

5. “Pray like this ...”

Part III: be preoccupied about what is necessary

Lectio Mt 6,9b-10; Lk 11,2b

Having alluded to the earth as a place where the divine will is fulfilled, (Mt 6,10b), we now reflect on the petitions which refer to “us” who pray, as beneficiaries. The fact that we have prepared for this second step by praying that God the Father's will be done is guarantee that the praying community find favor with the Father, while we now pray for ourselves.

READING

In Mt 6,11-13, the second part of the *Our Father* starts with a new intention, namely “*our daily bread*”, followed by three requests (*bread, pardon and overcoming temptation*) which, while being expressed in the active voice, in the imperative and in the second person singular refer to something which is *ours*. The second and third petition are more elaborate and are coordinated by the conjunction “*and*”, while the petition regarding pardon, expresses a comparison (“*as we...* ”). The last and final petition is in the negative form preceded by (“*not..., but...* ”), being the only petition which is reiterated.

What is highlighted in this second part of the prayer is the world of humankind (“*the earth*”). Thus, the petitions refer to a few but fundamental human needs. By being expressed in the present, they give the sense of continuity. The petitions reflect the real life of the one who prays and who has to confront real obstacles both as a human being and as a believer. All the petitions are made either as a community or in the name of the community. The “*Our Father*” is basically a communitarian prayer, for whoever prays it, though alone, is aware of being an active member of the praying community.

“*Give us, this day, our daily bread.*”

The second section of the “*Our Father*” begins with the request for “*our daily bread*”.¹ Having dealt with God and his designs, the one who prays addresses his/her own needs. However logical the sequence might seem, this is not all, for Jesus will once again encourage his disciples to have confidence in God who sustains his own, while also pointing out that the Father is aware of one's shortcomings and of what one needs before even they are expressed (Mt 6,8).

It is worth taking note that bread is the first thing that the one who prays desires to obtain from the Father. This primacy in asking for bread, does not only stress what one wants from God but also how intensely one asks for it. Asking for one's daily bread is in itself acknowledging that the Father provide it, since it is the duty of a father to provide bread (Mt 7,9; Lk 11,11), which is also the gift of God to his friends (Ps 127,2; Prov 30,8). The

¹ Luke offers a slightly different version. He prefers the present to the imperative. This detail is important, for, instead of asking that one begins to give, the continuity in giving goes further by also substituting the “*today*” of Matthew. The basic intention of the evangelists, does, not, therefore, coincide. Luke seems to have opted for a situation where the petition is habitual, even though not so urgent, while Matthew seems to reflect a more primitive version, namely, that the bread that is asked for, is for that same day on which the petition is made.

son/daughter who is willing to do the will of the Father will never lack what is necessary for his/her survival. In fact, he “*gives food to those who are hungry*” (Ps 146,7).

Contrary to Matthew who asks for bread “*this day*”, Luke prefers to ask for “*our daily bread*” (cf. Lk 9,23; 16,19; 19,47; 22,53; Acts 2,46.74; 3,2; 17,11; 19,9). The shade of difference is undeniable. In Matthew, Jesus teaches that one should pray for the bread of that very day. Whereas in Luke, one should pray not only for the bread of that day but that the daily need of bread be always assured by God.

The difficulty, which is still without solution, is common to both versions.² The preferred sense of the expression depends on the etymological origin of the word. It's more likely to mean “*what is necessary*” for our existence. It corresponds with a current meaning in Jewish prayer, calling on divine providence to satisfy vital needs. (cf. Prov 30,8-9: “*keep me from lying, and let me be neither rich, nor poor. So give me only as much food as I need. If I have more, I might say that I do not need you*”). This motive reappears and is confirmed in what immediately follows (Mt 6,25-34). When one can ask of the Father what is necessary for today, it is not right to be preoccupied neither for the present nor for the future. To act otherwise, would be a sign of little faith (Mt 6,30).

The petition centers on bread, which is the basic food, essential for “*each day*” and therefore as common as it is necessary. The one who prays lives in a social reality where food is scarce, thus doubting whether there would be food for tomorrow (cf. Mt 6,30.34). Such a petition is one that, in order not to deny the need, nourishes today one's dependence on God the Father and the bread which one would receive the next day. While teaching to ask for bread, Jesus educates the disciples to live with frugality without asking of God the gift of self-sufficiency, and still less one of overabundance (cf. Ex 16,4.18-22).

