

On The Lord's Prayer – by St. Nikolai Velimirovic

OUR FATHER

When the clouds are thundering and the oceans roaring, they call to Thee: “Our Lord!”

When the meteors fall, and fire springs up from the earth, they speak to Thee: “Our Creator!”

When the flowers are opening their buds in the spring, and the swallows are picking up pieces of dry hay with which to make their nests for their young, they sing to Thee: “Our Master!”

And when I lift my eyes up to Thy throne I am whispering to Thee: “Our Father!”

There was a time, a long and fearful time, when man too spake to Thee and called Thee: Lord, or Creator, or Master! Yea, when man felt himself to be only a thing among things. But now by merit of Thy First-born and Best Son, we learned Thy right name. Therefore, I too, with Christ, dare to call Thee: “Father!”

If I address Thee as “Lord,” I bow in fear before Thee as a slave amongst an army of slaves. If I call Thee “Creator,” I separate myself from Thee, as night is apart from day, or as a leaf from its tree.

If I look to Thee and say “Master,” I am as a stone among stones, and as a camel among camels.

But if I open my mouth and whisper “Father,” love takes the place of fear, earth seems lifted nearer to Heaven, and I walk with Thee, as with my companions in the garden of this world, and share Thy glory, and sorrows, and strength.

Our Father! Thou art the Father of us all, and I would lessen both Thee and me if I call Thee: My Father!

Our Father! Thou dost not care so much about me, a single individual, as about the whole world. Thy Kingdom is Thy aim, and not a single man. Selfishness cries to Thee: My Father! But Love cries: Our Father!

In the name of all men, my brothers, I pray: Our Father!

In the name of things which surround me and with which Thou hast woven me, I pray to Thee, Our Father!

I pray to Thee, Father of the universe, for one thing only I pray to Thee: let soon dawn the great day when all men, the living and the dead, in harmony with the Angels and stars, and the animals and things, call to Thee by Thy true name: Our Father!

WHICH ART IN HEAVEN

We always lift up our eyes to Heaven when calling to Thee and cast them down to the earth when remembering our sins. We are always in the depths on account of our weakness and our sins. Thou abidest always in the heights, as befits Thy magnitude and Thy holiness.

Thou art always in Heaven when we are unworthy to receive Thee; but gladly Thou descendest to us, to our earthly housing, when we are longing and opening the door for Thee.

Yet even when Thou descendest to us, still Thou abidest in Heaven; in Heaven Thou livest, over the Heavens Thou walkest, and with the Heavens dost Thou bow down to our valley.

Heaven is far, too far, for the man whose mind and heart are turned from Thee, or who laughs when Thy name is spoken. But Heaven is near, so near, for the man who always keeps open the door of his soul and waits for Thy coming, our dearest Guest.

If the most just man is compared with Thee, Thou towerest over him as the firmament of Heaven over the valley of earth; as everlasting life over the realm of death.

We are of destructible and perishable material; how could we stand on the same height with Thee, Immortal Youth and Strength!

Our Father which art always above us, bow down to us and lift us up to Thee. What are we but tongues constructed from the dust for the sake of Thy glory? The dust would be silent forever and could not proclaim Thy name without us, O Lord. How could the dust know Thee but through us? How could Thou do miracles with the dead dust, but through us?

O our Father!

HALLOWED BE THY NAME

Thou wouldest not be holier by our hallowing Thee, but in hallowing Thy Name we make ourselves holy. Thy Name is wondrous. The people quarrel on this earth about names: whose name is great? It is good that sometimes Thy Name is mentioned in these quarrels, because all the loquacious tongues become at once slow and hesitating, and all the great human names melted together cannot compare with Thy Name, Holy, All-Holy!

When men want to hallow Thy Name they ask nature for help. They take stone and wood to make the temples; they adorn the altars with pearls and flowers, and make fire of plants, their sisters; and take scent of the cedars, their brothers; and strengthen their voices by the voice of the bells; and call the animals for help, to hallow Thy Name. Nature is as pure as Thy stars, and as innocent as Thine Angels, O Lord. Be merciful with us for the sake of the pure and innocent nature which hallows Thy Name, together with us, Holy, All-Holy!

In what way should we hallow Thy name?

Is it by innocent joy? – then be merciful with us for the sake of our innocent children.

Is it by suffering? – then look at our cemeteries.

Or is it by self-sacrifice? – then remember our mothers, O Lord!

Thy name is stronger than steel and clearer than light. Blessed be the man who depends upon and enlightens himself by Thy Name!

The fools say: “We are armed with steel; who can resist us?” And Thou destroyest kingdoms with invisible insects!

