

“After this manner, therefore, pray ye,” saith He:
“Our Father, which art in the Heavens.”

SEE HOW He straightway stirred up the hearer, and reminded him of all God’s bounty in the beginning. For he who calls God Father, by him both remission of sins, and taking away of punishment, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, and adoption, and inheritance, and brotherhood with the Only-Begotten, and the supply of the Spirit, are acknowledged in this single title. For one cannot call God Father, without having attained to all those blessings. Doubly, therefore, doth He awaken their spirit, both by the dignity of Him who is called on, and by the greatness of the benefits which they have enjoyed. But when He saith, “in Heaven,” He speaks not this as shutting up God there, but as withdrawing him who is praying from earth, and fixing him in the high places, and in the dwellings above.

He teaches, moreover, to make our prayer common, in behalf of our brethren also. For He saith not, “my Father, which art in Heaven,” but, “our Father,” offering up his supplications for the body in common, and nowhere looking to his own, but everywhere to his neighbor’s good. And by this He at once takes away hatred, and quells pride, and casts out envy, and brings in the mother of all good things, even charity, and exterminates the inequality of human things, and shows how far the equality reaches between the king and the poor man, if at least in those things which are greatest and most indispensable, we are all of us fellows.

For what harm comes of our kindred below, when in that which is on high we are all of us knit together, and no one hath aught more than another; neither the rich more than the poor, nor the master than the servant, neither the ruler than the subject, nor the king than the common soldier, nor the philosopher than the barbarian, nor the skillful than the unlearned? For to all hath He given one nobility, having vouchsafed to be called the Father of all alike.

St John Chrysostom,
Homily XIX on the Gospel of Saint Matthew, p. 134
Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Volume X

Pearls from the Holy Fathers

February 13–19, 2012



He who wishes to be a friend of God, and a brother and son of Christ, must do something more than other men, that is, to consecrate heart and mind themselves, and to stretch up his thoughts towards God. In this way God secretly gives life and help to the heart, and entrusts Himself to it. When a man gives God his secret things, that is, his mind and thoughts, not occupying himself elsewhere, nor wandering away, but putting constraint upon himself, then the Lord deems him worthy of mysteries, in greater sanctity and purity, and gives him heavenly food and spiritual drink.

Saint Macarius the Great, *Fifty Spiritual Homilies*,
Homily XIII.1, p. 99

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Hallowed be Thy Name.

WORTHY OF HIM who calls God Father, is the prayer to ask nothing before the glory of His Father, but to account all things secondary to the work of praising Him. For “hallowed” is *glorified*. For His own glory He hath complete, and ever continuing the same, but He commands him who prays to seek that He may be glorified also by our life.

Which very thing He had said before likewise, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Yea, and the Seraphim too, giving glory, said on this wise, “Holy, holy, holy.” So that “hallowed” means this, *viz.* “glorified.” That is, “vouchsafe,” saith he, “that we may live so purely, that through us, all may glorify Thee.” Which thing again appertains unto perfect self-control, to present to all a life so irreprehensible, that every one of the beholders may offer to the Lord the praise due to Him for this.

St John Chrysostom,
Homily XIX on the Gospel of Saint Matthew, p. 134.
Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Volume X

WHEN THE Lord sees any one bravely turning his back on the pleasures and distractions of life, and material cares, and earthly ties, and the roving of vain thoughts, He gives the help of His own grace, and maintains that soul unfallen, and it passes nobly through the *present evil world*; and so the soul wins heavenly praises from God and the angels because it has preserved well the garment of its body and itself also, turning away, as far as lay in its power, from all the lusts of the world, and with His help has run nobly the race of this world’s course.

Saint Macarius the Great, *Fifty Spiritual Homilies*,
Homily IV.4, p. 22

AN OLD MAN used to say, “Satan is a twister of cords, and as long as thou givest him threads he will plait them”; now he spake this concerning the thoughts.

Paradise of the Holy Fathers,
Volume II, # 102, p. 176

Pearls from the Holy Fathers

Week of February 20–26, 2012



Thy kingdom come.

AND THIS AGAIN is the language of a right-minded child, not to be riveted to things that are seen, neither to account things present some great matter; but to hasten unto our Father, and to long for the things to come. And this springs out of a good conscience, and a soul set free from things that are on earth. This, for instance, Paul himself was longing after every day: wherefore he also said, that “even we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan, waiting for an adoption, the redemption of our body.” For he who hath this fondness, can neither be puffed up by the good things of this life, nor abashed by its sorrows; but as though dwelling in the very heavens, is freed from each sort of irregularity.