If we keep in mind that Jesus is teaching his disciples that, like himself, they live as permanent itinerants who need provisions to live from day to day (Mt 8,20; 10,9-14.40-42), the petition is very concrete, since the one who prays is to desire the essential to live today, and once again entrust to God the needs of tomorrow. Nourished by God, the one who prays, knows that he/she is loved and cared for by the Father as his son/daughter.

“*12 And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.*”

Having asked for “*the bread that is necessary*” which is the epitome of the goods of nature, what follows is “*pardon*” which is a basic spiritual need. To ask for pardon was characteristic of biblical piety, especially in the psalms and in Jewish piety (Bill I 421). What stands out is the fact that it is the only petition of the *Our Father* subject to being absolute, since far from being purely a petition, it obliges the responsibility that the one who prays must also forgive.

This is in line with the ethical orientation in the preaching of Jesus (cf. Mt 15,25-34; 25,14-30; Lk 7,41-43; 15,11-32; 16,1-7). The demands placed by the Kingdom of God on the one who hopes (waits) are the result of the desire for the coming of the Kingdom. For this reason, news of its coming would bring about conversion. (Mk 1,14). Pronounced by Jesus, the petition of

²There are 40 interpretations of the word, suggested by the Fathers of the Church and by modern exegetists. Not without reason, while it is present in both evangelical versions (Lk 11,3; Mt 6,11), it is so exceptional in Hellenistic or biblical Greek, that Origen suggests that it must have been invented by the evangelists who were the only ones who used it.

pardon is definitely the foretelling of the coming of the Kingdom. Pronounced by his disciples, it is a sign of conversion, guarantee of the efficacious presence of the Kingdom.

Matthew's version preserves better, the original tenor of its source. Luke speaks of sins, while Matthew of debts. "*Sin*" as much as "*debt*" could date back to "*hoba*", the Aramaic noun of the presumed original.³ Hence the comparison that follows uses the verb "*to have debts*" or "*to be in debt*", in both versions (Lk 11,4b; Mt 6,12b). Luke in this second sentence maintains the present. The pardon that the one who prays asks of God, and in turn is granted, for Luke is both a repetitive, habitual and continuous action ("*we are forgiving*") action. For Matthew, it is a more unique and specific action ("*we have just forgiven*").

The petition of forgiveness has been expressed as the fulfilment of a debt (Lk 11,4a: "*sins*"). The word is not precisely religious, for it is related to a commercial relationship between creditor and debtor. The "*debt/sin*" is regarded more as the lack of a response, be it deliberate or the transgression of a norm. There is debt where a previous gift is given. The debt established presumes the existence of an act of grace.

This is the only petition – and it is quite meaningful – in which what one asks of God, depends on the pardon that one has given to his/her neighbor. In the matter of pardon, God does not grant his grace gratuitously, that is, without imposing anything in exchange. No less surprising is the fact that he does not ask that the debt be paid, but that it be forgiven. The object of forgiveness is not to repay a debt, but rather that a personal relationship be restored. It is not simple remission or the payment of a debt, but rather the healing and restoring of a broken relationship.

Precisely because of this, it is not surprising that the pardon asked of God depends on the pardon promised to one's debtor (Mt 6,12b: "*as also*"; Lk 11,4b: "*for we also*"). Thus, one goes further than the content of the petition, for it suggests as a motive for desired forgiveness is the granting of divine forgiveness. Typical of Matthew is that he considers the pardoning of one's personal debt before he asks pardon of God, whereas in Mt 5,23-24, Jesus demands that one asks pardon before an encounter with God. It is not so much that one asks pardon of God in the same way as when we are forgiven, but that one does not ask to be forgiven if he/she were not prepared to forgive. At the same time, we cannot oblige God to forgive us if we ourselves have not forgiven others beforehand. One may only ask God's pardon on condition that one pardons his/her brother/sister.

Matthew, who insists on this eschatological orientation, advises us not to withdraw from forgiving others if we desire to be forgiven on that decisive day of his coming (Mt 18,34-35). Matthew is well aware of the duty of forgiveness characteristic of the Christian community. Whoever has been forgiven should not only forgive others, but remember having been themselves forgiven (Mt 18, 32). However, one does not forgive in order to obtain forgiveness. Besides obtaining God's forgiveness, it is also a matter of being able to receive forgiveness and see to it that it is made efficacious (Mt 18,18-19; 26,28).

