



The Holy See

ECUMENICAL PILGRIMAGE OF HIS HOLINESS FRANCIS TO GENEVA
TO MARK THE 70th ANNIVERSARY OF THE
FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

HOLY MASS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS

Palexpo (Geneva)
Thursday, 21 June 2018

[\[Multimedia\]](#)

Father, bread, forgiveness. Three words that the Gospel offers us today. Three words that take us to the very heart of our faith.

“Father”. The prayer begins with this. We can continue with other words, but we cannot forget this first one, for the word “Father” is the key to opening God’s heart. Simply by saying *Father*, we are already praying in the language of Christianity. As Christians, we do not pray to some generic deity, but to God who is, before all else, *our Father*. Jesus told us to say *“Our Father, who are in heaven”*, not “God of heaven, who are Father”. Before all else, even before his being infinite and eternal, God is Father.

All fatherhood and motherhood are derived from him (cf. *Eph 3:15*). In him is the origin of all goodness and life itself. The words “Our Father” reveal our identity, our life’s meaning: we are God’s *beloved sons and daughters*. Those words solve the problem of our isolation, our sense of being orphans. They show us what we have to do: love God, *our Father*, and others, *our brothers and sisters*. The “Our Father” is the prayer of *us*, of the Church. It says nothing about *me* and *mine*; everything is caught up in the *you* of God (*“your name”, “your kingdom”, “your will”*). It

speaks in the first person plural. “Our Father”: these two simple words offer us a roadmap for the spiritual life.

Every time we make the sign of the cross at the start of the day or before any other important activity, every time we say “*Our Father*”, we reclaim our roots. We need those roots in our often rootless societies. The “Our Father” strengthens our roots. Where the Father is present, no one is excluded; fear and uncertainty cannot gain the upper hand. Suddenly we remember all the good things, because in the Father’s heart we are not strangers but his beloved sons and daughters. He does not group us together in little clubs, but gives us new life and makes us one large family.

Let us never tire of saying “Our Father”. It will remind us that just as there are no sons or daughters without a Father, so none of us is ever alone in this world. It will also remind us that there is no Father without sons or daughters, so none of us is an only child. Each of us must care for our brothers and sisters in the one human family. When we say “Our Father”, we are saying that every human being is part of us, and that, in the face of all the wrongs that offend our Father, we, as his sons and daughters, are called to react as brothers and sisters. We are called to be good guardians of our family, to overcome all indifference towards our brothers or sisters, towards *any* of our brothers or sisters. This includes the unborn, the older person who can no longer speak, the person we find hard to forgive, the poor and the outcast. This is what the Father asks us, indeed commands us, to do: to love one another from the heart, as sons and daughters in the midst of their brothers and sisters.

Bread. Jesus tells to ask our Father for bread each day. Nothing else: just bread, in other words, what is essential for life. Before all else, bread is what we need this day to be healthy and to do our work; tragically, so many of our brothers and sisters do not have it. Here I would say: Woe to those who speculate on bread! The basic food that people need for their daily lives must be accessible to everyone.

To ask for our daily bread is also to say: “Father, help me lead a simpler life”. Life has become so complicated. Nowadays many people seem “pumped up”, rushing from dawn to dusk, between countless phone calls and texts, with no time to see other people’s faces, full of stress from complicated and constantly changing problems. We need to choose a sober lifestyle, free of unnecessary hassles. One that goes against the tide, like that of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, whose feast we celebrate today. It would involve giving up all those things that fill our lives but empty our hearts. Brothers and sisters, let us choose simplicity, *the simplicity of bread* and so rediscover the courage of *silence* and of *prayer*, the leaven of a truly human life. Let us choose *people* over things so that personal, not virtual, relationships may flourish. Let us learn once more to love the familiar smell of life all around us. When I was a child at home, if a piece of bread fell from the table, we were taught to pick it up and kiss it. Let us value the simple things of everyday life: not using them and throwing them away, but appreciating them and caring for them.

Our “daily bread”, we must not forget, is Jesus himself. Without him, we can do nothing (cf. *Jn* 15:5). He is our regular diet for healthy living. Sometimes, however, we treat Jesus as a side dish. Yet if he is not our daily bread, the centre of our days, the very air we breathe, then everything else is meaningless, everything else is secondary. Each day, when we pray for our daily bread, let us ask the Father, and keep reminding ourselves: simplicity of life, care for what is all around us, Jesus in everything and before everything.

Forgiveness. It is not easy to forgive. We always retain a dram of bitterness or resentment, and whenever those we have forgiven annoy us, it rises to the surface once again. Yet the Lord wants our forgiveness to be gift. It is significant that the only really original commentary on the *Our Father* is Jesus’ own. He tells us simply: “If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (*Mt* 6:14-15). That’s the only commentary the Lord makes! Forgiveness is the catch phrase of the *Our Father*. God frees our hearts of all sin, God forgives every last thing. Yet he asks only one thing of us: that we in turn never tire of forgiving. He wants every one of us to issue a general amnesty for the sins of others. We should take a good x-ray of our heart, to find out if there are blockages within us, obstacles to forgiveness, stones needing to be removed. Then we can say to the Father: “You see this stone? I hand it over to you and I pray for this person, for that situation; even if I struggle to forgive, I ask you for the strength to do it”.

Forgiveness *renews*, forgiveness *works miracles*. Peter experienced Jesus’ forgiveness and became the shepherd of his flock. Saul became Paul after the forgiveness he received from Stephen. Forgiven by our Father, each of us is born again as a new creation when we love our brothers and sisters. Only then do we bring true newness to our world, for there is no greater novelty than forgiveness; this is the forgiveness that *turns evil into good*. We see it in the history of Christianity. Forgiving one another, rediscovering after centuries of disagreements and conflicts that we are brothers and sisters, how much good this has done us and continues to do! The Father is pleased when we love one another and we forgive each other from the heart (cf. *Mt* 18:35). Then, he gives us his Spirit. Let us ask for the grace not to be entrenched and hard of heart, constantly demanding things of others. Instead, let us take the first step, in prayer, in fraternal encounter, in concrete charity. In this way, we will be more like the Father, who loves without counting the cost. And he will pour out upon us the Spirit of unity.

Brief Acknowledgements of the Holy Father

Conclusion of Mass at Palexpo

I wholeheartedly thank Bishop Morerod and the diocesan community of Lausanne-Geneva-Fribourg. I thank you for your welcome, your preparations and your prayers, which I ask you please to continue. I will also pray for you, that the Lord will accompany you at every step, particularly on the journey of ecumenism. I also greet with gratitude the Swiss bishops and all the

other bishops present, as well as the faithful coming from various parts of Switzerland and France, and from other countries.

I likewise greet the citizens of this lovely city, where exactly six hundred years ago [Pope Martin V](#) stayed, and which serves as headquarters for important international institutions, including the International Labour Organization, now celebrating the hundredth anniversary of its establishment.

I am deeply grateful to the Government of the Swiss Federation for its kind invitation and unfailing help and cooperation. Thank you!

Please, do not forget to pray for me. Until we meet again!