Terrible is Thy Name, O Lord! It illuminates and it consumes like a great fire-cloud. Nothing is holy and nothing terrible that is not bound with Thy Name. Give me, O Holy, give me as friends those in whose hearts Thy Name is engraved, and as enemies those who do not wish to know anything about Thee. For such friends will be my friends to the death, and such enemies will kneel and surrender to me as soon as their steel is broken.

Holy and terrible is Thy Name, Holy, All-Holy! Let us remember Thy Name in every moment of our joy and of our abasement in life, as we remember it in the hour of our death, yea, our heavenly Father, our Holy Father!

THY KINGDOM COME

Thy Kingdom come, O great King!

We are tired of the kings who are seemingly greater than older men, but who lie in our cemeteries together with beggars and slaves.

We are tired of the kings who yesterday declared their power over lands and nations and today complain of a toothache!

We are tired of them as of the clouds which bring quails instead of rain.

“Behold! this is the wise man. Given him the crown!” the crowds cried. To the crown, it is all the same upon whichever head it sits. But Thou knowest, O Lord, the wisdom of the wise and the government of the mortal. Shall I repeat what is known to Thee? Shall I tell Thee how the wisest among us ruled over us with folly as a prop?

“Behold! this is a strong man. Give him the crown!” the crowds cried again, in other times, and other generations. And so the crown travelled silently from head to head. But Thou, the Almighty, Thou knowest the price of the fortitude of the exalted ones, and the government of the strong ones. Thou knowest with how much weakness the strong supported their kingdom.

Now we have learned through suffering that there is no real king but Thee. Our soul is thirsty for Thy Kingdom and Thy government. Wandering here and there, are we not hurt and wounded

enough, we, the living survivors, upon the tombs of many kings and kingdoms? We pray now to Thee for help.

Let Thy Kingdom come in sight! Thy Kingdom of Wisdom, Fatherhood, and Power! Let this earth, the battlefield of thousands of years, be a Home, where Thou art the Host, and we the guests! Come, King, the empty throne is waiting for Thee! With Thee harmony will come; with harmony, beauty. We are tired of all other kingdoms, therefore we are now expecting Thee, the great King, Thee, and Thy Kingdom!

THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

Heaven and earth are Thy fields, O Father. Upon one field Thou sowest stars and angels, upon the other, thorns and man. The stars are moving according to Thy Will. The angels sing on the stars as on the harp, according to Thy Will. The thorns grow up and sting men, according to Thy Will. But man meets man and asks: what is God's Will?

How long will man be ignorant about what is Thy Will, O Father? How long will he abase himself before the thorns under his feet? Thou didst create him for equality with the angels and stars, and lo! He is beaten even by thorns!

But behold, if a man will, he can speak Thy name better than the thorns, and as well as the stars and angels do. O Thou, the Spirit-giver, and Will-giver, give man Thy Will.

Thy Will is wise, and fresh, and holy. This Will moves the Heavens: why should not the same Will move the earth, which compared with Heaven, is as a drop of water compared with the ocean?

Thy Will is wise. I listen to the tale of bygone generations, and I look up to the sky and know that the stars are moving as they have done for thousands of years, always in the same way, and are bringing in due time summer and winter.

Thou art never wearied in acting with wisdom, our Father. No foolish thing ever finds a place in Thy plan. Thou art as fresh in wisdom and goodness today as on the first day of the creation, and tomorrow Thou wilt be as today.

Thy Will is holy as it is wise and fresh. Holiness is inseparable from Thee as we from the air.

Whatever is unholy may climb up towards Heaven, but no unholy thing ever descends from Heaven, from Thy throne, O Father.

We pray to Thee, our holy Father, that thou mayest soon bring the dawning of the day when the will of all men will be as wise, fresh, and holy as Thy Will; and when all Thine earthly creatures will move in harmony with the stars in Heaven; and when our planet will sing in chorus with all Thy wondrous stars:

O Lord, teach us!

O God, lead us!

O Father, save us!

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

He that gives the body, gives the soul too; and He that gives the air, gives bread as well. Thy children, O merciful Giver of gifts, expect every needful thing from Thee.

Who would brighten their faces in the morning if not Thee through Thy light?

Who would watch nightly over their breathing when they sleep if not Thee, the most indefatigable of all watchers?

Where could they sow their daily bread if not upon Thy field? With what could they refresh it if not with Thy dew of the dawn? With what could they vivify it if not with Thy light and Thy air? With what could they test it if not with the mouth Thou formest on them?

By what means should they rejoice and give thanks to Thee when fed, if not by the spirit through which Thou hast inspired the lifeless clay and made of it a miracle, O Thou, most miraculous Artist?

