

*Prayer from the Bishop's Conference of
Scotland (1999)*

Make us channels of your peace, so that we can add to the river that flows from Jesus Christ across the centuries and so that you may be active in the world through us. Make us disciples like Mary, the mother of Jesus and our mother. May we open ourselves to you and to each other, so that our horizon will stretch far beyond this third millennium, towards life with Christ for ever. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. AMEN



PREPARING FOR THE MILLENNIUM

Part 3 (1999)
Year of God the Father

“GOD THE FATHER”

- The Creator of Heaven and Earth,
Father of Jesus and Our Father -

PREPARING FOR THE MILLENNIUM

Third Year (1999)

“God the Father”

-The Creator of Heaven and Earth, Father of Jesus and our Father -

INTRODUCTORY

Shortly before his election in 1958, pope John XXIII announced to the Church and to the world that he was calling together an Ecumenical Council—which became known as Vatican II. He hoped and prayed that another Pentecost would descend upon the Church so that she would be renewed once again by the Holy Spirit.

This third formation booklet reflects on the greatest prayer of all, the Our Father, which was given by Jesus to the apostles when they said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples’ [Lk 11.1]. As we consider the different aspects of this prayer, let that also be our request. This prayer, so deep that it will never be fully realised until we enter our eternal home.

Bibliography

[works cited in the text above]

Regis J Armstrong, J A Wayne Hellmann, William J Short *Francis of Assisi: early documents* Vol I, II, III [New York City Press, 1999] {FAED}

Catechism of the Catholic Church [Geoffrey Chapman, 1994]

Murray Bodo *Francis: the journey and the dream* [St Anthony Messenger Press, 1988]

Some books you might find helpful especially with your prayer sessions

Joseph Stoutzenberger & John Bonher *Praying with Francis of Assisi* [Winona: St Mary's Press, 1989]

Ramona Miller & Ingrid Peterson *Praying with Clare of Assisi* [Winona: St Mary's Press, 1989]

Carlo Caretto *I Francis* [London: Fount Books, 1982]

Carlo Caretto *Blessed are you who Believed* [Tonbridge Wells: Burns & Oats, 1982]

John Paul II *Tertio Millennium Adveniente* [London: CTS, 1994]

The Coming of the Third Millennium, a popular version of Tertio Millennium Adveniente [London: CAFOD, 1996]

The Common Good [London: The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales, 1996]

Session 1: OUR FATHER

Theme: The Fatherhood of God

A humble and trusting heart enables us to turn and become like little children [Matt 18.3]. For it is to little children that the Father himself is revealed [Matt 11.25].

Scripture:

Week 1—

- Rom 8.14-17—'Abba, Father'

Week 2—

- Mk 10.13-16—Jesus bless little children

Week 3—

- Matt 11.25-27—The Father and the Son

Week 4—

- Ps 103.13-18—The Father's tenderness

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

- Father in heaven, 2779-2792 (p 590-593)

St Francis:

'As the Father sees in every person the features of his Son, who is the firstborn of many brothers and sisters, so the Secular Franciscan, with gentle and courteous spirit, accepts all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ .' [Rule 13]

Action:

Our Lord has given us the fundamental and most perfect Christian prayer—a summary of the whole gospel [*Catechism* 2773-2776]. St Thomas Aquinas tells us this prayer not only teaches us to ask for things but also in what order we should desire them [*Catechism* 2541]. Let us, therefore, from now on endeavour to pray this prayer more slowly and more contemplatively.

Session 2: WHO ART IN HEAVEN

Theme: Our Father and Eternal Life

Because there is no eternal city for us in this life, we are to look for one in the life to come [Heb 13.15].

Scripture:

Week 1—

- John 17.1-3—Eternal life

Week 2—

- John 14.1-7—Jesus, the way to the Father

Week 3—

- Matt 19.16-30—How to get eternal life

Week 4—

- Deut 30.15-20—Choose life

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

- Heaven, 1023-1029 (p 233-235)

St Francis:

‘Who are in heaven: In the angels and the saints, enlightening them to know, for you, Lord, are light; inflaming them to love, for you, Lord, are love; dwelling in them and filling them with happiness, for you, Lord, are Supreme Good, the Eternal Good, from whom all good comes without whom there is no good.’ [FAED Vol I A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father 2 (p 158)]

Action:

Love is the one thing that cannot hurt our neighbour; it is the answer to all the commandments—Rom 13.10. Let us look for ways to express God’s love of neighbour and family during this coming month.