Whoever prays like this, shares with others his/her ability to forgive as a source of his/her own prayer for forgiveness⁴, hence the pardon already received justifies the prayer for forgiveness (cf. Mt 18,32-35). One can trust in God's forgiveness, because of having previously forgiven

³ J. JEREMIAS, *The New Testament Theology*, New York, 1971, 6 n15. 196.

⁴ Augustine asserts, *Sermon on the Mount*, II,11,39; PL 34 1287: "For in no other sentence do we pray in such a way that we, as it were, enter into a compact with God."

his/her brother/sister. Whenever the disciple of Jesus prays to be 'freed' from whatever debt one owes others, he/she must also pay the debt owed to God. In order to be freed from having debts with God, it is advisable not to have any of our own debts with others.

Although in Jewish prayer, it is not unusual to find the forgiveness of others related to God's forgiveness (cf. Eccl 28,2-5; Bill I 425), it is somewhat exceptional that God's pardon would depend on human forgiveness.⁵ Here we have an understanding of Christian prayer that goes beyond good sentiments. Whoever seeks God's pardon must have first of all forgiven his/her brother or sister. When we pray we not only dispose ourselves to act correctly, but to do so as a result of having acted rightly.

It may not be too much to observe how, in order to pray as Jesus taught, the Christian community must keep in mind its need to be forgiven and for this reason to admit one's failings in not having been able to correspond with the grace of God received and the responsibility to do so. At the same time, the Christian community must keep in mind their obligation to forgive whoever has offended them or failed to correspond in any way. To need to be forgiven does not exempt us from the duty of forgiving others.

Whoever prays the 'Our Father' is aware that he/she has an ongoing debt towards God and that the debts owing to others had been paid. The community that prays like this forgives those who have been offended and can thus rely on being forgiven by God the Father always and whenever they plead for pardon. However much one forgives others, he/she can rest assured of being forgiven forever.

“¹³and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

The form of the third petition is a double-edged request. The first part in the negative expresses strongly the desire to be freed from evil, while the second part is a positive statement which Matthew added to its source (cf. Lk 11,4c), by way of developing and clarifying the first part.

The best way of avoiding having to be forgiven is to avoid falling into temptation and to be free from evil. The petition has meaning in a community that is aware of being threatened and therefore fears being unfaithful in the future. Such is the sense of the first part, namely *“lead us not”* (cf. Mt 26,41; Lk 22,40). Temptation is thus seen as a situation which, however heavy, could be overcome.

The petition is to be understood according to how one interprets the temptation as either casual and repetitive or a onetime temptation. *“Temptation”*, used here in a generic sense, is not a technical term in Jewish apocalypics, where it refers to the common trials of the day (Bill I 422).⁶ One cannot deny the fact that the prayer, or rather the ministry of Jesus, had a clear eschatological orientation (cf. Mc 13,4). The proclamation of the Kingdom and what one expects from it would not be understood without it (Mk 1,14-15). However, it does not seem that, here one is asking to be free from tribulations that are expected at the end of time (Mt 24,4-9.21-24), since this crisis has not yet arrived. It does not therefore refer to the final test but

⁵ However, we need not take this to mean that the pardon received is a condition when asking for forgiveness. That is, as if God had to forgive the one who has forgiven. Mt 6,12b presents pardon as the means to obtain one's petition and the motive for desiring forgiveness.

⁶ Without knowing it, like ORIGEN, *De Orat.* 29,2, life in itself could be likened to a temptation.

rather to habitual or daily trials. The petition refers to those difficulties that threaten the fidelity of the disciple each day which, given into, would deny God. However, when overcome, would claim God as sovereign (Mt 5,11-12; 26,41; cf. Lk 8,13; Heb 4,15). Such temptations are those which, given their unusual nature, oblige one to claim to be with God as his sons/daughters or against him (cf. Mt 4,1-11).