I do not pray to Thee for my bread, but for our bread. Why should I alone have bread if my brothers around me are suffering hunger? It would be better and more just if Thou takest from me such bitter, selfish bread; hunger is sweeter shared with brothers dear. It cannot be Thy wish to have the thanks of one man, and the cursing of hundreds.

Our Father, give us our bread! In order that we may glorify Thee in harmonious chorus, and in order that we may joyfully remember our Heavenly Father.

This day we are praying for this day. This day is a great one; it is the birth of many thousands of living creatures. Thousands of new creatures, which yesterday were not, and which tomorrow will not be, today are rejoicing together under the same sunshine; together with us they crawl upon one of Thy stars, and together with us they call to Thee: our bread!

O great Host! We are Thy guests from morning till evening; we are sitting at Thy table and waiting for Thy bread. No one but Thee has the right to say: my bread. It is Thine.

No one but Thee has any right to tomorrow's day and tomorrow's bread but Thee alone, and those of today's earthly inhabitants whom Thou invitest.

If it is in accordance with Thy will that the end of this day be the dividing line of my life and death, I will bow before Thy holy Will.

If it is Thy Will that tomorrow I may once more be the companion of the great sun, and a guest at Thy table, I will repeat my thanksgiving, as I repeat it steadily day after day.

And I will bow before Thy Will, again and again, as the angels in Heaven do, O Giver of all gifts, material and spiritual!

FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US

It is easier for a man to trespass against Thy laws than to understand them, O Father. But it is not easy for Thee to forgive us all our trespasses if we are not forgiving towards those who trespass against us. For Thou didst establish the universe upon measure and order. How could this balance be retained in the universe if Thou observes one measure towards us, and we observe another measure towards our neighbors? Or if Thou givest bread to us while we give a stone to our neighbors? Or if Thou forgives us our sins while we are hanging our neighbors for theirs? How then could the measure and order in the universe be preserved, O lawful Father?

Yet behold, Thou forgives us more than we can forgive our brothers. We defile the earth every day and night with our crimes, while Thou greetest us every day through the undimmed eye of Thy sun, and every night sendest Thy merciful forgiveness through the stars, those shining sentinels at the gate of Thy court, our Kingly Father!

Thou makest us ashamed every day, O most Merciful. For when we are expecting punishment Thou sendest to us Thy mercy; when we are expecting Thy thunders Thou sendest to us a quiet evening; and when we are expecting darkness Thou sendest to us the sunshine. Thou art always sublime above our sins, and always magnificent in Thy silent patience.

Woe to the fool who hopes to trouble Thee with a sacrilegious word! He is like the boy who angrily cast a grain of sand into the sea in order to drive the whole sea from its place. But the sea only silently folds over the skin of its surface, revealing thereby the meagerness of angry weakness in the face of the ocean's immense power.

Behold, all our sins are common, and we all are responsible for the sins of all. Therefore, there are not on earth pure righteous men. For all the righteous must take upon themselves some of the sins of the sinners. It is difficult to be an immaculately righteous man, because there is no righteous one who does not bear upon his back at least one sinner. But how is it, O Father – give me to understand how it is that the more a righteous man bears the sinners' sins, the more righteous he is?

Our Heavenly Father, who art sending bread from morning to evening to all Thy children and art receiving their sins in payment, make less heavy the burden of the righteous ones, and illumine the darkness of sinners.

The earth is full of sins, but full of prayers, too; it is full of the prayers of the righteous and of the despair of sinners. Is not despair the beginning of prayer?

Thou must be the Victor after all. Thy Kingdom will be founded upon the prayers of the righteous. Thy Will will become the law for men as it is the law for the angels.

Well then, why should our Father hesitate to forgive trespasses to mortals, thereby giving them an example of forgiveness and mercy?

AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTAION

O how little is necessary for a man to turn his face from Thee towards idols!

He is surrounded by temptation as by storms, and he is as powerless as the foam upon a rough mountain brook.

If he is prosperous, he fancies at once that he is Thy colleague, or he puts Thee in his own shadow, or even adorns his home with Thy images as a luxury.

If evil knocks at his door, he encounters the temptation of making a bargain with Thee, or even of casting Thee away altogether.

If Thou callest him to sacrifices, he revolts. If Thou sendest him to death, he trembles.

If Thou offerest to him all the pleasures of earth, he will be tempted to poison and kill his own soul.

If Thou discloses to his eyes the laws of Thy creation, he murmurs, "The universe is wonderful and lawful in itself, without a Creator."

