

RECONCILIATION IN THE FAMILY - A SIMPLE SERVICE



INTRODUCTION

The Our Father is probably the most well-known and well-loved prayer.

When prayed together at home it can also be used as an opportunity to reflect on our relationships.

The saying 'WE HURT THE MOST THOSE WE LOVE THE MOST' is true of family life. We can reflect and share on the petitions in the Our Father and use these as an opportunity for being reconciled with God and with each other. We sin against God by neglecting or disobeying his commands but also by the way we hurt each other and we can ask forgiveness of God and of each other.

This type of Reconciliation moment can be held in all kinds of families and does not take the place of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. However, it can be a very useful preparation for Catholics receiving the sacrament later. The format below can obviously be adapted to suit the family's particular needs.

The Our Father is a communal prayer, we say OUR Father, not MY Father, and when we pray it, we join together with Jesus and each other in whatever group we find ourselves. In a reconciliation situation however, it is necessary to think mainly about myself and speak for myself because while I am a member of a group, such as a family, I am ultimately responsible to God only for myself, my life and how I have lived it in relationship with others.

In Matthew's gospel the Our Father is included in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said to his disciples, "When you pray do not to use a lot of meaningless words as the pagans do. Your Father already knows what you need before you ask him. This, then, is how you should pray, Our Father

MAKING PEACE WITH GOD AND WITH EACH OTHER

As appropriate begin with the Sign of the Cross and a song e.g. Praise him, in the morning, praise him in the noontime, praise him when the sun goes down.

REFLECTION AND SHARING ON THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE OUR FATHER.

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN - HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME, or "may your name be praised" by everyone. Do we give praise to God, our Creator for his goodness and for the gift of ourselves and each other? Practise doing so by having each one share an example of the greatness of God in themselves and their own lives.

YOUR KINGDOM COME. What kind of kingdom? What kind of king? God's Kingdom is one where love, justice, truth, peace and freedom are lived out with Jesus as our King. What am I doing to build such a kingdom in my and my family's lives?

YOUR WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IN HEAVEN. Heaven is a perfect place because God's will is done completely. How often do I do what *I* want rather than what *God* wants, and what effects does that have on others?

GIVE US TODAY OUR DAILY BREAD. This also means, give us all the basic necessities of life such as food, shelter and love. How far do I trust God to provide those for me? How well do I do my bit to provide for others or how frantically do I rush about and neglect the family in doing so?

FORGIVE US OUR SINS AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO SIN AGAINST US. I am literally saying, forgive me in the same way I forgive others. Do I forgive or hold a grudge? Who do I need to forgive and for what?

SAVE US FROM THE TIME OF TRIAL AND DELIVER US FROM EVIL. This is a statement of belief in God's supreme power over everything, good and evil and of his care for us in our need. Do I trust God enough?

RECONCILIATION

Spend some time in reflection and sharing. Then in being reconciled with God and with each other we admit our failures and pray, "I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned, through my own fault, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do; and I ask blessed Mary, ever virgin, all the angels and saints, and you, my brothers and sisters to pray for me to the Lord our God."

Then simply ask the different members of the family for forgiveness for the particular hurts caused. Listen carefully and if you are willing to forgive, say the words "I forgive you" or show your forgiveness by a sign e.g. a hug or kiss. Finally celebrate! Sing, dance, eat and be merry, just as the Forgiving Father threw a big party for the Prodigal Son when he returned.

FOR THE KINGDOM, THE POWER AND THE GLORY ARE YOURS, NOW AND FOR EVER. AMEN.

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