St John Chrysostom,
Homily XIX on the Gospel of Saint Matthew, p. 134.
Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Volume X

NOW WE KNOW that the whole creation of God is governed by God. He it was that made heaven and earth, animals, creeping things, beasts. We see them all, but do not know the number of them. What man is there that knows? God only, who is in all things, even in the unborn offspring of the animals. Does He not know the things that are under the earth, and that are above the heavens? Let us then leave these things, and rather seek, like good men of business, to gain possession of a heavenly inheritance and the things that are profitable to our souls. Let us learn to gain possessions which will stay by us. If you, who are but human, begin to search the thoughts of God, to say, “I have found out something, and comprehend it,” the human mind will be found surpassing the thoughts of God. But in this you are much mistaken; and the more you desire to search and get to the bottom, the more you get out of your depth, and fail to comprehend anything. Those visitations of His which happen to you – what He works day by day in you, and how – these are beyond expression or comprehension; you can do nothing but receive them with thankfulness, and believe. Have you been able to take cognisance of your own soul from the time when you were born till now? If so, declare to me the thoughts that spring up in you from dawn to dusk. Tell me the cogitations of three days. Nay, you cannot. If then you could not comprehend the thoughts of your own soul, how can you find out the thoughts and mind of God?

Saint Macarius the Great, *Fifty Spiritual Homilies*,
Homily XII.10–11, pp. 93–4

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Pearls from the Holy Fathers

February 27–March 4, 2012



Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.

BEHOLD a most excellent train of thought! in that He bade us indeed long for the things to come, and hasten towards that sojourn; and, till that may be, even while we abide here, so long to be earnest in showing forth the same conversation as those above. For ye must long, saith He, for heaven, and the things in heaven; however, even before heaven, He hath bidden us make the earth a heaven and do and say all things, even while we are continuing in it, as having our conversation there; insomuch that these too should be objects of our prayer to the Lord. For there is nothing to hinder our reaching the perfection of the powers above, because we inhabit the earth; but it is possible even while abiding here, to do all, as though already placed on high.

What He saith therefore is this: “As there all things are done without hindrance, and the angels are not partly obedient and partly disobedient, but in all things yield and obey (for He saith, ‘Mighty in strength, performing His word’); so vouchsafe that we men may not do Thy will by halves, but perform all things as Thou willest.” Seest thou how He hath taught us also to be modest, by making it clear that virtue is not of our endeavors only, but also of the grace from above?

And again, He hath enjoined each one of us who pray, to take upon himself the care of the whole world. For He did not at all say, “Thy will be done” in me, or in us, but everywhere on the earth; so that error may be destroyed, and truth implanted, and all wickedness cast out, and virtue return, and no difference in this respect be henceforth between heaven and earth. “For if this come to pass,” saith He, “there will be no difference between things below and above, separated as they are in nature; the earth exhibiting to us another set of angels.”

St John Chrysostom,
Homily XIX on the Gospel of Saint Matthew, pp. 134–5.
Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Volume X



Pearls from the Holy Fathers

Week of March 12–18, 2012



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CHRISTIANS who have truly tasted of grace, and have the sign of the Cross upon their mind and heart, these, from the king to the beggar, consider all things but dung and ill savour; and these are able to know that the whole world of earth, and the treasures of the emperor, and his riches, and his glory, and discourses of wisdom are but a vain show, having no solid basis, but passing away; and whatever there is under the heaven, to them is easily despised.

Why so? Because the things above the heavens are so strange and wonderful, which are not to be found in kings’ treasures, nor in wisdom of words, nor in worldly glory, and dignities, and wealth – such wealth they possess, who have the Lord and Creator of all things in their inmost man, a possession which does not pass away, but abides. Christians know the soul to be precious beyond all created things; for man alone was made after the image and likeness of God. Behold the heaven, how vast it is, and the earth; and the creatures in them are valuable, and their bodies are great; but man is valuable above all those bodies, inasmuch as the Lord was well pleased in him alone. The whales of the sea also, and the mountains, and the beasts, in outward appearance are greater than man. Behold then thy dignity, and of how great value thou art, that God hath made thee above angels, because for thy help and deliverance He came upon the earth Himself in person.

Saint Macarius the Great, *Fifty Spiritual Homilies*,
Homily XV.42–43, pp. 127–8

Give us this day our daily bread.

WHAT IS “daily bread”? That for one day. For because He had said thus, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” but was discoursing to men encompassed with flesh, and subject to the necessities of nature, and incapable of the same impassibility as the angels: — while He enjoins the commands to be practised by us also, even as they [the angels] perform them, He condescends likewise, in what follows, to the infirmity of our nature. Thus, “perfection of conduct,” saith He, “I require as great, not however freedom from passions; no, for the tyranny of nature permits it not: for it requires necessary food.”

But mark, I pray thee, how even in things that are bodily, that which is spiritual abounds. For it is neither for riches, nor for delicate living, nor for costly raiment, nor for any other such thing, but for bread only, that He hath commanded us to make our prayer. And for “daily bread,” so as not to “take thought for the morrow.” Because of this He added, “daily bread,” that is, bread for one day.

And not even with this expression is He satisfied, but adds another too afterwards, saying, “Give us this day;” so that we may not, beyond this, wear ourselves out with the care of the following day. For that day, the intervals before which thou knowest not whether thou shalt see, wherefore dost thou submit to its cares? This, as He proceeded, He enjoined also more fully, saying, “Take no thought for the morrow.” He would have us be on every hand unencumbered and winged for flight, yielding just so much to nature as the compulsion of necessity requires of us.

