

# The Fathers and Theologians On The Lord's Prayer

## **On the Lord's Prayer**

by St. Maximus the Confessor

For the Father's name is not something which He has acquired, nor is the kingdom a dignity ascribed to Him: He does not have a beginning, so that at a certain moment He begins to be Father or King, but He is eternal and so is eternally Father and King. In no sense at all, therefore, has He either begun to exist or begun to exist as Father and King. And if He exists eternally, not only is he eternally Father and King but also the Son and the Holy Spirit co-exist with Him eternally in substantial form, having their being from Him and by nature inhering in Him beyond any cause or principle: they are not sequent to Him, nor have they come into existence after Him in a contingent manner. The relationship of co-inherence between the Persons embraces all three of them simultaneously, not permitting any of the three to be regarded as prior or sequent to the others.

At the outset of this prayer, then, we honor the coessential and supraessential Trinity as the creative cause of our coming into existence. Secondly, we are taught to proclaim the grace of our adoption, since we have been found worthy of addressing our Creator by nature as our Father by grace. Thus, venerating this title of our begetter by grace, we strive to stamp our Creator's qualities on our lives, sanctifying His name on earth, taking after Him as our Father, showing ourselves to be His children through our actions, and through all that we think or do glorifying the author of this adoption, who is by nature Son of the Father.

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## **The Seven Mysteries of the Lord's Prayer**

By St. Makarios of Corinth

... He teaches us to call Him Father because we believed in His only-Begotten Son, and thus were reconciled to God, while we were His enemies and children of wrath. Saying "Our Father," He also revealed that those reborn through Holy Baptism are all genuine brothers [and sisters] and children of the same Father, God Himself, and brothers [and sisters] of one another. As such, they constitute the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, and hence, they must love one another as true and genuine children; as the Lord commands us, saying: *This is my commandment: that you love one another ...* (Jn. 15:12, 17).

Here, we should also note that with respect to human existence in general, i.e. creation, God is called Father of all men, both believers and unbelievers. Therefore, we must love all men [human beings], because having been created by the hands of God, all human beings are equally honored. We only hate evil, and not any creature of God. But in regards to the new creation, i.e. our recreation "in Christ," we Christians must love one another even more fervently, because we are united by a double bond, both by nature and by grace.

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### **Three Prayers**

#### **The Lord's Prayer/O Heavenly King/Prayer of St. Ephraim**

By Olivier Clement

He [i.e. "the modern person"] has been told that "God the Father" is the enemy of his freedom, a type of celestial spy, a sadistic, castrating father. One must admit that historically, Christendom, in the East as in the West, at one time or another has amply justified this accusation.

Nevertheless, He is called “Father.” As this metaphor suggests, the ultimate end is not assimilation but communion, a liberating communion that enables us to make our way toward others.

Thus: “Father.” How is this significant in our daily lives? Its means that we are never, ever, lost orphans at the mercy of the forces and circumstances of this world. We have a *recourse*, we have an *origin* beyond time and space. This seemingly infinite universe (though according to Einstein time began with the “big bang” and space is curved and contained) has its place within the word, the breath and the love of the Father.

And thus the nihilism of this age is vanquished. The anguish within us can be changed to trust, and the hatred to union. What we must sense most strongly, each day – and I say this especially to those who are young – is that it is good to live. To live is grace. To live is glory. All life is a blessing.

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## **Our Father**

By Alexander Schmemmann

How many ideas have evolved in man’s imagination about God! He has been referred to as the Absolute, the First Cause, Lord, Omnipotent, Creator, Benefactor, God, and so on, and so forth. Each of these ideas and designations relates to some element of truth, to a profound experience and a depth of understanding. Yet this one word “Father,” together with “Our” contain all of these concepts yet at the same time reveals them as intimacy, as love, as a unique, unrepeatable and joyful union.

“Our Father” ... This is no longer an idea about God, but already knowledge of God, this is already communion with him in love, in unity, and trust. This is already the beginning of knowing eternity. For Christ himself said to the Father: “For this is eternal life, that they would know you” (Jn. 17:3).

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## **PRAYER**

### **Encounter with the Living God**

Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev

The “Our Father: is of special significance, because Jesus Christ himself gave it to us. It begins with the words: “Our Father, who art in heaven.” This prayer is comprehensive in character: in it is concentrated, as it were, everything that man needs both for earthly life and for the salvation of his soul. The Lord gave it to us so that we would know what we should pray for and what to ask of God.

When we pronounce “Our Father,” this means that we are not praying in isolation, as individuals, each one of which has his own father, but as members of a single human family, a single, Church, a single Body of Christ. In other words, by calling God our father, we imply that all other people are our brethren [and sisters]. Moreover, when Christ teaches us in prayer to turn to God as “Our Father,” he places himself as it were on the same level with us.