



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** Wednesday, 7 June 2017 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

There was something fascinating about the prayer of Jesus, so fascinating that one day his disciples asked to be taught it. This event can be found in the Gospel of Luke, who among the Evangelists, was the one who best documented the mystery of Christ 'praying': the Lord prayed. Jesus' disciples are struck by the fact that, particularly in the mornings and in the evenings, he retired in solitude and "immersed" himself in prayer: And because of this, one day, they asked him to teach them how to pray too (cf. Lk 11:1).

It is then that Jesus transmits what has become the Christian prayer *par excellence*: the *Our Father*. To tell the truth, Luke, with respect to Matthew, gives Jesus' prayer back to us in a slightly abbreviated form that begins with the simple invocation: "*Father*" (v. 2).

The entire mystery of Christian prayer is summed up here, in these words: to have the courage to call God by the name 'Father'. The Liturgy also confirms this when, inviting us to recite the Lord's Prayer as a community, it uses the expression "let us dare to say".

In fact, calling God by the name 'Father' is by no means something to be taken for granted. We would be inclined to use much loftier titles, which to us seem more respectful of his transcendence. Instead, invoking him as 'Father' puts us on a familiar plane with him, as a child turns to his father, knowing that he is loved and looked after by him. This is the great revolution that Christianity impresses on the religious psychology of mankind. The mystery of God, which always fascinates us and makes us feel small, does not however, scare us; it does not crush us, it does not distress us. This is a difficult revolution to welcome in our human soul, so much so that even the accounts of the Resurrection say that, after seeing the empty tomb and the angel, the women "fled ... for trembling and astonishment had come upon them" (Mk 16:8). But Jesus tells us that God is a good Father and he tells us: "Do not be afraid!".

Let us think about the parable of the merciful father (cf. Lk 15:11-32). Jesus tells us about a father

who can be only love for his sons. A father who does not punish his son for his arrogance and who is even capable of entrusting him with his half of the inheritance and allowing him to leave home. God is Father, Jesus says, but not in the human way because there is no father in this world who would behave as the protagonist of this parable. God is Father in his own way: kind, defenceless before man's freedom of choice, able only to conjugate the verb 'to love'. When the rebellious son, after squandering everything, finally returns to the home of his birth, the father does not impose criteria of human justice, but rather he first feels the need to forgive, and with his embrace he conveys to his son that in all that long period of absence, he had missed him, his fatherly love had painfully missed him.

What an unfathomable mystery is a God who nurtures this type of love towards his children!

It is perhaps for this reason that, in evoking the core of the Christian mystery, the Apostle Paul does not feel up to translating into Greek an Aramaic word which Jesus pronounced as "*Abba*". Twice in his Epistles Saint Paul uses this term, and he does not translate it either time, leaving it as it came from Jesus' lips: "*Abba*", a term which is even more intimate than "father", and which some translate as "Dad, Papa".

Dear brothers and sisters, we are never alone. We can be far away, hostile; we can even profess that we are "without God". The Gospel of Jesus Christ however, reveals to us that God cannot be without us: He will never be a God "without man". It is he who cannot be without us, and this is the great mystery! God cannot be God without man: this is a great mystery! And this certainty is the *source of our hope*, which we find safeguarded in our every invocation of the *Our Father*. When we need help, Jesus does not tell us to resign ourselves and close ourselves off, but rather to turn to the Father and ask him with confidence. All our needs, from the most evident, daily ones such as food, health, work, to those of forgiveness and support against temptations, are not the reflection of our solitude. There is, instead, a Father who always looks at us with love and who certainly does not abandon us.

And now I have a proposal for you: each one of us has many problems and many needs. Let us reflect a bit, in silence, about these problems and these needs. Let us also think about the Father, our Father who cannot be without us, and who, at this moment, is looking at us. And all together let us pray with confidence and with hope: "Our Father, who art in Heaven...". Thank you!

Special greetings:

Tomorrow, at 1 pm, in various countries the "One Minute for Peace" initiative is taking place; it is a brief moment of prayer on the anniversary of my meeting in the Vatican with President Peres of Israel, and President Abbas of Palestine. In our time there is great need for prayer — Christians, Jews and Muslims — for peace.

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, particularly the groups from England, Scotland, Germany, The Netherlands, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Singapore, Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the Philippines, Canada and the United States of America. Upon all of you and upon your families I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I address a warm welcome to the Italian-speaking pilgrims. I encourage everyone to live intensely the encounter with the Successor of Peter, in order to grow in faith in the merciful God, the Father.

I offer a special thought to *young people*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. The month of June, which has just begun, reminds us of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus: dear *young people* may you grow in your commitment towards your neighbour at the school of that Divine Heart; dear *sick people*, in your suffering, unite your heart to that of the Son of God; and you, dear *newlyweds*, look to the Heart of Jesus to learn about unconditional love.