

The Lord's Prayer fleshed out

I was tired and prayer was difficult. I tried going for a walk outside, and still my thoughts went in all directions. So I followed a method that goes back at least to the Middle Ages, called in French the "Notre Père farci." An elegant translation would be: the "Lord's prayer fleshed out." The basic idea is that you take the well-known words of the Lord's prayer and after every phrase add your own thoughts and prayers. Let me take you down that path.

Our... Lord, I'm not alone. I come to you along with my brothers and sisters in Faremoutiers, Ozoir, Edinburgh... I think of my brothers and sisters in other denominations and around the world. Thank you because I'm not alone.

Father... Not a doting grandfather, but a strong and loving father. Such love! Such strength! Such integrity! You fix the standards, you look after your children. Abba, Father. Father of light. Father of every good gift!

... in heaven... Above us and beyond us. Immortal, invisible. And yet so close. God with us. Wherever, whenever. For ever!

... hallowed be your name... May my life honour you, in word and deed. May my church in Faremoutiers honour you. May you be honoured in the lives of Christians who have lost their way and in a country where so few people really know you.

.... your kingdom come... in Syria! in France! Guide our national leaders in the ways of justice, freedom and peace. In my own life, may I be an instrument for your kingdom! **Your will be done on earth as in heaven!**

Give us today our daily bread... For my family, for our families. For our needs, and for us to be able to give to others. Meet the needs of those of us who are ill, unemployed, loveless. Be with those Christians now homeless because of wars or poverty, enslaved, cooped up without hope in camps. Bread for the world: we have it, if only we could make it available! Bread for the world: change our selfishness! Bread for the world: Christ for the world!

Forgive us our sins... I'm caught up in the sins I see in the church, in society. Forgive us. Forgive me: anger in my heart and on my lips, time wasted, opportunities lost, guilty silences, false accusations, love extinguished.

... as we forgive those who sin against us... Nobody knows the trouble I see, the pain, the injustice. I want to keep those memories alive until justice has been done, and then still some more. But no, Lord, I will not take that road. It is yours to avenge, you will repay, not me. You will remember, until evil is judged. You put things to rights. Lord I forgive... Help me to forgive.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil... Lord, do not allow me to be tempted beyond what I am able to bear. Show the way out, show me how to resist. Deliver me from anything that would make me stumble. Deliver us from evil, in my family, in my church, in the mountains of Algeria.

All these things I bring to you, because **the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

NB. This is the translation and adaptation of a piece I did for our denomination's magazine, *Le lien fraternel*. I have used an English version of the Lord's Prayer which I found in the Anglican Alternative Service Book of 1980. If people are more familiar with another version, we can use that instead. This is not a Bible study in the usual sense of the word, though of course the traditional version of the Lord's Prayer is based on Matthew 6.9-12. If you would prefer something more exegetical, I will see what I can do. But as a piece to accompany a prayer bulletin, I thought it might be appropriate.

If there is an English equivalent to the expression "Notre Père farci" we should perhaps use that. In French the expression sounds strange, because the verb "farcir" is used for stuffing turkeys. But its very strangeness makes it memorable, and that is all to the good.

GM