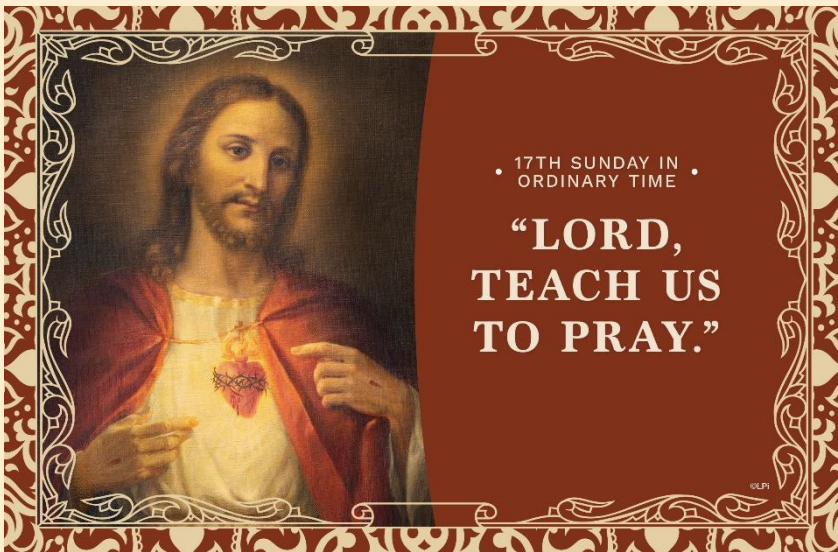


Our Father

Dear Friends,

Our prayer is communal. Above all, he who preaches peace and unity did not want us to pray by ourselves in private or for ourselves alone. We do not say “My Father, who art in heaven,” nor “Give me this day my daily bread.” It is not for himself alone that each person asks to be forgiven, not to be led into temptation or to be delivered from evil. Rather, we pray in public as a community, and not for one individual but for all. For the people of God are all one.

God is then the teacher of harmony, peace and unity, and desires each of us to pray for all men, even as he bore all men in himself alone. The three young men shut up in the furnace of fire observed this rule of prayer. United in the bond of the Spirit they uttered together the same prayer. The witness of holy Scripture describes this incident for us, so that we might imitate them in our prayer. *Then all three began to sing in unison, blessing God.* Even though Christ had not yet taught them to pray, nevertheless, they spoke as with one voice.



It is for this reason that their prayer was persuasive and efficacious. For their simple and spiritual prayer of peace merited the presence of the Lord. So too, after the ascension we find the apostles and the disciples praying together in this way. Scripture relates: *They all joined together in continuous prayer, with the women including Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.* They all joined together in continuous prayer. The urgency and the unity of their prayer declares that *God, who fashions a bond of unity among those who live in his home,* will admit into his divine home for all eternity only those who pray in unity.

My dear friends, the Lord’s Prayer contains many great mysteries of our faith. In these few words there is great spiritual strength, for this summary of divine teaching contains all our prayers and petitions. And so, the Lord commands us: *Pray then like this: Our Father, who art in heaven.*

We are new men; we have been reborn and restored to God by his grace. We have already begun to be his sons, and we can say “Father.” John reminds us of this: *He came to his own home, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who received him, who believe in his name, he gave the power to become children of God.* Profess your belief that you are sons of God by giving thanks. Call upon God who is your Father in heaven.

By Saint Cyprian, bishop and Martyr