



God's Plan

*D. Park, Jesuit Scholastic at Ciszek Hall,
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Growing up, I remember visiting Blockbuster with my parents after dinner. As my parents picked out a movie for themselves, my sister and I were allowed to pick out a movie for ourselves. I always loved reading the little summary of a movie on the back of its cover. It would start with lines like, "In a little town in Italy..." or "When little Simba went to the savannah with his friends..." Reading them would get me excited and I would imagine what might happen next.

To me, reading Ephesians 1:3-14 is just like that. But on closer reading, I realize that it is not just a story. It is a response to another story that was already told. God first loved us. Called us to live with Him. God teaches us, through His son, that we are his children. Saint Paul, who wrote this letter to the Christians in Ephesus, is writing like a person who has just received a long love letter. There is much excitement, as he realizes how beloved he is. When we know we are loved, our hearts move to respond also with love.

Perhaps this is why my heart leaps with excitement when I read this letter from Saint Paul. God is always present, God made us, and God loves us! God knows our names. God greatly cares for us in our times of loneliness, sadness, or happiness. God gives us a purpose in life and invites us to come live with Him today and forever. Does your heart also leap with joy when you read the beginning of this letter? "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ..."

Chosen before the Foundation of the World

Ephesians 1: 3-14

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love.

He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us.

With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.

In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Questions for Reflection

- 1 What word, phrase or image caught my attention?
- 2 What feelings and thoughts do I have after reading the text?
- 3 Do I have hope that God can transform my brokenness and weaknesses?
- 4 Can I believe that God only looks at me with love?
- 5 What are the moments in my life when I feel the blessing of God touching me?

Daily Ignatian Examen

We invite you to prayerfully reflect:

Presence

Become aware that God's presence is active at each moment of your life, looking at you with love, desirous of speaking directly to your heart. How do you feel at this moment?

Ask

Ask God for the grace to see the ways God is working in your life.

Gratitude

Be grateful. Thank God for the gifts, both big and small of the day. What are you most grateful for today?

Review

Trust that God is with you at each moment of day, during the good and challenging moments. God never abandons you. What were the good moments of today?

What were the greatest challenges of today?

Respond

You are not stuck. Tomorrow is a new day. Ask God to give you the grace to be the loving and generous person you were created to be. What can you do tomorrow to be more generous and loving?

Conclude with the Sign of the Cross.

