

THE LORD'S PRAYER

What is the meaning of the word 'PRAYER'? What does it mean 'TO PRAY'?

From the beginning of history, humans, made from earthly clay, are revealed to the world as thinking creatures who pray. It does not make any difference what the person prays for or to whom the person prays. There is no human civilization or culture, however primitive, where humans did not pray.

Prayer is that human state or act of worship where the person commits or entrusts himself to a Superior force or power and subjects himself to the Divine Omnipotence in order to reach the Ultimate Good or to avoid certain evils.

Prayer which is a devout supplication to God consists of both an inward spirituality as well as an outward and visible ceremony. Prayer embraces petition and entreaty. The efficacy of prayer would remain unknown if God abandoned the praying person's petitions.

To pray to God is not necessarily done by voice or pronunciation. Sometimes our mind is in another place and the words which we pronounce are irrelevant. Prayer is more an attitude or state of mind, not only physically but rather spiritually and intellectually. When we offer or surrender all of our being, physically and spiritually, to God, the divine creative Force can be seen and felt in our lives.

Holy spoken or written prayers to God are a much higher spiritual state than sorcery and witchcraft. Prayer is the ascent of the soul toward the Creator. The human, even in his or her clayish and earthly body, wishes to communicate and have a sincere relationship with God. Prayer is that moment when the earthly human touches the Inaccessible Spirit. The act of this touching transforms the human creature and makes him or her closer to God's image. This prayer must be repeated and continued in order for men and women to become mirror images of God. Through this divine communication, God is known as our Protector.

From this type of close relationship with the Divine, many of the Armenian saints are called Lousavorichner-- Illuminators, Shenorhaliner-- Graceful and the Naregatsis.

In Armenian literature, we have the words for "art" and "artist". We attribute those names to painters, poets, sculptors and others.

Those aforesaid persons see the invisible with their eyes, feel and hear the veiled, and reveal their insights and perceptions to the public.

Otherwise, those beautiful and harmonious melodies which exist in the universe are unattainable to mortal and earthly humans.

If we call those gifted individuals who have relations with the created beauty in the universe "artists", how much greater are those saints who communicate with the Creator God in prayer?

In this infinite cosmos, there must be immense power and immeasurable beauty for believing Christians which will be revealed as our minds and wills mature! Is it not worthwhile to enter into our private room, close the door and open our inner world and expose our inner selves to God exactly as we are, without veil or hypocrisy? A sincere entreaty to God will consist of true repentance and regret. Let us trust God and rely on Him as our only Refuge and Power.

In this spiritual and intellectual offering of a humble spirit, let us direct our prayer to the loving God with the sanctified and simple words which our Lord and Saviour Jesus taught the disciples- saying:

**OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily
bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven
our debtors.
And do not bring us to the time
of trial,
but rescue us from the evil one.
For yours is the kingdom, and
the power, and the glory, forever,
Amen.**

--Matthew 6:9-13.

OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN

Numerous prayers have risen to the God of Heaven. Many requests and supplications have reached the Eternal and Omnipotent One. All those prayers were directed to the *name* of God.

Because of their sinful and earthly existence, humans never dared to be intimate with God. Their relationship was always official. There was no love or charming endearment. Before the Incarnation of Jesus, the Son of

God, human prayer sprung from *fear*.

Jesus Christ who lived in the spirit of love and endearment with His God-Father, wanted his disciples to share this sanctified communion.

Jesus opened a new age for knowing God. Although prayer had always been a form of communication with God, Jesus taught and showed us that the prayer was a participation with God as well as a welcome and an invitation to intimacy.

How many of us have been present to witness a child's first naming of his father and mother? Does the child call his father or mother by their first names? No way. His first cry becomes "Papa" and "Mama". A child learns the names of his parents quite later in life and often pronounces them incorrectly.

A child never calls his parents by their legal names. Until his or her death, their names will continue to be "Father" and "Mother". Even from far away in correspondence, the child's letter will begin with the words "My dear Father" or "My very dear Mother". Also when a parent writes a letter to a son or daughter, it will end not with their names, but with the written words of "Your loving Father" or "Your very dear Mother".

When a child returns home from school, he calls his mother with the word "Mom". When a husband returns home in the evening, he calls his wife with the words "my love". The child waits to hear the voice of his mother and the husband waits to hear the echoing response of his greeting. Neither the child nor the husband will continue their conversation until they hear the voice of their loved one.

