



**ENCORE
ACCESS**

Praying the “Our Father” with Jesus

with Michael Simone, S.J.

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BOSTON COLLEGE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY

Praying the “Our Father” with Jesus

USING THIS RESOURCE

This resource is a guide to using an Encore presentation from the School of Theology and Ministry as a conversation starter with members of a faith community. Each part of the presentation may be used separately, in combination with each other, or in a sequence over a period of time. “Praying the Our Father with Jesus” has broad application for a faith community. It could serve as a standalone adult ed series during Advent or Lent, or could augment the activities of existing parish groups, such as prayer groups or Scripture study groups. Segments could be used by for periodic catechist meetings or Catholic school faculty meetings, and it would also be appropriate for high school religion students studying the life of Jesus or the New Testament.



OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENTATION

In this presentation **Michael Simone, S.J.** helps us view the Lord’s Prayer through Jesus’s eyes. This is a personal project that Fr. Simone pursues in addition to his academic research and writing. Simone reminds us that the library of books we call the Hebrew Bible or the “Old Testament” was the only Bible Jesus knew. As Simone explores selected phrases or segments from the “Our Father,” he points us to passages and words that may have captivated the mind of Jesus when Jesus uttered that prayer. Simone’s reflections demonstrate to the modern Christian believer just how powerful a source of revelation the Hebrew Bible continues to be.

Part 1: Introduction and “Our Father” [video 15 minutes]

Part 2: “Who Art in Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name” [video 14 minutes]

Part 3: “Thy Kingdom Come . . . Forgive Us Our Trespasses” [video 13 minutes]

Part 4: “Lead Us Not into Temptation” [video 9:30 minutes]

Part 1: Introduction and “Our Father”

OVERVIEW

First, Simone introduces us to his interest in the Lord’s Prayer, which he sums up in this way: “. . . how does Jesus take these words that he’s hearing, maybe that he’s reading, and incorporate them in his own sense of mission, his own sense of prayer? How does he find words to describe his own desires, his own hopes, his own fears, using the words that he inherits from the Hebrew Bible?” Simone continues by exploring how the prayer begins: “Our Father.” He explains the characteristics that Jesus captures in his use of “father.” He also identifies some other divine images described in the Hebrew Bible that Jesus did not draw upon.

BACKGROUND STUDY

Compare the “Our Father” in Matthew and in Luke.*

Matthew 6:9-13

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread;
and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors;
and do not subject us to the final test,
but deliver us from the evil one.*

Luke 11:2-4

*Father,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread
and forgive us our sins
for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us,
and do not subject us to the final test.”*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. What assumptions did you make about Jesus’s education before you heard Simone describe literacy skills in Jesus’s time? How might Simone’s description contribute to understanding why there are two versions of the “Lord’s Prayer,” one in Luke and one in Matthew?
2. What are some characteristics of “father” that Jesus may have called to mind when he began the prayer with “Our Father”? Which ones speak to you most strongly?
3. What were some divine images available to Jesus in the Hebrew Bible that Fr. Simone did not draw upon? What images of God are important to you?

* All Bible passages are from the NABRE

Part 2: “Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name”

OVERVIEW

Simone makes two points in this video segment. First, by praying to the Father who is in heaven, the first-century hearer understood that God is more accessible than they may have imagined. Second, the divine name makes God present. Even when the name isn't used, an action taken in the divine name makes the divine present.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. Simone makes the point that for modern Christians, it is not surprising to say that God is in heaven. What experiences, prayer, or Scripture passages help you realize that God is accessible to us today?
2. Describe how you understand the phrase “hallowed be thy name”?



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Part 3: “Thy kingdom come . . . Forgive us our trespasses”

OVERVIEW

Simone prompts us to reflect on the meaning of the Kingdom and daily bread. He links kingdom to Ezekiel 34. He points out that the understanding of daily bread evolved to become “reliance upon pure grace.” Finally, based on a vision of the Jubilee year which was a familiar idea in Israelite society, Simone builds a case for the use of “debt” rather than

Ezekiel 34:11-16

For thus says the Lord GOD: Look! I myself will search for my sheep and examine them. As a shepherd examines his flock while he himself is among his scattered sheep, so will I examine my sheep. I will deliver them from every place where they were scattered on the day of dark clouds. I will lead them out from among the peoples and gather them from the lands; I will bring them back to their own country and pasture them upon the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and every inhabited place in the land. In good pastures I will pasture them; on the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down on good grazing ground; in rich pastures they will be pastured on the mountains of Israel. I myself will pasture my sheep; I myself will give them rest—oracle of the Lord GOD. The lost I will search out, the strays I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, and the sick I will heal; but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd them in judgment.

Ezekiel 34:23-28

I will appoint one shepherd over them to pasture them, my servant David; he shall pasture them and be their shepherd. I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David will be prince in their midst. I, the LORD, have spoken.

I will make a covenant of peace with them and rid the country of wild beasts so they will dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the forests. I will settle them around my hill and send rain in its season, the blessing of abundant rain. The trees of the field shall bear their fruits, and the land its crops, and they shall dwell securely on their own soil. They shall know that I am the LORD when I break the bars of their yoke and deliver them from the power of those who enslaved them. They shall no longer be plundered by the nations nor will wild beasts devour them, but they shall dwell securely, with no one to frighten them.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. How do you understand the phrase “give us this day our daily bread?” How does Simone’s explanation support, enhance, or change your understanding?
2. What difference does it make to you if you pray “forgiver us our trespasses” or “debts” or “sins”? What difference does it make to Simone, based on his understanding of the Hebrew Bible?

Part 4: “Lead us not into temptation”

OVERVIEW

Simone focuses on an understanding of the word “temptation” as “test.” He inquires whether God tests or the devil tests. He speaks of the great tests of Abraham, Job, and the Israelites in the desert. In this segment, Simone also provides a short review of the points he has made throughout his entire presentation. He draws our attention to how one can be enriched by knowing the biblical prophets when praying this prayer. He ends by asking if this is personal prayer or priestly prayer, i.e. mediated prayer for the whole community. This question leads him to comment on the word “our” which begins the Lord’s Prayer.

Ezekiel 36:26

*I will give you a new heart,
and a new spirit I will put within you.
I will remove the heart of stone from your
flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*

Jeremiah 24:7

*I will give them a heart to know me, that I
am the LORD. They shall be my people and
I will be their God, for they shall return to me
with their whole heart.*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. What does it mean to you to pray the “Our Father” with the word “test” rather than “temptation?” What, from the Hebrew Bible, does Simone think that “test” evokes?
2. What does it mean to you to pray the “Our Father” as prayer for the world?