St John Chrysostom,
Homily XIX on the Gospel of Saint Matthew, p. 135.
Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Volume X

SUPPOSE A KING were to find a poor man who had leprosy all over his body, and were not ashamed of him, but applied remedies to his wounds, and healed his sores, and then took him to the royal table, and arrayed him in purple, and made him a king; that is what God did to the race of men. He washed their wounds, and healed them, and brought them into the heavenly bridechamber. Great then is the dignity of Christians, so great that there is nothing to compare with it. But if the Christian becomes high-minded and allows evil to steal over him, he is like a city without a wall, and the robbers come into it from any quarter they please, with nothing to hinder them, and lay it waste and set it on fire. Thus, whilst thou art taking things easy, and paying no heed to thyself, the spirits of wickedness come in upon thee, and destroy and lay waste thy mind, dissipating thy thoughts upon this present world.

Saint Macarius the Great, *Fifty Spiritual Homilies*,
Homily XV.47, pp. 129–30

Pearls from the Holy Fathers

March 19–25, 2012



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Having Christ in your heart, fear that you may lose Him, and with Him the peace of your heart; it is hard to begin again; efforts to attach oneself afresh to Him after falling away will be very grievous, and will cost bitter tears to many. Cling to Christ with all your might, gain Him, and do not lose boldness in approaching Him.

Saint John of Kronstadt,
My Life in Christ, p. 9



Then forasmuch as it comes to pass that we sin even after the washing of regeneration [i.e., Baptism], He, showing His love to man to be great even in this case, commands us, for the remission of our sins, to come unto God who loves man, and thus to say,

Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.

Seest thou surpassing mercy? After taking away so great evils, and after the unspeakable greatness of His gift, if men sin again, He counts them such as may be forgiven. For that this prayer belongs to believers, is taught us both by the laws of the church, and by the beginning of the prayer. For the uninitiated [i.e., unbaptized] could not call God Father. If then the prayer belongs to believers, and they pray, entreating that sins may be forgiven them, it is clear that not even after the laver [of baptism] is the profit of repentance taken away. Since, had He not meant to signify this, He would not have made a law that we should so pray.

Now He who both brings sins to remembrance, and bids us ask forgiveness, and teaches how we may obtain remission and so makes the way easy – it is perfectly clear that He introduced this rule of supplication, as knowing, and signifying, that it is possible even after the font to wash ourselves from our offenses; by reminding us of our sins, He persuades us to be modest; by the command to forgive others, He sets us free from all revengeful passion; while by promising in return for this to pardon us also, He holds out good hopes, and instructs us to have high views concerning the unspeakable mercy of God toward man.

St John Chrysostom,
Homily XIX on the Gospel of Saint Matthew, pp. 135–6
Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Volume X

Pearls from the Holy Fathers

Week of March 26 – April 1, 2012



A CERTAIN BROTHER was estranged from a fellow monk, and he came to Abba Sisoës the Theban, and said unto him, “I am estranged from a fellow monk, and I wish to take vengeance for myself”; and the old man said, “Let us pray.” And whilst he was praying, he said in his prayer, “O God, henceforward we have no need of Thee to take care of us, for we will take vengeance for ourselves”; and when the brother heard these words he fell down at the feet of the old man straightway, and said unto him, “Henceforward I will not enter into judgement with that brother. Forgive me, O Father.” And thus Abba Sisoës healed that brother.

Paradise of the Holy Fathers,
Volume II, # 198, p. 44

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*And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from the evil one:
for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, unto the ages.
Amen.*

HERE OUR LORD teaches us plainly our own vileness, and quells our pride, instructing us to deprecate all conflicts, instead of rushing upon them. For so both our victory will be more glorious, and the devil's overthrow more to be derided. I mean, that as when we are dragged forth [*to confession of the Faith*], we must stand nobly; so when we are not summoned, we should be quiet, and wait for the time of conflict; that we may show both freedom from vainglory, and nobleness of spirit. And He here calls the devil "the wicked one," commanding us to wage against him a war that knows no truce, and implying that he is not such by nature. For wickedness is not of those things that are from nature, but of them that are added by our own choice. And he is so called pre-eminently, by reason of the excess of his wickedness, and because he, in no respect injured by us, wages against us implacable war.

Wherefore neither said He, "deliver us from the wicked ones," but, "from the wicked one;" instructing us in no case to entertain displeasure against our neighbors, for what wrongs soever we may suffer at their hands, but to transfer our enmity from these to him, as being himself the cause of all our wrongs. Having then made us anxious as before conflict, by putting us in mind of the enemy, and having cut away from us all our remissness; He again encourages and raises our spirits, by bringing to our remembrance the King under whom we are arrayed, and signifying Him to be more powerful than all. "For Thine," saith He, "is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory."

St John Chrysostom,
Homily XIX on the Gospel of Saint Matthew, pp. 136-7
Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Volume X

Pearls from the Holy Fathers ❄️ *April 9-15, 2012*

ABRAHAM, the disciple of Abba Sisoës, said unto him, "Father, if there happen to be a congregation on the Sabbath, or on Sunday, and a brother drink three cups of wine, is that too much?"

The old man said unto him, "If Satan did not exist, three cups would not be too much to drink, but since he doth exist three cups is too much."