We are confused by Thy light, O our shading Father, like the night butterflies. When Thou callest us to the light, we are flying into the darkness, when we are set in darkness we are crying for light.

There is a network of many paths before us, but we dare not go to the end of any of them, for at each end there is a temptation waiting for us and luring us on.

And the path leading to Thee is crossed by many temptations as well as by many precipices. Before temptation assails us Thou seemest to accompany us as by an illuminated cloud. But when temptation comes Thou disappearest. We turn around in confusion and we put to ourselves the painful question: What was our illusion – Thy presence or Thine absence?

In all temptations we ask ourselves: Art Thou our Father? All our temptations put in our minds the same question that all the circumstances around us are putting into our minds from day to day and from night to night, which is: What do you think about the Lord? Where is He and Who is He? Are you with Him, or without Him?

Give to me the power, my Fatherly Creator, that I may in every hour of my life, whether bright or dark, give the same answer to every possible temptation and to everything: The Lord is the Lord. He is there where I am and where I am not.

I stretch always my passionate heart towards Him and my hands towards His bright garments, as a child towards his beloved Father.

How could I live without Him? It would mean to be without myself at the same time. How could I be against Him? It would mean to be against myself at the same time.

A righteous son follows his father with respect, quietness, and joy.

Breathe Thine inspiration into our souls, O Father, to be Thy righteous sons!

BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL

Who will deliver us from evil, if not Thee, our Father?

Who will stretch out hands to the drowning children, if not their father?

Who concerns himself more about the cleanliness and beauty of the house than its master?

Thou didst call us from nothing to be something, but we bind ourselves down with evil, and so we are transforming ourselves again into nothing.

We fold around our hearts the very serpent that we most fear.

With all our might we are crying against the darkness, but the darkness abides in our souls, the microbes of darkness and the microbes of death.

We are fighting with one voice against evil, while evil silently penetrates our home; while we are crying, evil is forcing one position after the other, and comes nearer to our heart.

Stand Thou, Almighty Father, stand Thou between us and evil; we will lift up our hearts, and evil will evaporate like a wayside pool under the burning sun.

Thou art high above us, and Thou dost not feel the swell of evil; but we are suffocating under it. Behold, evil grows in us from day to day before our eyes and spreads its abundant fruits all around.

The sun salutes us every day with "Good morning!" and with the question: What have we to exhibit before our great King? And we exhibit only our old corrupt fruits of evil. O God, is not the dust, unmoved and unvivified, purer than man in the service of evil?

Look, we have built our houses and our mansions in the clefts and crevices of the earth. It would not be difficult for Thee to order Thy brooks to overflow all these clefts and crevices, and to wash the earth of men and of their evil doings.

But Thou art above our anger and our counsels. If Thou hadst listened to man's counsels Thou wouldst by now have destroyed the universe to its foundations and been buried Thyself in the ruins.

O, Wisest among fathers! Thou smilest always in Thy divine beauty and immortality, and behold, from Thy smiles new stars are growing! Always with a smile Thou turnest our evil into good, and graffest the good upon the tree of evil, and so patiently curest our uncultivated and lost Garden of Eden. Patiently Thou curest, and patiently Thou buildest. Thou buildest patiently Thy Kingdom of good, our King and Father. We pray to Thee: make us free from evil and full of good, Thou, the perfect emptiness of evil, and fullness of good!

FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM

The stars and suns are the citizens of Thy Kingdom, O Father. Do Thou array us, too, in this splendid army of Thine.

Our planet I small and dark, but it is Thy work, Thine architecture, and Thine inspiration. How could anything but something great be formed by Thy masterly hands. Yet by our own smallness and darkness we make our abiding place small and dark. Yes, the earth is ever small and dark when we call it our kingdom, and when we foolishly pretend to be its kings.

Behold, there are many among us who were kings on earth and who now, standing on the ruins of their thrones, are wondering and asking: "Where are our kingdoms?" And many kingdoms there are that do not know what happened to their vain and glorious kings. Blessed and happy is the man who looks through the clouds and whispers the words that Thou hearest: Thine is the Kingdom!

What we call our earthly kingdom is full of worms and as perishable as bubbles on a deep river. A heap of dust on the wings of the wind! Thou only hast a true Kingdom, and only Thy Kingdom has a King. Take us from the wings of the wind, O merciful King, save us from the wings of the wind! And make us citizens of Thy Kingdom. O yes, make of us the citizens of Thy eternal Kingdom, near Thy stars and suns, near Thine angels and archangels, yea, near Thee, our Father!

