



God Cares For Me Intimately

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How many times a day do we say that we know someone? If your days are anything like mine, the answer is: too many times to count! When we say that we know someone we might just mean that we can match a name with a face or maybe it is someone who we spend a lot of time with - we know what they like, what their hopes are, and we are able to share some of their story.

When we read this psalm, we read about how God knows us. No matter where we are, God will be there with us. God will not be with us because we have done something wrong and God follows us to punish us. God will be with us because God knows us and loves us more deeply than we can know and love ourselves. No matter what we have done, or what we think we have done, to drive God away, God still loves and cares for each of us. We cannot do anything to make God love us any more or love us any less.

God loves us so much and knows every aspect of our being - everything that we have ever thought and everything that we have ever done. And God still loves each of us unconditionally!! How awesome is that?

Maybe, as we start this new year, we might resolve to try to see ourselves the way that God sees us: as a human being worthy of love.

The Lord is Always Near Me

Psalm 139

You have looked deep into my heart, Lord, and you know all about me. You know when I am resting or when I am working, and from heaven you discover my thoughts.

You notice everything I do and everywhere I go. Before I even speak a word, you know what I will say, and with your powerful arm you protect me from every side. I can't understand all of this! Such wonderful knowledge is far above me.

Where could I go to escape from your Spirit or from your sight? If I were to climb up to the highest heavens, you would be there. If I were to dig down to the world of the dead, you would also be there.

Suppose I had wings like the dawning day and flew across the ocean. Even then your powerful arm would guide and protect me. Or suppose I said, "I'll hide in the dark until night comes to cover me over." But you see in the dark because daylight and dark are all the same to you.

You are the one who put me together inside my mother's body, and I praise you because of the wonderful way you created me. Everything you do is marvelous! Of this I have no doubt.

Nothing about me is hidden from you! I was secretly woven together out of human sight, but with your own eyes you saw my body being formed. Even before I was born, you had written in your book everything about me.

Questions for Reflection

- 1 What word, phrase or image caught your attention?
- 2 What feelings and thoughts do you have after reading the text?
- 3 Have you ever imagined God carefully putting all the little pieces together to create you?

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.

I Will Hear You

Jeremiah 29 11-13

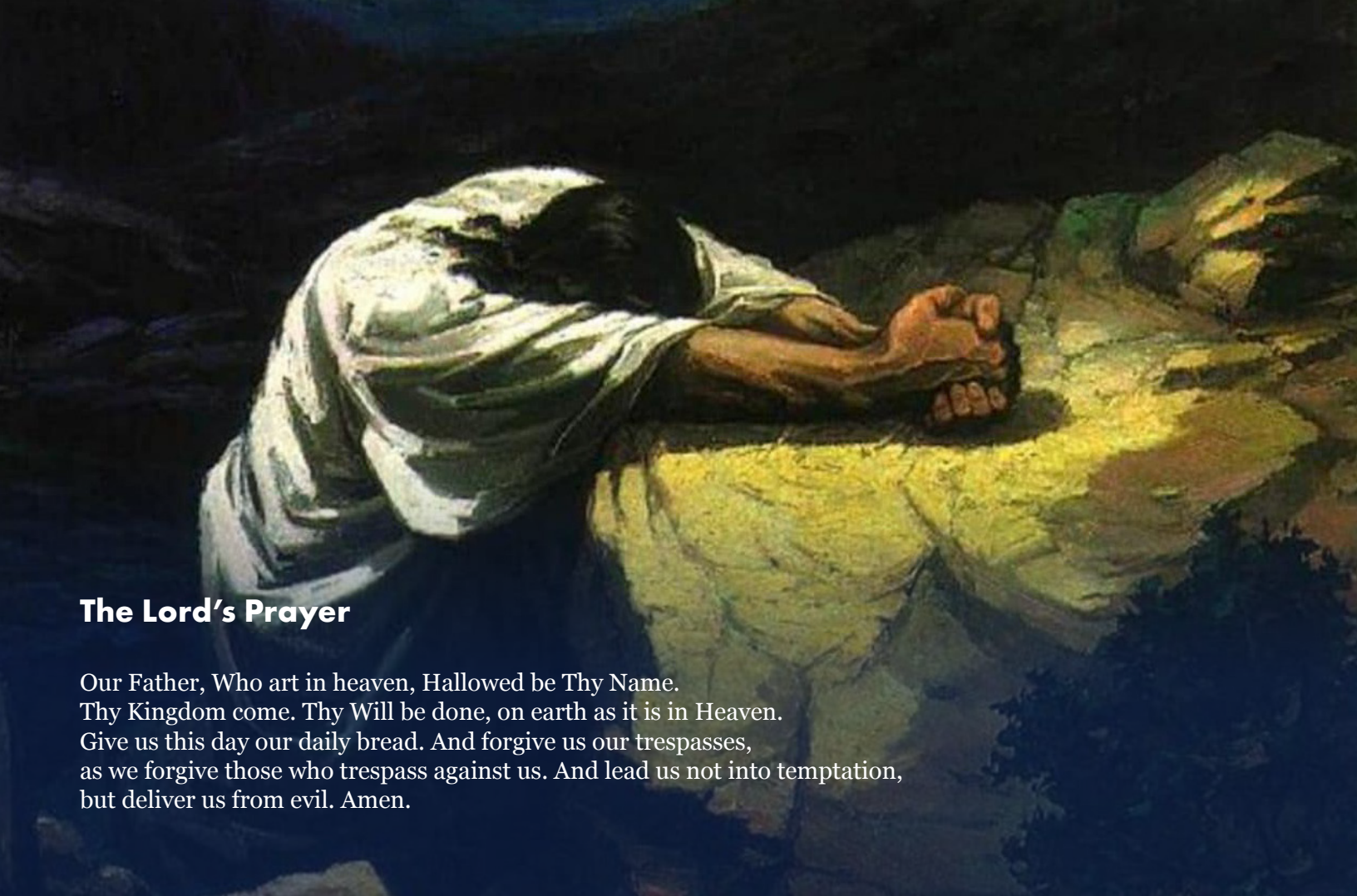
For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for peace and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you.