It is the same with the spirit of a person when he or she begins to pray saying, ***"Our Father which art in heaven."*** This is an affectionate calling directed to God to which follows a silence until God, with cosmic melody, replies to the voice of His believer and the "prayer" is transformed into spiritual dialectics. It is within this realm that the praying person becomes conscious of divine wisdom and mystery and sees himself or herself within the Creator's Light.

Thus, the first step in prayer is to quiet the mind and to listen to the divine silence for the still, small voice of God. Our prayer should not be a monotonous litany of words. Our prayer should become an occasion to *hear* and understand the Divine Voice.

Likewise, when Jesus tries to teach His disciples to pray, He puts *life* and *meaning* into the word "Father". Therefore, the believer who is in a true state of prayer, will immediately feel that he or she is in the presence of a *loving* Father. But a sinner, who for years has turned away from the presence of the compassionate Heavenly Father, will feel a hunger and emptiness which will draw him or her to faith and to an invitation to feast and rejoice at God's heavenly banquet.

To call God "Father" sounds very ordinary to us, but I believe that the Jewish disciples of Jesus were amazed. They must have used this new intimate term of "Father" very cautiously. What a great privilege it is for us believers, because to call God "Father" means that we are **adopted** by God! And if we are adopted, it means that we have His Spirit, and if we have His Spirit, our lives and behaviour should be transformed into divine reality. This means that we have an obligation to keep His commandments. What is the last commandment which Jesus gave to His disciples before ascending to heaven? It was a **new** commandment. He instructed them saying:

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”--John 13:35.

Jesus then prayed to God, the Father, saying,

“I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world”--John 17:6.

What was the name which Jesus manifested to the world? It was that divine, holy, and loving name, "**Father**" which Jesus, the Son, declared to earthly humans. It was this name, "Father", which became an important revelation and made humans and the loving God intimate. Through this name, humans became worthy or justified by the Begotten Son and were "adopted" by God.

It was through the force of this magnetic name, "Father", that the: Prodigal Son returned home to eternal life. It is this revolutionary name, "Father", which Jesus used to transform the gentile world by presenting it with a higher divine revelation.

So let us appreciate this common human word, "Father", in its new dimension. Only then will we discover the inexhaustible and victorious power which transformed the gentile world.

"OUR" FATHER"

When our lips pronounce the word "**OUR**", we who are praying no longer feel lonely or abandoned. From then on, the praying person does not lose his or her identity. Instead, he or she will find and feel that they are among innumerable believers who love God as their heavenly Father, the Creator of all. The praying believer's consciousness is sanctified so that he or she will accept all others who are praying as brothers and sisters, even

though they are not relatives or the same colour or even the same culture.

When a child visits a relative or a family friend with his parents, the child will find a toy or a plaything. For a moment, he or she will play with those trucks or dolls and then forget about them. But when they are leaving to go home, the house-wife may bring that toy to the child and put it in their hands saying, "From now on, this toy is yours". The child's joy and happiness will have no end.

Why is there more joy and rejoicing now from the child than there was when he or she was playing with the toy half an hour before? When the child started playing, none of the toys belonged to him. Similarly it is the personal spiritual feeling between a praying person who experiences in his soul when he or she says, "Oh God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob", and the one who utters the words "**Our** Lord" which becomes a testimony that the Inaccessible and Unattainable Being of God is near to all humanity in Spirit and not far away somewhere in the sky.

Prayer is like rising incense whose praiseworthy perfume rises up to the heavenly Father. The only reason the perfume or the aroma is released is because the incense and the fire are brought together. It is in this jointly responsible and harmonious state, that the Universal Love will find us earthly creatures and become our spiritual Protector and Guardian.

WHICH ART IN HEAVEN

There is no up or down in the atmosphere but, because the human is an earthly creature and gravity causes our feet to cling to this global earth, heaven is always "up". The hope and the expectation of humankind has always been from up above - from heaven. The first ingenious scatterer of seeds, ploughed the fields, scattered the grain, and lifted his or her face to the heavens and waited for rain to come from above. For countless centuries, early humans investigated the heavens and the sun, the moon, the stars, the dawn and the rainbows to decide the most auspicious time for sowing and reaping. Those who studied stars were called astrologers, wise-men, prophets and poets. Those who serve modern industry find the heavens or interstellar space even more fascinating and important than their predecessors. It is an indisputable fact, that, without the celestial vault, or space, there would not be telephones, television, navigation, or the internet. All modern affairs and actions rely upon satellite communication.

