

FATHER REGINALD E. MARTIN, O.P., *DIRECTOR*

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A PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES

Fr. Reginald Reflects on His Recent Journey

A friend once said, "I went to Lourdes a tourist; I came home a pilgrim." This, I believe, is a fair assessment of my own recent experience as one of several priests invited by the Order of Malta to serve as chaplains to its members — and the individuals suffering various ailments whom they accompany each year to Lourdes. In this and the next Light and Life I will offer some thoughts on my recent pilgrimage, together with a brief history of the Order of Malta.

THE ORDER OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM

The present-day Order of Malta traces its history to the end of the 11th Century, when Italian merchants sought permission to erect a hospice in Jerusalem, to care for Roman Catholic pilgrims. As time passed, the Order received bequests of castles and territory, with the donors' specific request that these be used to safeguard Christians — and Christian interests — in areas largely under the authority of rulers hostile to the Christian faith.

THE JOURNEY TO MALTA

By the end of the 12th Century, Muslim leaders had captured one Christian fortress after another. Hospitaller and other Christian forces withdrew to Cyprus, from which they hoped to return quickly to the Holy Land. These dreams went unrealized, and, at the beginning of the 14th Century, the Hospitallers moved their headquarters to Rhodes. From here they offered financial aid, ships and other assistance to the Christian forces trying to withstand Turkish domination of the region. These efforts proved unavailing, and at the beginning of January, 1523, the Hospitallers evacuated Rhodes. Seven years later they were offered the island of Malta as a base from which to protect the Mediterranean and northern Africa from Muslim forces.

THE MODERN ORDER

Hospitallers were among the Christian forces that defeated the Turkish navy at the Battle of Lepanto, in 1571.



The Assumption of Mary

Their determination never to fight other Christians rendered them powerless when the revolutionary French navy, under the command of Napoleon, attacked and claimed Malta in 1798.

With the dawn of the 19th Century the Order of Malta came to a new — or renewed — understanding of its mission. Gradually abandoning its claim to serve as an armed force, the Order of St. John reclaimed its identity as a formidable charitable institution. The Order is recognized as a sovereign entity, and enjoys diplomatic relations with numerous nations and institutions, including the United Nations. Because the Order owes allegiance to no sovereign except the Pope, its members are often among the first to be admitted into disaster-stricken areas, to offer relief. Most recently, the Order spear-headed relief efforts to those endangered by floods in Burma.

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THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

THE OUR FATHER - PART II

Hallowed Be Thy Name

By Father Reginald Martin, O.P.

I. AN INVITATION TO CONFIDENCE

St. Thomas Aquinas reminds us that calling God “Our Father” ought to inspire the same confidence in God that children have when they address a loving human parent. Experience teaches the sad lesson that not all parents do – or can – adequately care for their children, so to address God as Our Father in heaven should remind us that our prayer does not address a flawed human parent, who might prove incapable of returning a child’s affection, but a Father whose loving care is altogether perfect.

In the gospel parables, Jesus always chooses examples from the real life of those whom He addresses, so Jesus often asks His listeners to see a sign of eternal life in some common aspect of everyday existence. On some occasions, a parable describes a very low standard, which we are supposed to exceed; at other times, a positive standard we should strive to meet. At one point Jesus asks, “*If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?*” (Luke 11:13)

This question encourages us to look at ourselves, not to see a God flawed with human imperfection, but to conclude what a parent’s love might be, were it not hampered by the inadequacies that limit human love. When we approach God, we bring everything that makes us who we are. If our experience of our parents has been happy, we reasonably expect God to show us the same regard we have encountered at home. But if we have experienced a violent or unhappy childhood, the Lord’s Prayer encourages us to see these experiences as precisely what we should not expect from our encounter with God.

WHO ART IN HEAVEN

The Old Testament book of Ecclesiasticus tells us, “*Before prayer, prepare thy soul*” (18:23). To identify God as Our Father “in heaven” begins this preparation by reminding us that the encounter with God we look forward to in prayer is no ordinary activity. Not only do we address our prayer to a Father whose love is vaster than any human parent’s, the words ought to remind us that we, as children of the Father in heaven, share – or at least look forward to sharing – the glory that our heavenly Father enjoys. St. Paul encourages us, “*As we have borne the image of the earthly, let us bear the*

image of the heavenly” (1 Cor. 15:49), so our words do not only remind us who God is, but what we are (and are called to be) by our relation to Him.

A CALL TO CONTEMPLATION

Jesus warns us, “*Wheresoever thy treasure is, there also is thy heart*” (Matt 6:21). These words can be quite frightening when we think of some of the things that make our hearts beat faster. However, to approach God as our Father “in heaven,” allows us to direct our minds toward our true home, to “*seek the things that are above, where Christ is*” (Col. 3:1). In one of his sermons, St. John Chrysostom preached that the words “in heaven” do not confine God to one place, but rather invite us to withdraw from earthly concerns and fix our attention on things outside and above us. These thoughts of heaven lead us more and more to desire our true home, and this desire elevates and purifies our hearts, enhancing the spiritual dimension of our life and uplifting both our lives and the nature of our prayer.