It is certain that this supplication is supported by the presumption that God tests his followers (cf. Gen 22,1; Ex 15,25; Ps 26,2; 139,23-24; Eccl 2,1-18, 4,17; Sab 3,5-6), and that he not only permits it (cf. Job 1,6-12). It was more than just a common opinion, but a conviction born from experience that the just were tried (James 1,2.12; cf. Bill I 135). However, one would not accept that God would have created the temptation.⁷ In fact the NT refuses to even imagine God to be a tempter (James 1,13; 1Cor 10,13; cf. Eccl. 15,11-20), even though it agrees that God puts his followers, including his Son, to the test (Mt 4,1-11).

It is unquestionable that the one who prays takes for granted the omnipotence of God and therefore, does not question the possibility of being really tempted. One does not attribute the temptation as being of divine origin. Temptation is not of itself something negative and does not necessarily lead to a fall. In fact, this is just what one asks. However, it is a test of one's weakness and this is where the danger lies. It is a risky situation to experience and to overcome it is a possible option. Hence the petition: "lead me not under the power of sin, of guilt, of temptation and of scorn" (bBer 60b; cf. 1QPs 12,11-12).

Whoever prays like this trusts God entirely and would not fear that God might not be faithful (cf. Ex 17,1-7; Dt 6,16), but, knowing one's personal fragility, would rather mistrust one's own fidelity. Hence, the one who prays asks that he/she may not be prey to his/her weakness. Aware of not doubting the reality of the temptation, the petition is that it be removed (cf. Mk 14,36). Given the likelihood of falling into temptation and thus be no longer acknowledged as a son/daughter is always a possibility. Hence, one prays not be led into it. Because our helplessness can make us so insecure, there is no doubt that only God can save us from temptation.

Matthew adds another petition that serves as a commentary of the preceding one.⁸

In the same form and in a positive sense, he lengthens the text of the Lord's Prayer, giving it a hopeful tone. Here the difficulty lies in the Greek expression «*apo tou ponerou*» that permits us to understand the expression as the desired freedom from *evil* or from *the evil one*.⁹ In Jewish

⁷ TERTULLIAN, *On prayer* 8: "And lead us not into temptation, that is, suffer us not to be led, of course by the one who does tempt. For God forbid that the Lord should be supposed to tempt, as though he were either ignorant of each man's faith or desirous of overthrowing it." HILARIO, *PL* 9 510: "Do not lead us into a temptation that you know we cannot overcome".

⁸ ORIGEN, *De Orat.* 30,1, already believed that this was omitted by Luke, because it was already contained in the previous petition.

⁹ Both extremes are possible in Matthew who uses the neutral gender in Mt 4,11, cf. LK 6,22; 5,37 and the masculine in Mt 13,19.38; 5,39. In the early church,, it is (neutral: 1 Tim 4,18; Did 10,5; masculine: *Hom. Clem III* 55,1-2). Since Augustine, the traditional, Latin interpretation has preferred not to personalize evil. (CYPRIAN, *On the Lord's prayer*, 27; AUGUSTINE, *Sermon on the Mount II*,9,35:PL 34 1284-1285) even though there are those who identify evil with Satan (TERTULLIAN, *De Orat* 8:PL 1,1164; BEDA, *In Mt I*, 6:PL 92, 33). The Greek fathers (ORIGEN, *De Orat.* 30:PG 11,545-550; CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, *Catechesis* 23, 18:PG 33 1124; GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Orat. Dom.* 5:PG 44 1192; John CHRYSOSTOM, *Hom.* 19 6:PG 57, 282), those who respected the Reform, chose to use the masculine.

culture contemporary with Jesus, the evil one was not considered the same as Satan, but rather as the devil or the tempter (cf.,3.5.8.11;13,19.39). The fact that in Mt 6,13b *evil* is to be considered as neutral, it is likely that it should be understood that evil makes the temptation more threatening, since it discovers the weakness of the believer with greater force.

To acknowledge one's impotence before God renders this petition for help from God more sincere. The God of Jesus is the one who frees us from all slavery (2,27; 14,30), while helping us not to succumb to our impotence. Jesus claims that by praying the disciple acknowledges his/her weakness and the dire need of God's help. He doesn't teach that we ask to be freed from temptation but warns us how easily we can be overcome by it. The daily experience of the power of evil points to the realism and crudeness of the temptation feared. Thus, so much more desired is the grace to overcome it. Therefore, how timely and sincere is our petition asking God to deliver us from all evil.