Humans are terrestrial beings who know how to harness the power of space in a limited measure. God is an incomprehensible Being, supernaturally unlimited and above human power and knowledge. Humans often are

proud that "they" have put some thousands of satellites into the sky. But on the other hand, the Creator created and decorated the cosmos with innumerable galaxies which are visible in the darkness out of nothing. Is this not a divine force we should believe in and be proud of and should we not place our love and hope in Him? Is it not worthy to call God **Our Father Who Art In Heaven**.

The modern mind is well persuaded that the Power which rules over the sky in heaven, will be the Power who also dominates on earth. Our Heavenly Father will command the future as well, because God is the Creator of heaven and earth. God is the Lord of all the seen and the unseen.

When Jesus began to teach His disciples how to pray, he taught them precisely, strictly and justly to pray directly to God. We, too, as latter disciples, should direct our prayers only to God, the **Father**. In order not to be misunderstood, Jesus said "Whatever you ask the Father in my name, I will do it."--John 14:13-14. Our prayers should always be directed to God, the Father.

HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME

What is the most sacred object and godly item for a community or closely knit group of people? Is it the army or the cannon? Not at all. For a nation, the most sacred object is its **flag**. Every nation on this earth is known by its flag. When you come close to the United Nations' building, you will notice how many nations belong through their flags.

If you want to dishonour a nation, trample on its flag. There will not be a greater insult or outrage to the people of that country. Does the Creator of heaven and earth also have a flag? If yes, then what is the flag of God? God's flag is Jesus, His revelation on earth.

One of Jesus' disciples, through his apostolic and poetic words, very clearly elucidates the divine flag, saying,

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.--Heb. 1:1-3.

God, the Lord of the whole universe and guardian of all people, revealed Himself in many ways and means before the Incarnation of His Son. But the clearest and most important revelation of God to humanity

was the sending of His Begotten Son to this world in "human flesh". We only began to know God through His Son, because only Jesus who was in heaven truly knew the Father.

No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.--Matthew 11:27.

His dealings with the religious authorities, his healing the sick, his affliction, his love of mankind until death and then the Resurrection makes Jesus a "Living Flag". As much as Evil tried to debase and torment this "Living Flag", especially on Golgotha, Jesus more and more became the divinely revealed Teacher and Master.

Who are the "flags" and expounders of Jesus Christ, today? They are the believers and disciples who sanctify God's name.

It is not possible to stain or blemish the name of God. However, it is our duty to sanctify and glorify His name. Although God's holiness cannot be tarnished or stained, Evil still tries to do it.

I think that God, by adopting us, has put Himself in a delicate and vulnerable condition. The believers and "adopted" humans received divine nomenclature and also to become children of God through Jesus, the Son of God. This makes us God's "flags". Let us read how the apostle Paul writes, with tears running from his eyes, so that believers should keep God's name high and without blemish:

You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.--2 Cor. 3:2-3.

With the above words, St. Paul tries to persuade each believing Christian that he or she is a representative of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, each believer is duty-bound to be careful how he or she behaves in business and in everyday life both public and private. Our consideration in life should not be how to make money or how to enhance our national and political glory, but with honouring the sacred name by which we are adopted by the Almighty. Our lying, deceitfulness, falsehood, false witnessing, lack of sexual restraint, capitalism, avarice, and vengeance all deface and stain the sacred name of God in whose image we were created and by whose name we are called.

Therefore, each time we repeat the phrase, "Hallowed Be Your

Name", we should truly know that it is not Evil which stains that Sacred Name, but all those who consider themselves adopted by the Heavenly Father who do not want or like to fulfill the conditions of their adoption.

Just before ascending to heaven, Jesus gathered together his believing disciples and made a declaration saying:

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
--Acts 1:8.

Behold the living witnesses of this modern age who are the flags of Jesus Christ. Very humbly, I like to ask, what type of witness have we been of our Lord, today?

YOUR KINGDOM COME

The phrases "The Kingdom of God" or "Your Kingdom Come" both have the same meaning and implications. The above expressions are mentioned more than thirty times within the four Gospels. They expose the great message for which Jesus came to earth to teach humans.

The first preaching which is recorded in the Gospels is the message of John the Baptist who said with blazing rhetoric,

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near”
--Matthew 3:2.