A CALL TO MORALITY

When he considers the words of the Lord’s Prayer, St. Augustine asks us to look at our relation to our human parents and draw some conclusions about our relation to God. We have parents on earth, he says,

that we might be born to labors and to death; but we have found other parents, God our Father, and the Church our Mother, by whom we are born unto life eternal.

These relations not only ennoble us, they equip us to act nobly. St. Augustine uses the words of the Lord’s Prayer to remind us of the intimate connection between our prayer and the other activities in our lives.

“Let us then consider,” he urges, “whose children we have begun to be; and let us live as becomes those who have such a Father.”

THE POWER OF HEAVEN

To acknowledge our Father “in heaven” asserts our faith in God’s power and the majesty of His nature. Unless they are aided by grace, our minds cannot grasp much beyond what greets our senses. Our imagination may furnish heaven with all sorts of familiar, everyday details, but when we pray to our Father in heaven, our language refers to a plane of existence that is beyond

anything we can imagine. To acknowledge God's existence in this state of being acknowledges our belief in His superiority (and control) over every atom of physical creation. Our prayer also acknowledges His greatness, which exceeds anything human imagination can picture.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

Thus far we have considered the words "in heaven" to refer to God's spiritual abode. St. Thomas Aquinas offers an additional meaning to these words, remarking they can also refer to the saints, whose glorified lives are filled with God's presence. When we pray, our prayers are united to the prayers that the heavenly host continually offer for the Church. And because Jesus promised, "*If any man love me... my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him*" (1 John 4:16), our prayers also unite us with every faithful Christian who enjoys the state of grace.

II. AN INVITATION TO ASK

The very first words of the Lord's Prayer inspire confidence. They tell us who God is, and they remind us what God's love calls us to be. Once we grasp (however imperfectly) the reality of God's love, and the immense benefits this love confers on us, we may approach God with trust and confidence. The words of the Lord's Prayer now teach us what we should ask of our loving Father, and how we should frame our request.

A GRAMMATICAL NOTE

The Lord's Prayer is an extremely compact statement, and the language of the prayer is nothing less than remarkable. The punctuation of the prayer will vary with the Scripture translation, but the prayer consists of seven petitions, each of which is expressed either as a wish or a command. In this prayer we either urge God to do something, or we assure Him we will welcome something He does. This language reflects both our daring and our trust. Because God is "Our" Father, we dare to tell Him what to do for us; because He is our Father "in heaven," unmoved by any of the ignoble feelings or motives that detract from our actions on earth, we have the confidence to say we will accept, unquestioningly, what God wills.

GOD'S NAME

The first petition of the Lord's Prayer expresses a wish that God's name will be known and revered. This seems a safe enough thing to ask for, but St. Augustine warns that these words also ask God to make His name holy in us.

...Holy it always is. And how is His name hallowed...except while it makes us holy... For we do not wish well to God... but we wish what is good for ourselves....

The mere fact of our asking God to make His name known is a pledge that we will take responsibility for

the outcome of our request, and that we will help to make it happen.

St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that God's name, which we ask to be made manifest and honored, is lovable, wonderful, venerable and indescribable. It is wonderful because it accomplishes great things. Jesus says,

In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak strange tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly things it shall not hurt them (Mark 16:17,18).

We may never be called upon to perform these specific works, but Our Savior's words should give us the courage to live our faith bravely, confident of God's presence to guide and guard us.

God's name is lovable because we all desire salvation, and "*there is no other name...whereby we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12). The lives of the saints show the value we should attach to God's name; the martyrs, especially – who were willing to die rather than deny God – help us see how fiercely we should cling to Him.

We say God's name is venerable, because it commands respect throughout creation. St. Paul says, "*at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, on things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth*" (Phil 2:10). The respect paid by the heavenly host should be obvious, but St. Thomas remarks that "*of things on earth*" refers to humankind, who bow before God for the love of heaven, which we desire. "*Things under the earth*" the Angelic Doctor says, refers to the damned, who acknowledge God out of fear.

St. Thomas calls God's name "ineffable" because it cannot be adequately described by human speech. We often use metaphors, which reveal some quality or aspect of God, such as "rock" or "light," to describe the stability we find in God, or the brightness, warmth and safety we enjoy in His presence. In itself, however, the magnitude of God's name is beyond our ability to grasp or express. That we can address God by name at all is His gift, given to Moses (Ex 3:13) – and to us – as a sign of His love.

A HALLOWED NAME

The English word "holy" reminds us of the word "whole." God's name is holy because it belongs to God, of course, but at the same time the name is perfect (or "whole") because it lacks nothing, and because nothing can be added to it. In Latin, the word "*sanctum*" refers to the holiness of God's name, but also calls to mind the word "*sancitum*," which means "firm." God's name, thus, reminds us of the eternal, unchanging solidity of God's love – which the blessed enjoy in heaven, and which we aspire to as we make our way through a daily-changing world.

