



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** *St Peter's Square*

Wednesday, 20 March 2019 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning,

Continuing our catechesis on the Lord's Prayer, today we will pause on the third invocation: "thy will be done". It should be read together with the first two — "hallowed be thy name" and "thy Kingdom come" — so that they jointly form a triptych: "hallowed be thy name", "thy Kingdom come", "thy will be done". Today we will speak about the third.

Before man's care for the world, there is the tireless care God employs for man and for the world. The whole Gospel reflects this inversion of perspective. The sinner Zacchaeus climbs up a tree because he wants to see Jesus but he does not know that, much earlier, God had sought him. When Jesus arrives, He says to him: "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today". And at the end He states: "the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost" (Lk 19:5-10). This is *God's will*, what we pray to be done. What is God's will, incarnated in Jesus? To seek and to save the one who is lost. And in prayer, we ask that God's seeking may be successful, that his universal plan of salvation may be accomplished, firstly in each of us, and then in the entire world. Have you thought about what it means that God seeks me? Each one of us can say: 'But does God seek me?' — 'Yes! he seeks you! He seeks me': he seeks each one of us, personally. But God is great! How much love there is behind all this.

God is not ambiguous. He never conceals himself behind enigmas. He did not plan the world's future in an incomprehensible way. No. He is clear. If we do not understand this, then we also risk not understanding the meaning of the third expression of the "Our Father". Indeed, the Bible is filled with expressions that tell us about God's positive will for the world. And in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, we find a collection of quotes that bear witness to this faithful and patient divine will (cf. nn. 2821-2827). And in his First Letter to Timothy, Saint Paul writes: God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2:4). This, without a shadow of a doubt, is God's will: the salvation of man, of mankind, of each of us. God knocks upon the door of our heart with his love. Why? To attract us, to attract us to him and to carry us forward on the path

of salvation. God is close to each of us, with his love, to lead us by the hand to salvation. How much love there is behind this!

Therefore, by praying “thy will be done”, we are not called to subserviently bow our head as if we were slaves. No! God wants us to be free; his love frees us. Indeed, the “Our Father” is the prayer of children, not of slaves; but of children who know their father’s heart and are certain of his loving plan. Woe to us if, in uttering these words, we should shrug our shoulders as a sign of surrender to a destiny we find repellant and that we are unable to change. On the contrary, it is a prayer that is filled with ardent trust in God who wants good, life and salvation for us. A courageous, even militant prayer, because there are many, too many realities in the world that are not in accordance with God’s plan. We all know them. Paraphrasing the prophet Isaiah, we could say: “Here, Father, there is war, abuse of power, exploitation; but we know that you want our good. You want our good, therefore we implore you: thy will be done! Lord, overturn the world’s plans, transform swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks: so that no one may learn the art of war any more” (cf. 2:4). God wants peace.

The “Our Father” is a prayer which kindles in us the same love as Jesus’ love for the Father’s will, a flame that spurs us to transform the world with love. The Christian does not believe in an inescapable “fate”. There is nothing unplanned in Christian faith. Rather, there is a salvation waiting to manifest itself in the life of each man and woman, and to be fulfilled in eternity. When we pray, we believe that God can and wants to transform reality by overcoming evil with good. It makes sense to obey and to surrender oneself to this God, even at the hour of the most difficult trial.

So it was for Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane when he experienced anguish and prayed: “Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Lk 22:42). Jesus is crushed by the evil of the world. However, he trustingly surrenders himself to the ocean of love of the Father’s will. The martyrs, too, were not seeking death in their trials. They were seeking the “after-death”, the resurrection. Out of love, God can lead us to walk along difficult paths and to experience wounds and painful thorns, but he will never forsake us. He will always be with us, beside us, within us. For a believer this is more than a hope, it is a certainty: God is with me. The same that we find in the parable in Luke’s Gospel regarding the need to always pray. Jesus says: “will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily” (18:7-8). Such is the Lord. This is how he loves us. This is how he cares for us. But now I would like to invite you to pray the “Our Father” all together. And those who do not know Italian can pray it in their own language. Let us pray together.

[*Our Father ...*]

Appeal for flood victims

In these days, great floods have caused mourning and destruction in various regions of Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi. I express my sorrow and my closeness to these dear peoples. I entrust the victims and their families to God's mercy and I implore him to comfort and support those struck by this calamity.

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, especially those from England, Belgium, Croatia, Norway, Nigeria, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates and the United States of America. With prayerful good wishes that this Lent will be a time of grace and spiritual renewal for you and your families, I invoke upon all of you joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

I offer a special greeting to *young people, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds*. May the Lenten journey we are undertaking be an opportunity for authentic conversion for each one of us, so that we may reach full maturity of faith in Christ, yearning to spread his Gospel in every area of life in which we find ourselves.
