

# THE LORD'S PRAYER DIALOGUE

Cheesefare/Forgiveness Sunday – March 13, 2016

Gus: Our Father who art in Heaven...

God: Y-E-E-E-S?

Gus: Hey, I'm trying to pray here. Don't interrupt me.

God: You're the one who called Me.

Gus: Called you? I didn't call you. I'm trying to say my prayers! Our Father who art in Heaven...

God: There, you did it again.

Gus: Did what?

God: You called Me. You said, "Our Father, who art in heaven." Well, here I am. What's on your mind?

Gus: Bu...but...I didn't mean anything by it. I was...you know...just saying my prayers. I always say my prayers before I go to bed. It's just a habit that makes me feel good, kind of like brushing my teeth and washing my face.

God: Alright, go on.

Gus: Hallowed be Thy name...

God: Hold it! What do you mean by that?

Gus: By what?

God: Hallowed be Thy name.

Gus: It means...It means...Christ! I don't know what it means! It's just part of the prayer. By the way, what does it mean?

God: First of all, be careful how you use My Son's name. It's not a swear word. Don't take it in vain!

Gus: Oops! I guess I forgot Who I was talking to.

God: Hmm, so you change your speech depending on who you are talking to eh? Hallowed means honored, respected, treated as holy. You could get a few pointers on that next door at the synagogue. Faithful Jews won't even write or say my name so as not to desecrate it inadvertently!

Gus: Wow, I had no idea about that.

God: Well?!

Gus: Well what???

God: Haven't you got something to say? Something about not honoring, respecting or holding my name as holy?

Gus: Oh that, about Your Son's name. I'm really sorry Lord. I guess I never really stopped to think about what I was saying.

God: You're forgiven...this time, but try not to let it happen again. Okay, go on.

Gus: Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

God: Do you really mean that?

Gus: I guess so.

God: So what are you doing about it?

Gus: Doing about it? Nothing I guess. I just like the idea of You being in control of things down here.

God: Have I got control of you?

Gus: Well I go to church every month or so and do try to say my prayers at night.

God: That's not what I asked you. You show no respect to others, you have a mean temper, you spend all your time and money on yourself and you rarely show any concern for others.

Gus: Hey, what is this, criticize me day! I'm just as good as any of those phonies and hypocrites at church. I'm even better than some if not most.

God: Excuse me. I thought we were talking about you. You were asking for My will to be done. That needs to start with YOU doing My Will.

Gus: Okay, okay! I guess I've got some issues I need to work on...You know, I could probably list a few more.

God: Yes indeed, and so could I...a lot more. By the way, a direct translation from the Greek version of the prayer would read, "*May Your will be done, as it is in heaven so also on earth.*" You're really asking for My perfect will to be done on earth in the same way as it is done in heaven.

Gus: Huh, that's pretty cool. I like that. You know, I really hadn't thought about it much before. I can see now how I really do need to make some changes in my life.

God: Now we're getting somewhere. You know, working together, you and I, along with the community of love, My Church, we can really make some changes in your life...and in the world.

Gus: Lord, THAT sounds exciting!! (pause) Can I finish my prayers now? This is taking a whole lot longer than usual.

God: You are very special to me. I sent my Son to die for you. Go see the movies, RISEN and THE YOUNG MESSIAH and read all four Gospels. They will show you how much My Son suffered because of Our Love for you. It's really important that we spend both quality and quantity time together. Go on.

Gus: Give us this day our daily bread.

God: You need to go easy on the bread. You're overweight as it is. Besides what is it you are really asking for, a whole French loaf?

Gus: No. I've actually thought about that before. I'm really asking you to take care of my basic needs.

God: It's actually even more than that. The word for "daily" in Greek is epi-ousion. In Latin it would be rendered "super-substantial". In other words, you are asking for spiritual sustenance. Many theologians have rightly connected this to Holy Communion as well as to Bible reading, prayer and other spiritual food.

Gus: Huh! I had no idea about that, but now that explained it, it makes perfect sense.

God: Go on with your prayer. I'm looking forward to the next part.

Gus: (pause) That's what I was afraid of. Well here goes. *"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."*

God: What about Vasili?

Gus: See, that's what I was afraid of. I knew you were going to bring him up. Why should I forgive him God?! He told lies about me. I trusted him and he betrayed me. He made me look like a fool in front of my friends. I have to get even with him!

God: What was that you just prayed?

Gus: Well...I guess I didn't really mean it.

God: Gussie, don't you know that when you sin you actually go into debt against Me? In Greek, the prayer reads, *"Forgive us our debts of sin as we forgive those who have debts of sin against us."* In other words, you are asking me to forgive you in the same way that you forgive others...including and especially Vasili. I want to forgive you but you have to forgive others to make that possible.

Gus: But God, You don't understand, I have to get my revenge to save face with all my friends. I just can't forgive Vasili. Man have I got a plan to get back at him. Then I'll feel better. Boy is he going to get it.

God: Gussie, my name is not Man or Boy. Remember, MYname is holy. Revenge is never sweet. It's actually quite bitter and it fills you with bitterness and distances you from Me. It's a very heavy weight of sin that weighs you down spiritually and keeps you from entering My Kingdom. I can't forgive you unless you repent and ask for forgiveness. Without forgiveness, you can't know me, you can't have my peace and my joy, and you can't enter My Kingdom.