To call God's name holy is to distinguish it from the things of earth. This is not to say that earthy things are unholy, but that creation is, by its nature,

incomplete. Moreover, creation can do nothing without God's assistance. God, on the other hand, is eternally creative, and His loving concern guarantees our continued existence as well as all the produce of the earth that supports life. Finally, we say God's name is holy because God is the light that destroys the darkness of sin and error.

THE PROPER ORDER OF THINGS

The previous reflection observed that the Lord's Prayer teaches us not only to pray succinctly, but also how our prayers should be organized. St. John Chrysostom commends the order of the Lord's Prayer, saying we do well to begin by asking first for the revelation of God's glory, which contains our tacit prayer that we may be part of making this glory known. *"His own glory He hath complete...but He commands him who prays to seek that He may be glorified also by our life."*

DOING OUR PART

We may imagine that because our prayer asks God to do something — perhaps, especially, to do something for us — we are passive partners in the encounter; the Lord's Prayer should dispel this notion forever. We reasonably ask God to provide what we cannot provide for ourselves, but in doing so we pledge our willingness to be a part of what we pray for. God's name is holy; we cannot add or detract from its holiness. However, if we pray that the holiness of God's name be acknowledged in our world, we offer ourselves as the preachers or other ministers by which this will come about.

One of the fruits of prayer is a greater understanding of who we are, and a clearer understanding of the individuals God calls us to become. Prayer can be a transforming experience if we allow ourselves to be transformed. This transformation comes at a price, which is the possibility that we will be changed by the experience of our prayer. When we pray the Lord's Prayer we ask God for certain specific outcomes; if we are not willing to play our role in these outcomes, we should hesitate to pray for them. ■

LOURDES PILGRIMAGE *(Continued from page 1)*

MALTA AND LOURDES

Because Lourdes draws individuals seeking healing from every corner of the world, the Order of Malta's involvement at Lourdes should come as no surprise. Every year, members of the Order accompany invalids — called malades — to the site of the Blessed Virgin's apparition to Bernadette Soubirous in 1858. Here the malades are offered the opportunity to wash in the miraculous waters of Lourdes and — more important — the opportunity to renew their faith and re-invigorate their devotion through a series of spiritual exercises spread over several days.

Each group of the Hospitallers sets its own program. The group I accompanied begins its days of prayer with a ceremony of foot-washing, in which those who are ill are served by Order members, which include a

number of priests and bishops. This ceremony recalls the liturgy of Holy Thursday, in which the Church's ministers humble themselves in imitation of Our Savior, who washed the feet of His disciples.

THE ROSARY CENTER - TO LOURDES - TO THE WORLD

What makes Lourdes impressive is the faith of the individuals who flock there. Only a few of those who make the pilgrimage are healed of a diagnosable illness, but no one who prays at the grotto or washes his hands in the water from its stream is untouched by the palpable devotion of the place. I have been blessed — and often — throughout the years of my religious and priestly life, but I consider myself specially privileged to have carried the petitions of our friends in the Rosary Confraternity to this hallowed ground. ■

THE HOLY FATHER SPEAKS ON THE ROSARY

On May 3 of this year Pope Benedict XVI prayed the Rosary with pilgrims to the basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome, the oldest church in Western Christendom dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Addressing those present, the Pope said,

The Rosary, when it is prayed in an authentic manner — not mechanically and superficially, but profoundly — brings peace and reconciliation. It contains the healing power of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, invoked with faith and love at the heart of each Hail Mary.

NEW FROM THE ROSARY CENTER

Mary and Me, by Ginny Kubitz Moyer, explores the many ways in which Mary speaks to modern women. The book includes (among others) the author's own testimony of Mary's compassion during a painful moment of motherhood, the story of an eating disorder activist helped by Mary to overcome a struggle with anorexia, and the words of a religious sister whose devotion to the Visitation strengthens her work with prostitutes and drug addicts.

The Rosary Center is proud to offer two new CDs of talks by Fr. Brian Mullady, O.P. The conferences discuss "Love, Sex and Marriage in St. Thomas Aquinas" and "The 'O' Antiphons of Advent". Also newly available is the Dominican Rite, Latin High Mass on DVD.

FR. DUFFNER'S VOL. II NEARS COMPLETION

The second volume of Fr. Paul Duffner's *Light and Life* essays will shortly go to the printer. The Rosary Center will make the book available as soon as it is published. Fr. Duffner directed the Rosary Center for more than twenty years, and his writing is concise, thoughtful, and to-the-point. Each essay is about three pages, so the book is invaluable for those with limited time to devote to spiritual reading.

At this time we repeat the offer we made when we produced the first volume of Fr. Duffner's work. Anyone who contributes \$500 to the printing cost will receive a complimentary copy of the book, signed by Fr. Duffner.