

FEBRUARY 24, 2026 FATHER PETER CHOI

In St. Luke's gospel, the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. It is because they heard that John the Baptist taught his disciples how to pray.

Jesus didn't exactly teach them what posture they should use to pray, or what breathing exercises they should do first. Instead, Jesus taught them what to pray for and, most importantly, he taught them about their relationship with God. God was their father. What that means is that God is our father. That's why we call the prayer the "Our Father".

I must be honest, one of my pet peeves when I pray with other people, especially the Rosary, in the communal setting is people rushing through the prayers as if we were in a race. Prayer should be recited meditatively, and as if you're in a conversation. Because that's what prayer is, a conversation with God.

In a conversation, one person doesn't dominate. When one person talks, the other person listens, and vice versa.

St. Teresa of Avila was a Carmelite nun who was also a mystic and lived in the 16th century. I read that when St. Teresa of Avila was praying the Our Father she often couldn't get through the entire prayer. Many times she couldn't get past the words "Our Father" and fell into ecstasy. She was having this intense spiritual experience where her mind was completely absorbed by God, felt intense joy, and had visions of God.

We may not experience that kind of ecstasy in our lifetime. But prayer is supposed to be an experience of union with God. In prayer, we raise our minds and hearts to God, but we shouldn't stop there. The goal of prayer

is not only to align our minds to God but also to align our will to God, and seeking to do God's will.

Back in the '90s, there was a famous countertop rotisserie barbecue oven that was sold on the dedicated channel called "As Seen on TV". Our family loved the barbecue chicken, so Mom went out and bought one. She put the chicken through the metal sticks and tied the legs with a cord, and turned it on. It was that simple. After two hours, the dinner was ready.

The inventors of the rotisserie barbecue sold a lot of their ovens, they even coined the term 'set it and forget it'. However, some time after, there was a service announcement regarding the safety of the oven. They had to correct themselves and say, "Please don't take 'set it and forget it' literally. Please pay close attention and monitor the oven while in use."

Some of us think that God has done the same thing with the creation, He set it and forgot about it. But that couldn't be further from the truth. In reality, God is a loving Father who loves us and understands our needs, even before we ask Him. He's also a providential God who is attentive to our needs.

Just imagine a father who has worked all day at work and came home. He sits at the dining table and listens to the stories his kids tell. He's attentive to every detail, not because the stories are interesting but because the ones that are telling the stories are important to him. What is important is not what but who.

In the same way, God not only notices what's happening our lives but He pays close attention to our thoughts, our desires, and our needs.

There are so many things I could say about the 'Our Father'. But let me just zero in on two things that are most important for me.

First, "Thy will be done." We may mistakenly think that if we were persistent with our prayer God would eventually give in. Many times I see little children, and I'm talking about kids who are younger than 3, when the children ask for their parents' phone so they could play the video games, many parents at first say no. But as the kids persist and begin to make a huge scene in public the parent reluctantly hands over the phone out of exhaustion and wanting to avoid the conflict in public.

Every time that happens we all know that parents are merely reinforcing the negative behaviour and creating a sense of entitlement in the children. By giving in, parents are abdicating their authority. Now, I'm not saying that these parents are bad parents, all I'm saying is that by doing what should be done, and what is necessary, isn't always easy.

However, in my experience, God has no problem saying no to us because he knows when to say yes and when to say no. He knows when to discipline us and when to go out of His way to make sacrifice for us. He knows exactly what we need and when we need it. So we can trust Him and rely on Him.

Many of us I'm sure can proudly say that we believe in God. But how many of us can honestly say we obey Him and seek to do His will above our own?

Secondly, God loves us with an everlasting love. His love for us is constant. His love for us never changes. The good news is that God loves us on our best days and on our worst days.

Of course, God doesn't force His love upon us. So when we reject God's love, and walk away from Him, He constantly pursues us and never gives up on us. We all know true love is unconditional, it comes with no strings attached.

Forgiveness works exactly the same way. In order for forgiveness to be genuine, it has to come without conditions. The good news is that forgiveness is a gift from God, it is free and has no limit.

The only caveat is that it is like a blank cheque, the amount you will give... we will be giving away will be the amount that we will get. If you are generous, the amount we give away is the amount we get, just as Jesus said, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

One of my favourite quotes about forgiveness comes from a theologian Lewis Smedes, "To forgive is to let a prisoner go free, and to realize the prisoner was you." When we forgive, we will not only be forgiven, we will also be set free.

So, have you forgiven others? Are you free?