MEDITATION

In the Church of the first centuries, it was not the custom to teach catechumens the *Our Father* as the prayer of the Christian par excellence, since these did not as yet claim to be God's sons or daughters. To pray like Jesus is an exercise of being a son/daughter that springs naturally and is generated before God's paternal goodness. At the same time, it is a process of discovering what it means to be sons and daughters of God and members of a praying community who ardently desire to acknowledge God, his Kingdom that is to come and the fulfilment of his will. The community that prays the *Our Father* is, before anything else, a community wherein God's interests come first, before our own needs and our invincible fears. This is no small matter which we urgently need to recover in our life of prayer.

What we most desire from God is bread as our daily basic nourishment. To satisfy hunger is an urgent human, life giving and indispensable need. The duty of a father is to provide bread for his children, since they receive their life from him. Jesus teaches us to expect God to be our father while he provides bread, which is the most simple and indispensable nourishment only bread can give. However, it is not so much bread that we need, but what we desire most is that God manifests himself as a Father who cares to sustain us. The bread we receive each day is a proof of the caring fatherhood of God. Why do we not express our gratitude to God when we eat? How do we discover God's fatherhood while we eat?

We must not forget that the bread that we ask of the Father is not exclusively for the one who asks for it. One always and only desires bread that is "ours". The nourishment that God gives us is not for ourselves alone but that we might share it. As long as there are children of God who go hungry, there is reason for us to pray that God continues being our father. And, still more, should the one who prays not hunger for bread, it does not mean that he/she refrains from desiring bread from the Father for those who are hungry. Not to avail oneself of bread to eat today presupposes that one does not count on a provident Father. However notwithstanding this, no one is to deny nourishment to the brother/sister who daily plead for that bread which is "our bread".

Whether we only have to ask for the bread for "today" or whether we repeat the same "each day", we satisfy our need to nourish our childlike confidence in God even before thinking of our body. If we ask God for bread for the day, this would be a good reason to pray more often. By approaching God the Father, it is in his hands that we can reassure ourselves of our daily nourishment. While permitting us to feel the need and by being prepared to satisfy it, God has

made us depend on him. Whoever is satisfied today and feels hungry once again tomorrow will certainly find his/her Father prepared to provide still more. God has granted us an insatiable hunger for bread and for life in order to express his care as our Father.

If the bread we receive sustains our life, pardon received fills it with peace and joy. Having received bread for the body, Jesus teaches us to think about healing our heart. We have a great need to be forgiven, not only and not above all because we have sinned much, but also because, having received so much from God, we cannot be responsible enough for all that we have received from him. However grateful we may be, we do not manage to appreciate all that we have received and still less are we able to be truly grateful for them. We offend the Giver of these gifts by our lack of appreciation and even rejection of his gifts. We own what we have received in such a way that we act as bad administrators and absolute owners of what does not belong to us when it was entrusted to our care.

What turns out to be a paradox is that it is not enough to desire to be forgiven by the Father to be truly forgiven. It is indispensable that before being forgiven, we have forgiven those who have offended us. Jesus teaches us that forgiving our neighbor is a necessary condition in order to be forgiven by the Father. No one who has not beforehand been reconciled with his offender need expect to be forgiven by God. When we do not forgive the wrongdoing of our brother/sister, we will not be acknowledged by God as his sons/daughters. While teaching us to ask God's pardon, Jesus does not oblige us to forgive whoever has maltreated us. Since God sees what lies in our heart while we pray, we cannot hide our sentiments. The fact that the Father is always prepared to forgive us, and that his pardon is always a gratuitous gift, does not mean that we are exempt from striving to be like him. Moreover, he will only forgive us "in as much as" we ourselves have already forgiven. The pardon we ask of God is according to the measure of our pardon of others. Hence, very often we do not obtain the much-desired forgiveness from the Father of which we are so much in need. Only those who forgive are forgiven.

The forgiveness that we ask of the Father does neither simply consist in forgetting a wrong received nor in repaying a debt, however large that may be. It does not consist in restoring the rights to one's honor or restitution of the good which has been usurped. It implies freely and forever re-establishing the personal relationship that the offence had destroyed. The pardon that God grants, and expects has been already given, heals the root of the heart of the offender and the heart of the one offended. God the Father and the son/daughter who asks forgiveness are no longer the same as before, after having forgiven. They have become kinder because they have performed a greater good. In reality, only God the Father is capable of really forgiving forever, while whoever follows his example is worthy of being his son/daughter (cf. Lk 23,34).