The Spirit of Children of God

Romans 8:14-28

All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

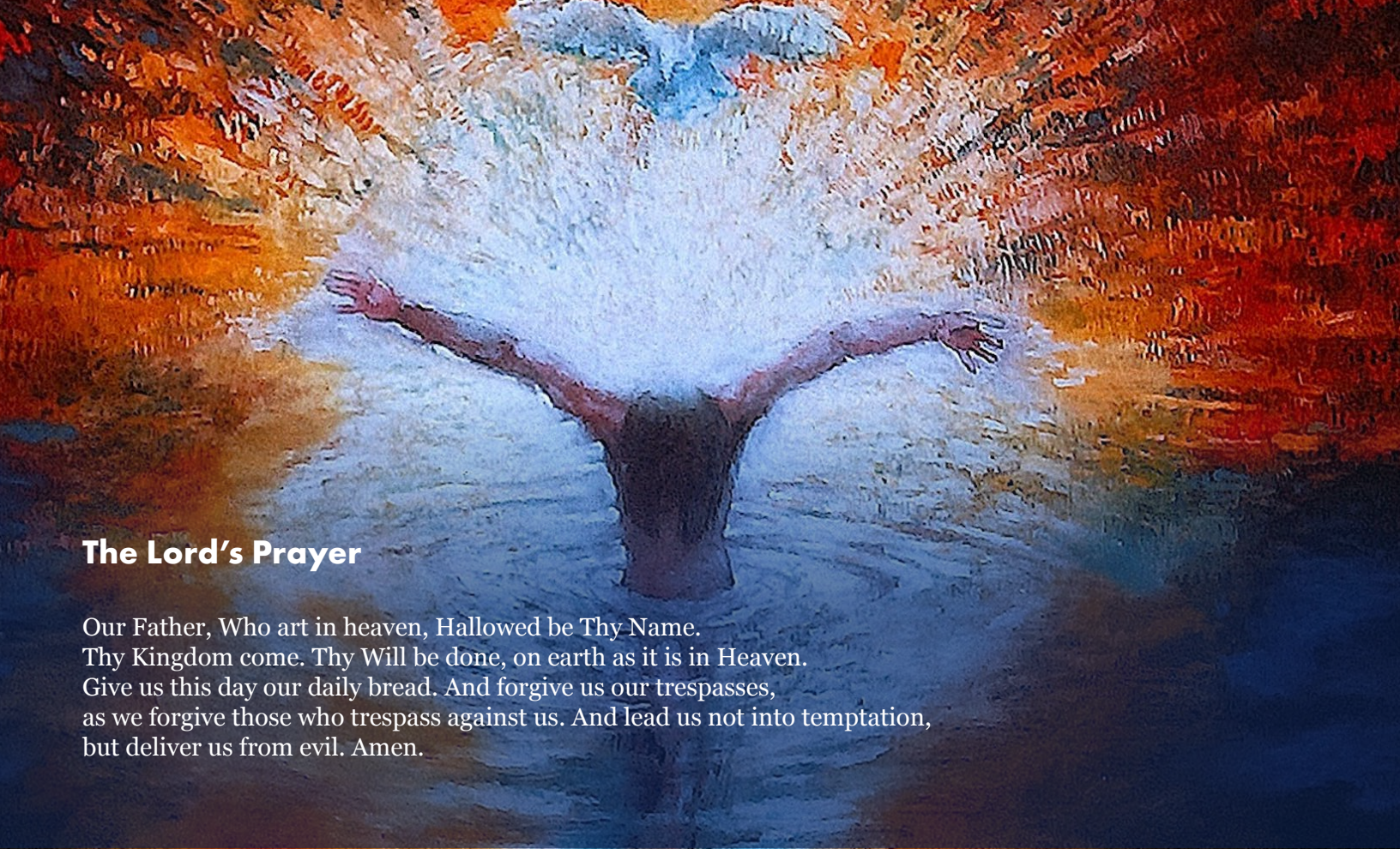
I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, called according to his purpose.

Questions for Reflection

- 1 You are a free person, a free child of God. When you are afraid, do you rely on this truth?
- 2 How do you feel after learning that the Holy Spirit prays on your behalf when you feel too "dry" or tired to pray?
- 3 In life, not everything goes as we plan it. How do you feel after realizing that "all things work together for good for those who love God"?
- 4 "For in hope we were saved"! What is your biggest hope?



The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, Who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Our Father Who Art in Heaven

L. Lapean, Jesuit Scholastic at Ciszek Hall, Fordham University

As we begin our exploration of the Our Father, we keep in mind the story of how Jesus taught the prayer which we heard last month. We can picture Jesus turning to the disciples and saying, "Our Father who art in heaven." Simple words, but full of meaning.

As we pray it might be helpful for us to understand that when we say "art" we are not talking about God drawing or painting in heaven. It is a way of saying "is" - we might imagine Jesus saying, "Our Father who is in heaven."

