint. But when I ask why there are so many poor, they call me a communist..." Who was it that said, "...for the ravenously hungry, God would come as bread (food)...?"

I define prayer as relationship with God. Communities and persons need that relationship. Both Community and a person (but not at the exclusion of others, as I mention below) can have an encounter with God by means of God. God gets us to God. So in prayer we have as a goal, God. And we use as our means, God, our relationship with God gets us going. Then prayer serves as inspiration. The relationship should make a difference.

So it is a strong analogy that begins the Our Father, "...on Earth, as it is in heaven..."

This isn't mere Platonism. The reign of God, if sought first, gets us the pattern, the schema for the way things can proceed and find their end on Earth. (have we eliminated the pie-in-the-sky pitfall?)

My imagination gives me more than analogous images in the petition of "daily bread...." Whence all justice finds a standard. As Dorothy and Peter put it above, how can there be communion is some go hungry?

Jesus embodied this pastorally. He knew what it was like to go hungry. He was tempted to dump his humanity for the economic deification of turning rocks into bread. Yet, we don't live on bread alone. This is key to the Our Father. When Jesus sees the hungry, bedraggled, the wretched follow him into the wilderness; he chafes at their settling for earthly bread, he compassionately provides it, even at the risk of their misunderstanding it and making him king. There is no place in the reign of God for deprivation, neither physical nor spiritual. My image becomes fuller as I juxtapose the Hebrews in the wilderness and the followers of Jesus. These are steps in a reconciled humanity. This leads to their understanding of consuming the body and blood of Jesus, a full reconciliation of humans with God and with each other.

In John's gospel, he declares that bread is from heaven. We were made for this. Keep in mind we were made to need each other. Sin, both structural, systemic, and personal, distorts that interdependence. Jesus asks; "give us this day our daily bread..." Neither the physical nor spiritual are neglected. Nor is justice. Neither is there room for greed and whatever gives rise to war. Tempted, as we are, the reign of God, inaugurated in the person of Jesus, isn't compatible with domination. Certainly not divisions caused by structures. Can injustice be found either in the Our Father, or the reign that it prays for?

We were made to need Jesus. The petition is all inclusive. All aspects of our hunger as humans are plaintively expressed. There is a depth in us humans that won't settle for less. A center of us that only Jesus the incarnate word, food, if we can accept

the metaphor, to remain alive, especially in the desert, wilderness like our Hebrew ancestors.

The second half of the Our Father bears out the mystery of grace and sin. By mystery I mean hidden. Sin of greed comes in many forms and leads to war. Many need healing and forgiveness to offset the effects of greed and war. My imagination is provoked in these words of the prayer, "...forgiven as we forgive..." that the nature of sin is that each person has a debtor and each is in debt for their own and the sins of each other. It is some kind of chain, broken by forgiveness that while hidden, releases bonds. There can be no revenge in this reign of God. And when we are at/in the soup line we are merely giving the poor, what as we pray, belongs to them in justice.

So I am trying to say with these reflections on my praying the Our Father, the prayer that Jesus taught us, taught Martha and Mary, which meets the criteria of Hebrew Biblical justice and commits us to the reign of God, is that the prayer is guaranteed not to remain spiritualized. Do we need daily contact with God? Affirmative. Do we ignore the need for healing, the hunger and greed around us to our own spiritual peril? Affirmative.

Well, I have used many words, one learns by doing. Decades ago I first heard with my questioning ears, my tangential mind, the admonition, that Christians would do well to pray over and over and over, thoroughly the first word of the prayer, "Our". It would help our socially disordered, bereft of healing consciousness.

In Jesus we see that we humans were made in the image of God. That is, we humans were made socially. Our very condition and constitutive being is that we are creatures that need each other. And we woefully need to not make war on each other, and we dearly need the healing of reconciliation and restorative justice. The "Our" is first person plural. For Christians, made like their triune God, we are mutually in need of each other. We are like God in creativity, loving, and providing. The analogy doesn't stop there. We must learn the consciousness of the social 'our' if our spirituality is to make any

difference. If our spirituality is to be authentic, it should be an openness, a disposition for the Holy Spirit to make us supple and beckon us on. Any prayer, any reading of scripture for that matter, that is either wayward or neglecting the economic, social, human constitutive tenets, is a truncated prayer, a truncated reading and thus short of the reign of God.

But in all this, we are ever invited, by God the faithful to be led to God. Be stouthearted as the hope-imbued Psalm provides. Because the prayer has promise: Our Father is the DNA and map for Jesus companions.

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