AND THE POWER

Thine is the power, because Thine is the Kingdom. Quasi-kings are powerless. Their only kingly power is in their royal title, which in truth is Thy title only. They wander in the dust, and the dust goes where the wind wants it to go. We are the wandering shadows and moving dust. But even when we wander and move it is by Thy power.

By Thy power we are and by Thy power we are going to be. Earth would be a corpse without Thy power. Thou art the breathing power in every grain of dust, and if the dust dances it dances by Thy power, or if the dancing dust is called man it is by Thy power.

Thou hast lent a small grain of Thy power of man. If a man does good he does it by Thy power through Thee; and if a man does evil he does it by Thy power but through himself. Everything

which is done, is done by Thy power, either used or misused, either understood or misunderstood. If a man, O Father, uses Thy power according to Thy Will, then Thy power is Thine, and it is good; if a man comes, however, and uses Thy power according to his own will, then Thy power is called his own, and it is evil.

I say, O Lord, when Thou disposest with Thy power it is good, but when the beggars, who borrowed the power from Thee, proudly dispose with it as with their own, it is evil. So there is one keeper, but many disposers of Thy power; and also there is no evil power in the world, but there are evil disposers and practicers of Thy power. Yea, of the particles of Thy power Thou mercifully lendest to them, from Thy plentiful table, to those poor mortals on earth.

Look down upon us, O powerful Father, look down upon us and be slow in sending Thy power to the earthly dust until it prepares two rooms to take it in: good will and humility – good will to us the borrowed divine gift for good, and humility to be steadily reminded that all the power in the universe belongs to Thee, great Power-giver!

Thy power is holy and wise. But when in our hands Thy power is in danger of being defiled and becoming unholy and foolish.

O Father, which art in Heaven, help us to know and to do every day one thing; that is, to know that all power is Thine, and to us Thy power according to Thy will. Behold, we are unhappy because we separated what is inseparable in Thee; we separated power from holiness, and also power from love, and power from faith, and, finally – which is the first cause of our fall – power from humility. Unite, O Father, what Thy children have foolishly separated, we pray.

Bring again to honor Thine own power which has been disregarded and dishonored, we pray. For behold, whatever we are, we are Thy children.

AND THE GLORY FOR EVER AND EVER

Thy glory is co-eternal with Thee, our Kingly Father. It is substantial in Thee and independent from us. It is not glory of words like the glory of mortals, but it consists of the same imperishable essence as Thou art. Yea, it is inseparable from Thee like the light is inseparable from the burning sun. Whoever has seen the center and the periphery of Thy glory? Whoever has become glorious without the touch of Thy glory?

Thy dazzling glory is enveloping us all around and looking silently at us half-smiling and half-wondering about our human pains and murmurings. When we become silent we hear a secret whispering: Ye are children of a glorious Father!

O, how sweet is this glorious whispering!

What could we want more than to be the children of Thy glory? Is it not enough? Surely it is enough for a normal life. But behold, men want to be the fathers of the glory. And that is the beginning and the culmination of their misery. They are not satisfied with being children and sharers of Thy glory; they want to be fathers and bearers of Thy glory. Yet Thou art the only

Father and the only Bearer of all glory. There are many misusers of Thy glory and many self-deceivers. Nothing is so dangerous in the hands of mortals as glory.

Thou showest Thy glory, and men argue about theirs. Thy glory is a fact, men's glory is a word.

Thy glory nourishes the poor and leadest the meek ones; men's glory, when separated from Thee, is the best of Satan.

How ridiculous people are who try to make a glory of their own, outside and apart from Thee! There was a fool who hated the sun and tried to secure a place out of the light of the sun and to have it as his own. He constructed a shady hut and made no windows, entered it, and stood in quite darkness, rejoicing that he had gotten rid of the great source of light. Such a fool and such an inhabitant of darkness is one who makes an effort to build a glory of his own, outside and apart from Thee, O immortal source of glory!

There is no glory of man's, as there is no power of man's. Thine is the power and the glory, our Father. If we do not borrow from Thee, we lack both qualities and fade away like dry leaves when separated from the tree and scattered, at the mercy of the wind.

AMEN

Let us be satisfied to be called Thy children. There is no greater honor on earth or in Heaven than this.

Take from us our kingdoms, our power, and our glory. All that we ever called our own lies in ruins. Take from us what from the beginning belonged to Thee. Our whole history has been a foolish attempt to make our own kingdom, our own power, and our own glory. Close soon our old history, during which time we have been fighting to make ourselves servants in the house which is Thine. Behold, it is better and more glorious to be the humblest servant in Thy Kingdom than the greatest king is ours.

Therefore make us, O Father, servants of Thy Kingdom, power, and glory, through generations and generations, forever and ever. Amen.