Session 10: BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL

Theme: Our Father and the Whole Human Family

We pray for the deliverance of the whole human family from the evil one who opposes God and his commandment that we are to love God, and our neighbours as ourselves. To love and serve God's people is living the gospel life.

Scripture:

Week 1—

- Col 3.9-17—Putting on the new self

Week 2—

- Lk 10.25-36—How to love and serve

Week 3—

- Rom 12.14-21—Overcoming evil with good

Week 4—

- Eph 4.7-16—Prepared for service

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

- Catholicity, 830-831 (p 192-193), 863-866 (p 201)

St Francis:

'...when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord himself led me among them and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body.' [FAED Vol I The Testament(1226) 1-3 (p 124)]

Action:

In the spirit of cooperation and Franciscan humility, let us identify some of the needs around us and within our parishes and use the gifts God has bestowed on us for others' benefit—looking to serve wherever we can.

Session 3: HALLOWED BE THY NAME

Theme: Our Father and Holiness

'Thus you shall keep my commandments and observe them: I am the Lord. You shall not profane my holy name, that I may be sanctified among the people of Israel: I am the Lord; I sanctify you, I who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the Lord' [Lev 22.31-33].

Scripture:

Week 1—

- Rev 15.3-4—You alone are holy

Week 2—

- Ps 105.1-7—glory to his holy name

Week 3—

- Rev 4.8-11—Holy is the Lord

Week 4—

- Exod 20.7—Do not speak God's name or misuse it
- Exod 3.14—I am who I am

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

- The Lord's name is holy, 2143-2144 (p 465)

St Francis:

'Holy be your name: May knowledge of you become clearer in us that we may know the breadth of your blessings, the length of your promises, the height of your majesty, and the depth of your judgments.' [FAED Vol I A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father 3 (p 158)]

Action:

Let us reflect on some of the blessings and promises of God that we identify in our own lives.

Session 4: THY KINGDOM COME

Theme: Our Father and our Salvation

People are helpless to escape from the situation in which sin has ensnared them. Only God can bring deliverance. Sin was dealt with by Jesus in his death and resurrection. He redeemed us with his own life. The apostle Paul urges us to consider the price that was paid for this redemption and to give ourselves wholeheartedly in God's service [I Cor 6.20]. We will not experience the full meaning of salvation until the end of the age with the return of Jesus Christ. In the meantime, we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling—for it is God himself who is at work within us [Cf. Phil 2.12].

Scripture:

Week 1—

- Lk 17.22-37—The coming of the kingdom of God

Week 2—

- Phil 2.12-16—Work out salvation

Week 3—

- Matt 25.1-13—Stay awake and be ready

Week 4—

- Lk 2.29-35—Nunc Dimittus

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

- The Last Judgment, 1040-1050 (p 238-240)

St Francis:

'Your kingdom come: That you may rule in us through your grace and enable us to come to your kingdom where there is clear vision of you...' [FAED Vol I A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father 4 (p 158)]

Action:

How is the kingdom both present in us, and yet to come?

Session 9: LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

Theme: Our Father and Human Frailty

God allows his people to be tested. Such testing reveals the worth of our love for him. Every test overcome strengthens us and leads us forward.

Scripture:

Week 1—

- Jas 1.1-15—you will always have trials

Week 2—

- Acts 14.22—Perseverance

Week 3—

- Rom 5.1-6—Suffering brings patience

Week 4—

- Matt 26.40—Pray not to be put to the test

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

- Sin and its consequences, 396-402 (p 89-90)

St Francis:

Francis shares another new insight with brother Leo: 'Brother Leo, only the Spirit of Jesus would enable you to be patient. That kind of experience is our continual initiation. We have to be testing our spirits constantly. Are we still carnal or is the Spirit of God stronger in us than in our own selfishness?' [Cf. Murray Bodo *Francis: the journey and the dream* (p 48)]

Action:

Make a firm resolution to practice 'perfect joy' this coming month.