When Jesus returned from the fiery desert where He had gone to pray after His baptism and after conquering the devil's deceitful intrigues, His first preaching was identical to that of John the Baptist,

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near"
--Matthew 4:17.

The gospel writer, St. Mark, also records this in his gospel.

After John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent, and believe in the good news.”
--Mark 1:14-15.

After disciplining his disciples, Jesus sent them two by two to go to different villages and cities to heal the sick and to preach. What do you think the subject of their preaching was to be? The kingdom of God!

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, The kingdom of heaven has come near. Cure the sick; raise the dead; cleanse the lepers; cast out demons. Freely You have received, freely give. Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts."--Matthew 10:5-9.

This very clear and evident instruction to preach the "Kingdom of Heaven" has become unknown in modern churches. I believe that no priest or preacher ever teaches or presents it in churches!

Christians around the world pray the Lord's prayer every day and say, "Thy kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven". Most of us think that when we die we will go to the kingdom of heaven! However, the words in the prayer clearly say,

**Your kingdom come. Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

Jesus, through this prayer, tried to teach his disciples, as well as present believers, to pray for God's total victory over the kingdom of Satan and his evil demons. Jesus wants to accomplish radical change on this planet earth, not just to repair it!

After He was baptized, Jesus wanted to retire to the eastern desert to meditate and contemplate the mission for which his Father had sent him. While he was contemplating, time vanished and days passed without him noticing. He was in the presence of his Father and his body did not need any food. Jesus' only pleasure was to spend time with his Father. Even when we humans are in communication with the heavenly Father, physical disturbances or unrest do not affect us. When we are in contemplation with God, we are drawn into the bosom of God where time stands still and is eternally relative. In other words, time has no beginning and no end.

Only after receiving his ideal mission from God, did Jesus feel within himself that time had passed and that his human body had not eaten food

for forty days.

The Slanderer, whose other name is Satan, followed Jesus like a shadow. This vilifier calculated that the hunger and physical weakness of Jesus would be the best time to tempt and conquer him. He approached the Begotten Son of God while He was weak and physically tired. After subjecting and exposing Jesus to many temptations and adversities, the Devil, the false accuser, took Jesus to a very high mountain and paraded all the kingdoms of the world and their glory and riches before Him and, like a celestial angel, offered them to Jesus, saying,

"All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."--
Matt.4:8-9

Jesus said to him, ***"Away with you, Satan! for it is written, Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."***

Jesus, empowered and spiritually strengthened from being in the Presence of his Father, came out from the desert invincible and undaunted from this intense engagement with Satan.

The devil who had become the apostate adversary of God by rebelling against the kingdom of heaven had declared himself the lord of this earth. Jesus, the Son of God was sent to this earth primarily to regain this living earth from the dominion of Satan.

How real, how true and how scriptural are the aforesaid explanations which refer to the kingdom of heaven when God's power is reestablished and the earth is ruled by the Creator God again.

The poets and the prophets of the Old Testament used to think that the kingdom of God meant a universal and spiritual domain and did not refer to our earthly planet.

The Psalmist, King David, also declared the divine universal kingdom, saying,

"The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all" --Psalm 103:19.

"They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom" --Psalm 145:11-12.

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye

everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory."--Psalm 24:7-10.

The prophet Micah sees God in a vision and prophesies saying:

***Therefore, hear the word of the Lord;
I saw the Lord sitting upon his throne,
And all the host of heaven standing on his right
Hand and on his left.--2 Chronicles 18:18.***

There was a Saudi man in the land of Arabia in the city of Uz whose name was Job. He was a righteous and God-fearing man who lived around 1625 B.C. which was later than Abraham but before the prophet Moses. Job described the Creator of the universe as saying thus:

*Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth?
Declare, if thou hast understanding.
Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest?
Or who hath stretched the line upon it?
Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened?
Or who laid the corner stone thereof;
When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?
Or who shut up the sea with doors,
When it brake forth,
As if it had issued out of the womb?
When I made the cloud the garment thereof,
And thick darkness a swaddling band for it.
And said, Hitherto shalt thou come,
But no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?
--Job 38:4-8*

The perception and understanding of divine circumstance and nature slowly developed and became confined to a belief. Eventually, God became known as the King and the Protector of the Jewish nation. Thus, people believed that God not only ruled the whole universe and is unapproachable to humans, but that the Jews were God's chosen nation on earth.

