

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost – 2025

Genesis 18:17-33

Colossians 2:6-19

Luke 11:1-13

The Mona Lisa was painted by Leonardo Di Vinci. Di Vinci was a master artist and this painting is objectively sublime. How many of you would ask the French government for the permission to improve this painting, to take your watercolor set and your Walmart paint brush and adapt Di Vinci's work to make it more contemporary, more 21st century? Michaelangelo carved *La Pieta*, one of the most astounding works of art that has ever been made. "Pieta" is the Italian word for pity, which is a reference to Mary's emotional state and our emotional state as we look at her. *La Pieta* depicts the dead Messiah lying in the arms of Mary. Mary's countenance is youthful, which is meant to capture the timelessness of love, compassion, and spiritual beauty. How many of you would ask the Vatican for permission to alter the Pieta, to jazz it up a bit, or make it more relatable, whatever that means?

These examples are ludicrous. When I was a lad, we had classes in Art Appreciation in school. These classes taught youthful minds to grasp the splendor of art. We learned about artistic balance, proportion, depth of field, accent, and emotion embedded in the art as well as the more straightforward ideas of line, shape and space. Art Appreciation is intended to enhance one's experience of what is truly beautiful. It wasn't snobby. To be sure, people can be snobs. Art Appreciation is inviting, welcoming, lovingly instructive. Our ability to appreciate great art enlarges our spirit. The art forms us, not the other way around.

One of His disciples asks Jesus to teach them how to pray. The unnamed disciple is certainly asking for guidance on prayer, but what the disciple really wants is to be more like Jesus. Help us to pray like you do. The Lord wants us to be like Him. The Lord is at work among us to that very end. He said: "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40). What does Jesus give us? That we might be like Him, what does the Lord give us? He gives us the "Our Father." I know that you pray it – the Lord's Prayer. I know that you pray it devoutly, humbly. There are some who would attempt to persuade you to believe that the Lord's Prayer is a rote set of words that is devoid of spiritual depth. There are some who complain that the "Our Father" is formulaic and dry, that it doesn't capture their need for spiritual dynamism. Don't fall for it. Don't let that attitude take you captive. This prayer that Christ has given us is a spiritual gift of the highest order. A treasure, a constant ally, a spiritual tool for perpetual use – the Lord's Prayer is a vista of salvation and grace and as you pray it your Father hears you, answers you, and bestows upon you His gifts.

You have the extraordinary privilege of calling upon Almighty God as your Father. Jesus gives you that privilege. He is the Only-Begotten Son, the eternal Son of the eternal Father, and we were slaves of darkness – we were defiled, radically distant from our Creator by virtue of our sin. And Christ's blood makes us sons and daughters. Christ's sacrifice changes our status. His death upon the holy cross gives us the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent or a husband's will, but born of the new genesis of Jesus' cross and empty tomb (John 1:12; 3:16). When you pray "Our Father," just those two words, you are praying the glorious love of Good Friday and the splendor of Easter morn. By Jesus' blood, we are no longer

slaves to death but liberated sons and daughters of the Most High. Is that not how you *want* to pray – as a beloved child of your beloved Father? There is joy in that address – Our Father. The whole church on earth is in that address – Our Father. Christ's kingdom is in that address – Our Father. Is that not how you *want* to pray? Do you think that there is anything stale in that address – Our Father?

We learn more than just saying the words. The problem of someone looking at *La Pietà* and not seeing layers of beauty is not with the work of art but with the eyes, the heart of the viewer. As a Christian, is it not both our duty and our privilege to learn the sprawling content of the petition “hallowed be Thy name?” “God’s name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also. How is God’s name kept holy? God’s name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to God’s Word profanes the name of God among us. Protect us from this, heavenly Father!” (Small Catechism).

Hallowed by Thy name. Did you know that God has placed His name on you? You were baptized into the name that is above every name (Philippians 2:9; Acts 2:38). You were baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). You bear God’s name. Even now, Jesus comes to us in God’s name (Matthew 21:9). Blessed is He, blessed is He, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. You will sing that momentarily (Sanctus). When you pray for God’s name to be hallowed you are praying for Christ to deliver His holiness to you – and He does! You, me, the sinners that we are, we are made holy. Christ’s prayer is in action in this place. You become a hallowed vessel of His name as Christ ministers to you through His means of grace. This prayer is *dynamic* and it is a window into eternal truth, a window into divine love, a window into Christian vitality.

Our faith is formed by God’s Word. Our spirit, our virtue, our love, our fidelity to God and our neighbor is formed by inwardly digesting His Word. This prayer frames your mind and tells you both who you are and what God is doing presently. He is giving you your daily bread. It’s the word for “daily” that is layered with meaning. The word in Greek is ἐπιούσιος. Stay with me now. This word is a “hapax legomenon” which is a fancy term that means it is only found once in the Bible – here and in Matthew’s version of the Lord’s Prayer (okay, that’s two). There is no ancient Greek secular background on this word to consult either. *Daily* bread; it could mean “give us the bread that we need each day to survive, physical bread, bread for sustenance, bread essential for existence.” It could also mean “give us the bread of tomorrow, the bread we need for tomorrow. Give us the bread of the coming age, now, sacramentally, as we anticipate being seated at the banquet table in heaven.” Jesus gives us this bread and tells us that it is His body. God’s name is hallowed as you eat this bread. God’s kingdom comes upon you as you eat this bread. God’s will is being done as you eat this bread. The Lord’s prayer forms your faith, opens your eyes to see what is taking place in this Divine Service. The Lord’s prayer is Art Appreciation for Christians who want to see their Lord, who want to be engaged by His life. *That’s* what Jesus teaches.

On one occasion, when His disciples were urging Him to eat, Jesus said this: “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” “My food is to do the will of His who sent me and accomplish his

work” (John 4:32, 34). The Father sent His Son into our flesh to reclaim humanity by dying for our sins. That was Jesus’ food. Now, His flesh is real food and His blood is real drink. This is the true bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever (John 6:48-51). Fred Nowak ate of this bread. I communed him in that pew back there over and over. As I pronounced a blessing on him, after he had communed, he looked at me with a happy gratitude for what God had given him. Fred is now at the heavenly banquet table. Fred Nowak was fed well in this place. The Lord’s prayer informed and shaped Fred as a Christian, as a husband, father, and grandfather. He lives. Jesus said this: “As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me” (John 6:57). I hope that you see the art of Christ’s life among us. It is exquisite, this art. Treasure it! Pray as our Lord taught us. Be assured of this, the Lord is blessing us. His prayer invades us, forms us, enlarges us and makes us like Him.