

Congregation at Prayer

✠ Advent IV ✠

A Guide for Daily Family Prayer
For the Week of December 23rd to 29th

Catechesis Notes for the Week...

The Lord's Prayer teaches us the Christian life. In it we are taught to pray and given the promise that God hears and delights in our prayer. One thing God delights to give is bread—and with it, forgiveness.

The Catechism teaches us well that “*daily bread*” includes everything. Luther drives this home in answer to *What is meant by daily bread?*

“... food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.”

In a word: daily bread is *everything!* We are to trust God to provide *everything* that we need to support this body and life. And this blessed support and preservation is not just for Christians. “*God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers,*” Luther says, “*even to all evil people.*” That anyone has anything is purely by God's grace and providential care of humanity.

But there is something uniquely given to those who believe. There is a bread that supports not only this body and life, but the body and life for the life to come. That bread is the bread connected to the Lord's Word of forgiveness. This is what we call the Sacrament of the Altar.

In the Sacrament, the Lord provides His own body and blood together in, with, and under the bread and wine. It most certainly is daily bread—it's not magical bread, or anything like that. And yet, with the Word of the forgiveness of sins attached to it, this bread becomes the bread of immortality—a life giving, heavenly Manna, a true Bread from Heaven.

So when we pray for daily bread and for the forgiveness of our trespasses, we are to recognize that in communion with God at the Lord's altar, we receive all that the Lord desires to give us—even heaven itself!

And from the altar, having received the very body and blood of Jesus for our forgiveness, life, and salvation, we are then to forgive those who trespass against us. As we have been forgiven much, Luther says in the Catechism, “*So we too will sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.*”

Daily Bread and Forgiveness

Responsive Prayer 2, *Lutheran Service Book* p.285

Learn-By-Heart Scripture...

Psalm 19:14

“*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.*”

Learn-By-Heart Catechism...

The Lord's Prayer

Fourth Petition: Give us this day our daily bread.

What does this mean?

God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What is meant by daily bread?

Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

Fifth Petition: And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

What does this mean?

We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins, or deny our prayer because of them. We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them, but we ask that He would give them all to us by grace, for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment. So we too will sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

Daily Readings...

Monday (12/23): Isaiah 43:25-44:20; Revelation 11:1-19

Tuesday (12/24): Isaiah 44:21-45:13, 20-25; Revelation 12:1-17

Wednesday (12/25): Isaiah 49:1-18; Matthew 1:1-17

Thursday (12/26): Isaiah 49:22-26; 50:4-51:8, 12-16; Matthew 1:18-25

Friday (12/27): Isaiah 51:17-52:12; Matthew 2:1-12

Saturday (12/28): Isaiah 52:13-54:10; Matthew 2:13-23

Sunday (12/29): Isaiah 55:1-13; Luke 1:1-25

Prayer of the Week...

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Psalm of the Week...

Psalm 130

Hymn of the Week... “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

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Looking Forward to Next Week...

Christmas Eve: Isa 9:2-7

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 2:1-20

Christmas Day: Isa 52:7-10

Heb 1:1-12

John 1:1-18

Sunday a. Christmas: Isa 63:7-14

Gal 4:4-7

Matthew 2:13-23