As much for God as also for one's neighbor, the way to prove that one has been forgiven is without doubt not to succumb to temptation and be freed from evil. The third petition emanates from the one who feels weak before trials yet wants to preserve his/her fidelity in spite of being aware of his/her fragility. One can be unsure of his/her strength and therefore asks God not only to preserve him/her from sin, but also to protect them from this danger. One should above all fear the evil that lurks in one's heart and whoever incites it from without, in order that this petition be truly liberating and sincere. Only whoever is capable of betrayal knows the price of fidelity.

It strikes us strongly that Jesus, in a certain sense, attributes to God the Father the responsibility for a possible fall on the part of the one who prays. It is understood that he can lead him where

evil reigns or leave him alone before the evil one. Jesus speaks from personal experience, when he was led by the Spirit into the desert at the beginning of his ministry to be tempted (cf. Mk 1,12; Mt 4,1; Lk 4,1-2). His Father did the same in Gethsemane, where God watched over him in agony while he was hoping to be freed from death (Mk 14,32-42; Mt 26,36-46; Lk 22,39-46). To feel tempted is to be aware of one's weakness and to realize with greater clarity the need for help and accompaniment. However great the danger, so much stronger our need becomes. To desire freedom from temptation is not a characteristic of the sons and daughters of God, who can and must ask that they not be led into nor give in to temptation. However, they cannot escape from it. Whoever desires to be converted as a son/daughter of God must prove their fidelity towards God as Jesus did, cost what it may.

Regarding our good intentions and desires, Jesus taught us not to trust in ourselves. Those who fear that they may not be faithful to God need not fear that God would be less faithful to them. The temptation that assails us, which he permits, is neither a trap nor still less a betrayal. It is an occasion to invite us to be true sons/daughters of God whose faith has been proven through the test. Precisely as God's children, what we need fear most is not God who tries only those who deserve his confidence (cf. Job 1,6-12), but rather our own weakness. Jesus wants us to pray that we be freed from evil and not from temptation. He therefore trusts that we do not cease to pray (cf. Mk 14,38; Mt 26,41; Lk 22,40.46).

Given that, while being tempted, we succumb as victims of our helplessness, we pray to the Father that while the temptation lasts, he does not abandon us in spite of our inconsistencies. Because of being sons and daughters like Jesus, we are prepared to suffer but not be overcome, we are then to persist in constant prayer, for however much we are tempted, greater is our need for God's intervention. Aware of our helplessness, we pray unceasingly, confident that we can place implicit trust in him.

Whoever asks to be freed from evil is aware of God's power. In order to pray as Jesus did, it presupposes that one has experienced being the victim of evil, or at least close to it. The petition would not otherwise be sincere. However great is the feared victory of the evil one, greater the sincerity of the petition. Observing how much evil prevails in our world and not only in our heart should fill us with reasons for persevering in constant prayer. Is this not always so, since rather than turning to prayer, so often we trust in our own strength? Are we so over self-confident that we do not have recourse to prayer with trust? May it not also be that we believe that we are not listened to and defenseless? To ask the Father's protection proves that we are his children.

Last but not least, we need to reaffirm that the petitions contained in the *Our Father* do not include all possible prayer intentions, not even the one where, a short time before praying the "Lord's Prayer", Jesus recommends explicitly, "pray for those who persecute you" (Mt 5,44). The *Our Father* is not the only prayer possible, but the model par excellence in the structure and order of the petitions. While the first part of the *Our Father* focuses on the theological and eschatological aspects, in the second part the interests of the community and the most urgent needs of the one who prays prevail. Before asking God to satisfy one's desires, the one who prays asks God that his salvific mission be realized.

PRAYER

I remain so grateful to you, Lord God, for having taught me how to pray with few words, while maintaining a certain order in doing so. The one who trusts so much in God has very

little to say. However, it had not yet struck me how when I speak to our Father, it is not my urgent needs that I should ask for first, but those of the Father. In the presence of you, Father, I should keep your interests very much at heart, since all the rest is secondary, however important and urgent it may seem. I must admit that not always, and maybe never, has it been like this. However much I lack and need, it is you, God the Father who must be sufficient for me. Forgive, Lord, my poor judgment. Since having you, I can bear my poverty, for you look upon me as your son/daughter. What more could I desire?

