

# SAINT THOMAS CHURCH

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*Fifth Avenue · New York City*

**Sunday, October 16, 2022**

The Nineteenth Sunday After Pentecost

**Festal Evensong**

4 p.m.

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A Sermon by

The Rev. Canon Carl Turner, *Rector*

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## **The Lord's Prayer**

**'I pray that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.'** *John 17:21*

"Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." What was at the heart of the prayer of Jesus just before his passion and death? A prayer for unity "That they may be one." I want to share just a few thoughts about prayer and unity, and the place of the Lord's Prayer as the pattern of all prayer.

On Thursday, I attended an ecumenical service of Vespers at St. Vincent Ferrer Church on the Upper East side. I was embarrassed to say that I had never ever set foot inside the church, so it was both a joy and a wonderful to be in a church designed by Ralph Adams Cram, one of the architects of this church, and to see the very same kind of arcades and pillars, and attention to detail that is so beloved of our own church.

It was a gathering of the Order of Malta and the Order of St. John and I had been asked to read a prayer at the end of the service. Dear Bishop John O'Hara preached a beautiful homily about the 11<sup>th</sup> Rector, Father John Andrew, and his dear friend Cardinal Terence Cook, and their commitment to unity. Bishop O'Hara shared two images that have stayed with me since that evening – both are linked and both speak much of the poignancy of Christian unity. First, he pointed out the Advent altar frontal that Fr. John Andrew had made for Saint Thomas. Emblazoned across the front of that rich purple frontal, in large gold letters is the phrase: **Adveniat regnum tuum – Thy kingdom come.** He then took us, as it were, two blocks down the road to see the mosaic of Terence Cook's coat of arms when he was made a cardinal. The inscription reads, **Fiat voluntas tua – Thy will be done.**

For a moment I was completely transfixed. Fr. John Andrew and Cardinal Terence Cooke had been close friends; their two churches two blocks apart from each other here in New York. They had left behind a prayer for unity more powerful than anything that any pope or Archbishop of Canterbury had ever prayed, for it as the prayer of Jesus. *Adveniat regnum tuum; fiat voluntas tua – Thy kingdom come – thy will be done.*

For as long as our prayer for unity is centered on difference, dogma, and 'my way of doing things' it will never be true prayer. But when our prayer is united with the prayer of Jesus, it truly becomes the Lord's Prayer, and a sign of unity and hope.

Rabbis, at the time of Jesus, taught their disciples in the way of prayer and, like the disciples of John the Baptist, the disciples of Jesus wanted that particular and significant way of praying that marked their Rabbi out from the rest. Jesus fulfilled their request by giving them what was to be, *what is*, the pattern of all Prayer – so much so that it would become known as *the Lord's Prayer*. This prayer of Jesus is rooted in the *experiences* of Jesus – it is not a philosophical exercise – it is rooted in his encounters with those he came to save and

with the relationship he had with his heavenly Father – in other words, the prayer of Jesus is rooted in the everyday stuff of life and existence; The Transfiguration on the mountain, the feeding of the five thousand, the forgiving of the sinful women, the touching of the leper, the defiance of the devil in the desert – did all of these events, and many more, shape the prayer of Jesus? In this year of Luke, we read again the lines of the Lord Prayer:

**Father** – one word, and in Aramaic, *Abba*, which means ‘daddy’. The Prayer of Jesus reveals an intimate relationship with God – not a distant vengeful God but a God who yearns to be known and to know each of us.

**Hallowed be your name** – adoration is at the heart of the prayer of Jesus – something that Jesus regularly demonstrated to his disciples... “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth.....Father, glorify your name!”

**Your kingdom come** – the reality of a kingdom to be experienced here on earth – now in real time and challenging and transforming all creation in the future. God’s kingdom, not *my* kingdom, and certainly not God’s kingdom as *I* would want it to be.

**Give us each day our daily bread** – not being afraid to ask God for our daily needs but also asking for God to be present in our daily lives – the bread of life come down from heaven, born in a manger in the little town whose name means ‘house of bread’

**And forgive us our sins as we forgive everyone indebted to us** – significantly we are to seek forgiveness - for we need to experience the power of forgiveness in order to make our own forgiveness of others real.

**And do not bring us to the time of trial** – or temptation – for this prayer of Jesus is to end with a statement of hope and faith.

Jesus taught his disciples the need to persevere in prayer – to make this kind of prayer at the heart of their lives – prayer that is transformative but in touch with the world around them. Prayer which is natural and speaks of the relationship that God has with each of us – not someone else’s prayer or words but our own who dare to come close to God knowing that he has already come close to us.

When we attempt this kind of prayer – when, like Jesus, we make this prayer the pattern not only of our meditation or intercessory prayer but rather make it the pattern of our lives, we open ourselves up to a new and vivid relationship with our God. We become Christ-like in our prayer because our prayer becomes one with us – it becomes as natural as breathing. It helps us become fully human and, therefore, more like God in whose image we are made.

And that brings us back to John Andrew and Terence Cook. The Lord’s prayer is truly a prayer of unity. Instead of a prayer centered on me and my needs, I learn to pray the prayer of Jesus first, “*Thy* kingdom come – *Thy* will be done.”

Let me end with a prayer of St. Francis of Assisi that I treasure – it is his Paraphrase of the Lord’s Prayer.

#### **SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI**

#### **OPARAPHRASE OF THE LORD’S PRAYER**

O

**ur father**, most holy and blessed, Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter.

*Who art in heaven*, in angels and saints; enlightening them with knowledge of thyself: for thou, O Lord, art light inflaming them with love divine; for thou, O Lord, art love dwelling in them and filling them with every blessing; for thou art the supreme and everlasting good, from whom all things do come and without whom nothing is good.

*Hallowed be thy Name*, glorified in us by thy revelation, that we may know the breadth of thy benefits, the length of thy promises, the height of thy majesty, and the depth of thy judgements.

*Thy Kingdom come*, that thou mayest reign in us by thy grace, and make us to come to that kingdom, there to attain thine open vision, thy perfect love, thy blissful fellowship and thy fruition without end.

*Thy Will be done, in Earth as it is in Heaven:* that we may love thee with all our heart, ever thinking of thee; with all our soul, ever-longing after thee; and with all our mind, directing all our intentions to thee, and seeking thy honor in all things; and with all our strength, devoting every faculty and sense of mind and body to the service of thy love and not to anything else : that, secondly, we may love our neighbor as ourself, bringing them all to thy love as far as in us lies; rejoicing in the good of others as in our own, sympathizing with them in their affliction, and giving no offence to anyone.

*Give us this day our daily Bread:* even thy beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord do thou give us this day; in remembrance, understanding, and adoration of the love which he had to usward, and of those things which he did, said, and suffered for our sake.

*And forgive us our Trespases,* by thy mercy, and the ineffable virtue of the Passion of thy beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord, and the merits and intercession of the blessed Virgin Mary and of all Saints.

*As we forgive them that trespass against us;* and because we do not forgive fully, O Lord, do thou make us to forgive fully; that we may love our enemies for thy sake, and intercede for them devoutly with thee, not rendering to any man evil for evil, but striving to be profitable to all men in thee.

*And lead us not into temptation,* hidden or manifest, sudden or importunate.

*But deliver us from Evil,* past, present, and to come.

*Amen,* so be it, freely and of thy grace.