

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK



CHANGING THE OUR FATHER?

A boy challenged his friend: "I bet you don't even know the Lord's Prayer." "I bet I do!" The friend replied. The other kid said, "Listen, I will bet you ten dollars that you can't say it!" But the friend was persistent, "I can do it" "Okay," the first boy said, "You're on-let's hear it!" So the kid folded his hands and prayed, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." "Gee," the other boy said, "Here's your ten dollars. I didn't think you could do it!"

I suppose that most of us do know the Lord's prayer. Well, at least we've heard it before at Mass. We call the Our Father the "Lord's Prayer." It was the Lord Jesus himself who taught His disciples this prayer. The Our Father contains seven petitions that if prayed well could lead us to great holiness of life.

Several weeks ago at the Vatican, The Holy Father Pope Francis made the news when he suggested that the Our Father be changed. A good number of people have recently asked me about what the Pope wanted to do. Suffice it to say that the Holy Father's intentions were good.

What he actually wanted to adjust or clarify was one line in the prayer: "Lead us not into temptation." the Pope said, "That is not a good translation... It is not God who throws me into temptation and then watches how I fall... God helps us get up." Pope Francis added, "It is Satan who leads you into temptation."

We thank the Pope for that clarification because it's an important one. It's obvious too, that the Pope takes time saying his prayers and reflects upon the meaning of the words. Many of us don't do that. There was a young child who once recited the Our Father this way: "Lead us not into Penn Station!" Maybe that's not a bad prayer! Obviously, a child could be forgiven for not comprehending the words in a prayer. But for us adults, it's a different story. We should try to pray with attention and devotion. Sometimes we don't do that. It seems that we're always in a rush to say our prayers as quickly as possible which is not good!

The Our Father as taught by Jesus really was a revolutionary prayer to the people of His time. The idea of calling God "Father" was unbelievable to them. Yet, Jesus encouraged us to be on such familiar terms with God that we could go to Him with our needs and concerns just as we would to our own earthly father with a pressing problem. Saint Cyprian wrote: "How merciful the Lord is! He wished us to repeat this prayer in God's sight-to call the Lord "Our Father." None of us would have dared to utter this name, unless he had allowed us to pray in this way."

A word about temptation, it comes to all of us. It's not a sin to be tempted at all. But we need the grace of God to overcome it. The way to receive that grace is to pray fervently each day. Without the power of prayer, however, we're "sitting ducks" for our enemy the devil to gain the upper hand. As we start the new year, let's pray that in 2018 we might be found alert and watchful in prayer so that we might achieve victory over the malice and snares of the evil one.

Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome