

7 September 2026 -- Wednesday of the 27th week « A »

[Gal 2:1-2. 7-14; Luke 11. 1-4.](#)

Homily

John the Baptist, like the other spiritual teachers of his time, including the Pharisees and Sadducees and the doctors of the Law, taught his disciples methods, gestures and formulas for prayer. So, one day, Jesus' disciples, many of whom had been disciples of John, asked him to teach them to pray "as John taught his disciples". They were no doubt intrigued by the fact that they often saw Jesus withdraw, especially at night, to pray in secret, but that he taught them neither method nor formula. Jesus' response, summed up in what we call the "Our Father", is not a "prayer formula" that he invites them to repeat, but a very rich teaching on what prayer is. (It is generally accepted by exegetes that this version of the Our Father in Luke, which is shorter than the one in Matthew, is the most original).

The first teaching is found in the word 'father', and implies that we must adopt a filial attitude towards God, full of affection, trust and, in a way, 'complicity'. This attitude is expressed first in the desire that the name 'Father', given to God, be revered everywhere and that his reign of peace, justice and love be established everywhere, here on earth. Then comes the request for daily bread, which is a way of acknowledging that everything we have is a gift from God, followed by the request for forgiveness of sins, and the request not to be subject to temptation.

That, in a few very brief sentences, is the description of the attitude of the praying person. Jesus did not give an easy answer to his disciples' question. In fact, he did not answer the question directly. He does not say: 'Prayer is this or that. He does not say, 'Prayer consists in reciting this or that formula.' Rather, he says, 'When you pray, say...' That is, when you are in a state of prayer, or when there is a prayer in your heart and you want to express it in words, you can, for example, use the following words, 'Our Father, hallowed be thy name, etc.'

If Jesus does not answer the question directly, the reason is probably that what is most important to Him is not that we learn to pray but rather that we learn to transform our whole life into prayer. When we pray, that is, when we are in a state of prayer, we can use the words he teaches us. If we are not in a state of prayer, the words, even if they are taught to us by Jesus, will be empty.

When we speak of 'saying our prayers' or 'doing our prayers', we already have a commodified vision of prayer. Prayer is not something that human beings use; it is first and foremost an attitude or a state of communion.

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