Session 8: AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US

Theme: Our Father and Reconciliation

It is only when our relationship with God is restored that relations between people can be truly healed. This is the effect of the 'reconciliation' which God offers to all.

Scripture:

Week 1—

- Rom 5.10-15—Reconciliation

Week 2—

- II Cor 5.17-21—Let God reconcile

Week 3—

- Col 1.17-20—All perfection found in Jesus

Week 4—

- I Pet 1.9-10—Now you have been given mercy

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

- Sacrament of Penance, 1490-1493 (p 335)

St Francis:

'Let them not judge or condemn. As the Lord says, let them not consider the least sins of others; instead, let them reflect more on their own sins in the bitterness of their soul.' [FAED Vol I Earlier Rule cap 11:10-12 (p 72)]

Action:

Each week during the coming month, take time to consider seriously one particular fault or failing and one particular attribute or gift that you have. Resolve to overcome the former, using the latter for the glory of God and for the help of others.

Session 5: THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

Theme: Our Father and Mary—Love & Obedience

A deep abiding love for Mary, mother of our Lord Jesus Christ as well as ours, is a characteristic mark of the OFS. She is the special advocate and protector of the Order, the perfect example of how we should respond to the Father—'Let it be with me according to your word' [Lk 1.38].

Scripture:

Week 1—

- Lk 1.38—Handmaid

Week 2—

- Lk 1.39-56—The Visitation

Week 3—

- John 19.25-27—Mary, our mother

Week 4—

- John 2.1-5—Do whatever he tells you

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

- Mary, 2617-2618 (p 558), 2827 (p 601), 508-511 (p 114)

St Francis:

'Holy Poverty confounds the desire for riches, greed, and the cares of this world. Holy Humility confounds pride, all people who are in the world and all that is in the world. Holy Charity confounds every diabolical and carnal temptation and every carnal fear.' [FAED Vol I Salutation of the Virtues 11-13 (p 165)]

Action:

Take a few minutes daily to reflect on the rosary, praying at least one decade.

Session 6: GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

Theme: Our Father and his Beloved Son

Jesus is our whole nourishment. As we freely receive from him we must freely give to others. He nourishes in the Eucharist and the Word that we might go out and serve him in the community. [Cf. Matt 25.33-46]

Scripture:

Week 1—

- John 1.1-18—In the beginning

Week 2—

- John 6.48-58—The Bread of Life

Week 3—

- Heb 4.12-13—The Word of God is living

Week 4—

- I John 3.1-3—Children of God

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

- Eucharist, 1346-1349 (p 303-304)

St Francis:

‘All those who love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with their whole strength and love their neighbour as themselves, who hate their bodies with their vices and sins, who receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who produce worthy fruits of penance. O how happy and blessed are these men and women while they do such things and persevere in doing them...’ [FAED Vol I Earlier Exhortation cap 1 1-5 (p 41)]

Action:

Let us strive to be ‘Eucharist’ to others—share a meal, send a card/letter to sick or housebound...Don’t wait for an opportunity—take the initiative!

Session 7: FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES

Theme: Our Father and Safeguarding Creation

‘During the past few decades we have shown less respect than ever for nature—the gift of God’s goodness and wisdom. We have wantonly violated the sacred relationship between ourselves and nature, as a result we are today impoverished spectators of all sorts of unforeseen...consequences that effects all life.’ [The Ministers of the Franciscan Family Rome, 1982]

Scripture:

Week 1—

- Gen 1.26-31—God saw all he had made

Week 2—

- Ps 8.4-10—What is man that you are for him?

Week 3—

- Rom 8.18-25—Salvation through hope

Week 4—

- Col 1.15-20—The Firstborn of all creation

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

- Respecting creation, 339-344 (p 78-79), 2415-2416 (p 516)

St Francis:

‘...they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which ‘bear the imprint of the Most High’ and should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.’ [Rule 18]

Action:

Let us decide to act on any injustices to life or creation which are brought to our attention.