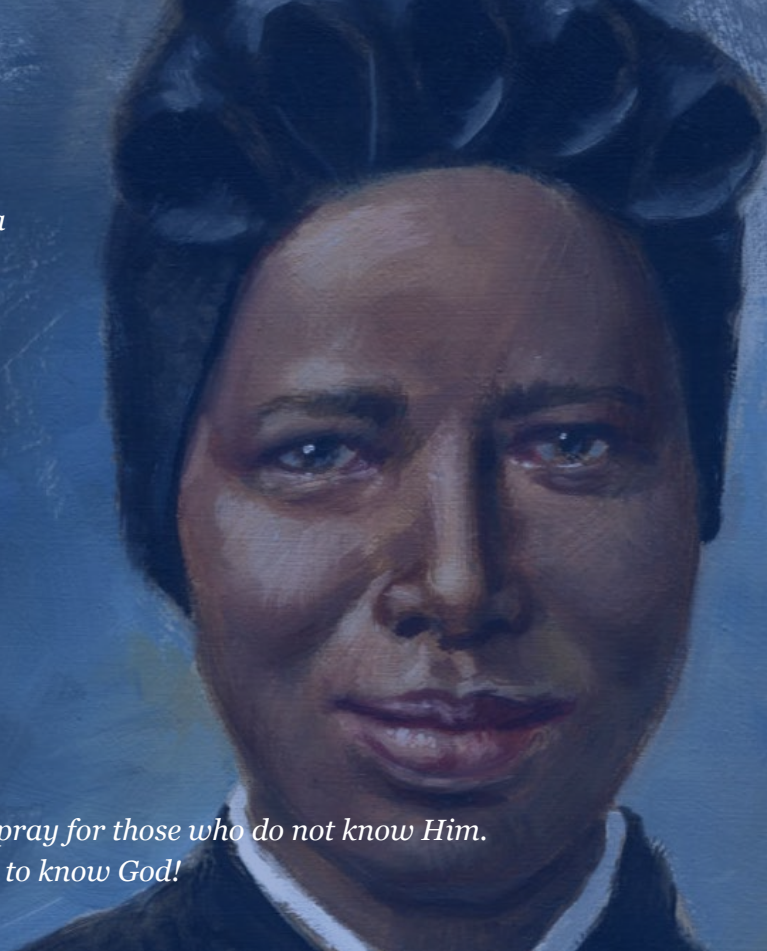
How wonderful it is that Jesus teaches us to call God our parent! Even if our relationships with our earthly parents are difficult, we have a relationship with our heavenly parent that is deeper and more love-filled than we can imagine. Knowing this allows us to enter into prayer confident that we are loved completely by our heavenly parent, and we can speak as we would with someone we trust completely.

No matter what we think that we have done wrong, God loves us more than even an earthly parent loves their child. Jesus taught us to call God OUR Father, showing us that every person is a child of God and deserves to be treated with respect. When we recognize God as being present in every person, we treat each individual person with the love and reverence that we show God.

When we pray, it can seem like we are standing before someone who passes judgment on us based on how we pray. Instead, when we pray the Our Father, what we are saying is that we know that we are speaking with a God who loves us totally, tenderly, and cares for our whole being, even the parts that we might be ashamed of.

Your Holy Friend of the Month

Saint Josephine Bakhita



*Be good, love the Lord, pray for those who do not know Him.
What a great grace it is to know God!*

Josephine Bakhita was born in Sudan around 1869. This African flower, who knew the anguish of kidnapping and slavery, bloomed marvelously in response to God's grace. The Lord guided her through innumerable and unspeakable sufferings to human freedom and to the freedom of faith.

Bakhita was kidnapped at the age of seven. Sold and resold in the markets of El Obeid and Khartoum, she experienced the humiliations and sufferings of slavery, both physical and moral. Later, Bakhita was bought by an Italian Consul. For the first time since the day she was kidnapped, she was treated with dignity and cordiality, instead of being lashed and humiliated.

On arrival in Genoa, Italy, Bakhita became a babysitter for another Italian family. Along with the family's daughter, Bakhita was entrusted to the Canossian Sisters in Venice. It was there that Bakhita came to know about God whom "she had experienced in her heart without knowing who He was" ever since she was a child. After several months in the catechumenate, Bakhita was baptized with the name of Josephine, on January 9, 1890.

Bakhita experienced the call to be a religious, and to give herself to the Lord. In 1896, Josephine Bakhita was consecrated forever to God. For another 50 years, this true witness of the love of God, lived in the community in Schio, engaged in various services. Her humility, simplicity and constant smile won the hearts of the people. Her sisters in the community esteemed her for her inalterable sweet nature, exquisite goodness, and deep desire to make the Lord known.

As she grew older, she experienced long, painful years of sickness. Mother Bakhita continued to witness to faith, goodness, and Christian hope. She breathed her last on Feb. 8, 1947 at the Canossian Convent, Schio.

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