You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

Questions for Reflection

- 1 Have you ever thought that God has a plan for you?
- 2 What do you think that plan looks like?
- 3 Does His plan and yours always look the same?
- 4 How do you feel about God's promise that you will always find Him when you seek Him?
- 5 God always hears you... What do you do if you feel that He isn't listening?



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.

Jesus, Teach Me to Pray

P. Jimenez, Thrive For Life Spiritual Mentor

Before we take a closer look at the meaning of the Our Father in our monthly newsletters, I want to take a step back and remember the story of how Jesus taught this prayer to His disciples. The gospel of Luke says, "One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.'" I imagine that seeing Jesus praying must have been moving and impressive. That day, the disciples realized the beauty and power of Jesus' prayer; at the same time, with immense humility, they saw their need for guidance. Luckily, they had the best teacher anyone can imagine.

Like them, you and I can also ask Jesus to teach us to pray. When I pray, I often get distracted and start thinking about work, the groceries that I need to buy, the weather, the homework I haven't done, and much more. Does it happen to you too?

When I realize that I'm distracted, I say, "Jesus, teach me to pray." In other words, "Jesus, give me grace to know that I am in your presence, that you see me and listen to me attentively, that you love me and invite me to love you back." Prayer, after all, is our conversation with God, that is only possible when we firmly believe that God is present and alive and in love with us.

This doesn't mean that we shouldn't talk to God about our daily life. The Lord is interested in the most insignificant of our activities! But you and I know the difference between getting distracted and talking with God. In prayer, we talk with God about our life. We share it with him, and we listen to his response. So don't feel bad if you are distracted when you pray. When you get distracted, repeat with me, "Jesus, teach me to pray."

A close-up portrait of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, a young woman with dark hair, looking directly at the viewer with a serene expression. She is wearing a dark, high-collared dress.

Your Holy Friend of the Month

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton

Elizabeth Ann Bayley was born in New York City on August 28, 1774 to a prominent Episcopal family, and lost her mother at the age of three. In 1794, at the age of 19, Elizabeth married William Magee Seton, a wealthy businessman with whom she had five children. William died of tuberculosis in 1803, leaving Elizabeth a young widow. After discovering Catholicism in Italy, where her husband had died, Elizabeth returned to the United States and entered the Catholic Church in 1805 in New York.

After a number of difficult years, Elizabeth moved in 1809 to Emmitsburg, Maryland, where she founded the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph's, the first community for religious women established in the United States. She also began St. Joseph's Academy and Free School, planting the seeds of Catholic education in the United States. Her legacy now includes religious congregations in the United States and Canada, whose members work on the unmet needs of people living in poverty in North America and beyond.

Mother Seton, as she is often called, was canonized on September 14, 1975 in St. Peter's Square by Pope St. Paul VI. She was the first citizen born in the United States to be given the title of "Saint." St. Elizabeth Ann Seton is an example of the resilience that comes from a strong faith, which translated into her work for justice and equality. Her encounter with Jesus led Mother Seton to seek Him in the poor and to affirm the common dignity of men and women.

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