Gus: I know that You're right Lord. I guess You always are. I want to be close to you more than I want to get back at Vasili. I can see now how my feelings toward him have hurt me and the people around me too. I do want to be able to forgive him, but...I guess I really need Your help.

God: Make an appointment with your priest for Holy Confession. Holy Confession will help you get ready to get the most out of Holy Week and Pascha, the celebration of My Son's Holy Resurrection

Gus: Why can't I just talk directly to you?

God: We can talk anytime of course, but I have given special authority to my Apostles and by extension to My bishops and priests to forgive and not forgive sins. Besides it being like a spiritual laundromat, Holy Confession is also about getting spiritual direction. Father will talk to you about giving to charity, about prayer and fasting, like you heard in today's gospel and he'll help you set up a rule especially catered to your particular needs and situation.

Gus: Huh, I guess I never realized all that. You know, I'm feeling better already. I feel lighter, closer to You, to Your Light and to Your Love.

God: Gussie, another way for you to be able to forgive Vasili is to pray for him. It's in praying for your enemies that you are able to forgive them. You know, the two of you could really be great friends and do some amazing work together for My Kingdom...if you ever stopped trying to get at each other and dragging everyone else down with you.

Gus: Is that even really possible God?

God: It **is** with Me. Remember, with **Me** all things are possible.

Gus: You know God, I can't remember the last time I felt this good. Is this what it's like to really be a Christian?

God: Gussie, you are just getting started. You are just starting to scratch the surface. With humility, mercy and love, there are no limits to the blessings you can know. Go ahead and finish up your prayer.

Gus: And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

God: You know, that's one of the places where even the original Greek is off. Who is it that leads you into temptation?

Gus: The Devil of course.

God: The early Church in Northern Africa is one of the few that seems to have understood this section properly. They translated it, *"Keep us from being lead into temptation and deliver us from the evil one, literally the sly and scheming one."*

Gus: Wow...now that seems to make a whole lot more sense.

God: I'll do My part but you need to do your part as well.

Gus: What do you mean God?

God: Avoid putting yourself in situations where you will be tempted.

Gus: How do I do that?

God: Use the filters on your computer and use the filters I gave you as well. Think about whether you would be watching, listening or reading to whatever it is -- TV, radio, music, movies, content on the internet, etc., if I were sitting next to you.

Gus: Hmm, I see what you mean.

God: I'm not just an escape hatch you know.

Gus: What do mean by that? I don't understand?

God: Sure you do. You've done it lots of times. You get caught in a bad situation, often of your own doing, you get into trouble, and then you come running to me. You try to make a bargain with me, *"Lord, if you get me out of this one, I promise I'll never do it again. I'll be in Church every Sunday."* Most of the time, I deliver you, but you don't change anything. My Heavens, you don't even say thank you.

Gus: I'm sorry God. I can see that you are absolutely right. I have done that a whole lot of times. I guess I thought that as long as I went to church every now and then, and said my prayers, I could just basically go on doing what I want. Please forgive me.

God: You are forgiven! Go ahead and finish your prayer.

Gus: For Yours is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and forever, and to the ages of ages. Amen. (pause) Wow...I've said those words thousands of times, but this time they really felt powerful.

God: That's because this time you really prayed them instead of just saying them. (pause) Do you know what would bring me glory?

Gus: What is it Lord? I really want to please You. I really want to do Your Will.

God: That's exactly what would bring me glory. Come to the Vespers of Forgiveness tonight at 6 PM and start your Great Lenten journey off right. Make an appointment for Holy Confession with Fr. Demetri, ideally before or after services. Make a point of taking your focus off yourself and put it on Me and on others. Come to the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy on Wednesday evenings along with the **BIBLE AND CONSTITUTION** study series that follows. Come to the Salutations on Friday evenings. Sign your stewardship card with a significant proportional gift for the ministries of My Church and fill in the ministries section to show which ones you can support with your time and talents as well. Strive to tithe, to give 10% from your time, talent and treasure. Pick a charity and support it. Use fasting as a way to become self-controlled, to "just say no" to temptation, and to focus on the things of My Kingdom rather than the things of this earth.

Gus: I'm going to do my best to do all those things Lord. Thank you for interrupting my prayers. Please help me to do all the things I need to do to get close to You and to stay close to You forever.

God: I will Gussie. Together, we can make it happen. I've got some of my best angels watching over you, guiding you and protecting you.

Gus: Wow, I had no idea. Thank You so very much for that Lord. Hey, God, before you go, can I ask you why the Synod of Bishops didn't use a better, more accurate translation for the English version of the Lord's Prayer.

God: Since that is the universal translation used by all English speaking Christians, they decided to use that translation for all the Greek Orthodox parishes in America. It's important that you be obedient to them. They are My representatives on earth. In your private prayers however, you would do well to pray it the way I just taught you. I'll talk to you soon Gussie.

Gus: Talk to you soon God. Thank You for your great love for me, for sending Your Son, Jesus Christ to die for me, for delivering me time and time again, for Your forgiveness and for all Your blessings. Amen.