

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost
July 24, 2016

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In Biblical times important rabbis used to compose prayers for the use of their disciples. So it was a reasonable expectation the followers of Our Lord would do the same. They asked Him for a prayer. Do not make too much of the fact the Bible notes they had to ask. They asked when they were ready. What they got was a masterpiece. The practice of the ancient rabbis is known to us but the prayers they composed are mostly long lost. The Lord's Prayer however is far and away *the most often used prayer ever*.

After delivering to His disciples what became known as "The Lord's Prayer" Jesus gave counsel. In a little parable and its teaching the Lord's focus was on the very first word of the prayer He gave: *Father*. God's Son told us that confidence ought to mark our heart in its approach to God. Why? *Because God is our Father*. And because that is true, we have nothing to fear. God will not let us down.

Jesus made His case from an analogy to human fathers. Every father says he wants his children to have the best of everything. How much more, then, will Almighty God in His perfect goodness and Divine Wisdom grant such gifts as are needed for our body and soul? The Lord also makes the point Our Father in Heaven hears our prayers when we pray. And throughout history the saints have reminded us our prayers are *incredibly fruitful*. If God gives so much to those who do not ask or cannot ask, how much more will He give His children who *do* ask?

The Lord is telling us not to stand on formal relations with Almighty God. The laws of conventional piety do not apply. Why? We have access to Our Heavenly Father because the Son has brought us into the Family. In effect Jesus says, "Don't even let the prayer I just gave you get in the way of that relationship. Just remember the prayer I gave you begins *Father*." Using the Lord's Prayer and repeating it often as we do inevitably draw us closer to Our Heavenly Father. Using the prayer itself is the perfect antidote to making formal application to a remote and impersonal deity.

Saint Bernard taught us long ago that if our great confidence in this parent-child relationship is great, as Jesus urges it to be great, then so will be the measure of the grace we receive from God. But if our confidence is little, we shall receive but

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little. God's Own Son encourages you and me to have the utmost trust in the Divine willingness to answer our prayer. Why? *Because God is our Father.*