Father, Jesus wanted that I should ask of you bread for the body that I may sustain myself daily, that I may refrain from craving for what keeps me alive. Trusting that you provide for my daily bread, I entrust my life into your hands and leave it to you to be a Father to me. I do not know why I am so preoccupied about my well-being, since I am convinced that you watch over me each day as a father does his child. I forget this and it weighs on me. From now on, all that I receive from you to sustain me, I promise to regard as a sign of your fatherly love. I regret having missed so many opportunities to acknowledge you as our Father who, while providing me with food, you acknowledge me as your son/daughter. Jesus, your Son, taught me how to ask you, Father, for my daily bread; I also ask that you grant me the grace to strengthen my belief in being a son/daughter of our heavenly Father.

I had not realized that my hunger and the need to be sustained is a way of desiring your presence in my life. By having allowed me to experience hunger and helplessness, unable to be satisfied with myself and not content with what I have received, you have drawn me closer to yourself. Grant me, Father, to realize this and accept that whatever I am lacking, which is essential for my well-being, it is you for whom I really long. How well would I suffer any hunger, my personal poverty and radical unrest, if these would speak to me of you and lead me to you!

Father, having satisfied my corporal needs, Jesus desires that you placate the most radical need of pardon within my heart, of which I am in greater need than of bread. How much I need your forgiveness, because I have disobeyed you so many times by almost always placing my projects above your will, especially misusing the gifts you have bestowed on me. I feel somewhat abandoned and badly treated, only because I do not acknowledge your presence in your gifts. Lord, I need your pardon and grant me to realize and appreciate how much of you there is in me.

What greatly worries me is not only that I have offended you, but moreover, I have continued to ignore how much you have loved me. It is likely that I do not appreciate how good you are to me, and this hurts me more than the evil that you abhor. My sin confirms and ratifies my weakness that calls for your mercy and pardon. However, my inability to see and take care of the gifts you have granted me creates a distance between us. You have already bestowed on me so much grace, and I now ask that you help me express my gratitude. Only thus will I know that you have forgiven me.

I believe, Father, that since you have been so generous with your gifts, your pardon may be demanding. Your Son, Jesus, has often reminded me to ask you for pardon, but only after having myself pardoned others (cf. Mt 6,14; Mk 11,25). Would that I could be assured that you will pardon me if I have forgiven whoever has offended me! Would that, while begging your pardon, I may know and value from my own experience how much it costs, and therefore appreciate the greatness of your pardon. Why do you expect me to approach you to have my debt pardoned only after I myself have forgiven my debtor? Do you think that I am like you,

“slow in anger and rich in mercy” (Num 14,18; Ps 145,8 ; cf. Ex 34,6-7)? Why then do you demand this from me? Isn't it a high price that you have placed on your pardon? This is probably the reason why I do not feel totally forgiven by you, given that I am unable to forgive as you desire. Grant me whatever you desire of me.

I do not have any right to ask that you lead me not into temptation, because you have already done so several times with your Son (Mk 1,12; Mt 4,1; Lk 4,1-2). You put to the test whoever serves you (Eccl 2,1; 44,20); you test your faithful (Job 5,17; Heb 12,7); “you correct those you love, as a father loves his favorite son” (Prov 3,12). However, I know how well you know my weakness. Father, how can I show you my fidelity, unless you put me to the test? How will I know that you trust me (Job 1,8; 2,3), if you do not put me to the test? I am afraid of being lost by giving in to my frailty. In time of temptation, I will place my trust in you by clinging to your promise, to your word as your Son did (Mk 14,38; Mt 26,41; Lk 22,40.46).

Do not free me from temptation, for that is an occasion for me to prove my love for you, and to feel that I am loved by you. I know that you are proud of me and that you give me the opportunity to show you the sincere desire to be faithful to you in spite of my weaknesses. Do not free me from evil and from the evil one. Not because they put me to the test when they are disguised into what appears to be good, but because they do not come from you, and neither want to belong to you. Free me from all that keeps me apart from you, however good it may be. May I adhere to all that speaks to me of you, leads me to you, and in you, makes me rest. Our Father, you are my only Good. Grant that I may truly be one of your good sons/daughters.