The concept of "Thy Kingdom" or the "Kingdom of God" passed through centuries of time and gradually crystallized and became even more enlightened. During those times, the divine prophets and poets communicated more about spiritual events. They perceived that God is

not the Lord of only the Jewish people but of all men and women on earth.

The idea of the omnipotence of God became clearer to the Jews after their forced migration to Babylon. Although the national slavery was disastrous for the people, it became religiously and spiritually an intuitive and unparalleled blessing. This unprecedented time of slavery lasted for 70 years. It gave birth to inspired prophetic literature, poetry and divine visions. The prophets, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea and many others, lived during that time of slavery in Babylon.

It was the prophets of slavery who sang and pointed to the Messiah's birth, the Incarnation of Jesus and the kingdom of God. Without those fiery prophecies, today's religious and believing people would be deprived of great heavenly visions.

The prophet, Daniel who was called "God's lover", explains the Heavenly Kingdom thus:

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.--Daniel 2:44.

God's loved one, Daniel, through sanctified reflection, no longer sees the Jewish nation as "the *chosen people* of God". His perception shows that God's chosen people are, "***the saints of the most High.***"

But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.

Until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

But the judgment shall sit and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.--Daniel 7:18, 22, 26-27.

Until the Incarnation of Jesus and his birth from the virgin Mary, there were many similar prophecies which were propagated until the time

of Jesus Christ. They were very valuable literary prophecies. They still exist but, in spite of their valuable visions, they have not been put into either the Old or New Testaments.

The expression "*Kingdom of God*" is written about and mentioned not only in Jewish literature. The *Kingdom of Heaven* is mentioned also in Persian holy writings of Zarathustra. Zarathustra appropriated a large space in his sayings to the Kingdom of God. In the Western world, also, people have not neglected or disregarded the divine vision of a new world.

Virgil, who died 19 years before Jesus was born, very beautifully paints a vision of the *heavenly kingdom* with poetic words saying,

*"Ours is the crowning era foretold in prophecy:
Born of Time, a great new cycle of centuries
Begins. Justice returns to earth, the Golden age
Returns, and its first-born comes down from heaven above
Look kindly, chaste Lucina, upon this infant's birth,
For with him shall hearts of iron cease, and hearts of gold
Inherit the whole earth--yes, Apollo reigns now.
This glorious Age shall dawn,
The march of its great months begin.
You at our head, mankind shall be freed from its age-long fear,
All stains of our past wickedness being cleansed away.
This child shall enter into the life of the gods,
And rule a world made peaceful by his father's virtuous acts.
Earth will shower you with romping ivy, fox-gloves,
Goats shall walk home, their udders taut with milk, and nobody
Herding them; the ox will have no fear of the lion:
Silk-soft blossoms will grow from your very cradle to lap you.
But snakes will die, and so will fair-seeming, poisonous plants.
The soil will need no harrowing, the vine no pruning-knife;
And the tough ploughman may at last unyoke his oxen.*

*Come soon, dear child of the gods, Jupiter's great viceroy!
Come soon--the time is near--to begin your life illustrious!
Look how the round and ponderous globe bows to salute you,
The lands, the stretching leagues of sea, the unplumbed sky!
Look how the whole creation exults in the age to come!"*

--Eclogue IV

This divine revelation given to non-Jewish nations, exposes and reveals that God wants all nations to know about Him and His plans. Without partiality between whites and blacks, east or west, rich or poor,

Jew or gentile, God loves all people and wants all nations in his Heavenly Kingdom.

If we want to condense the teachings of the three years of Jesus Christ's mission, we will find that there is only one subject and that is the "Kingdom of God." But the Gospel writers, Matthew and John, used words about *eternal life* instead.

There are some Christians who would like to identify the Kingdom of God with the Church of Jesus Christ which, by being expanded and extended over all the earth, eventually will become the Kingdom of God on earth.

Other Christians believe that the Kingdom of God is a spiritual condition or state when a person receives Jesus within his heart and becomes a "born again" person and lives and acts by the new commandments of Jesus Christ.

The disciples of Jesus who were taught many things and had the opportunity to penetrate into their Lord's living mind and plans, were, nevertheless, ignorant of many things including the concept of the *Kingdom of God*. Why? Because their cultural background was Mosaic and nationalistic. They even regarded their Lord Jesus Christ from the perspective of the Law of Moses.

My analysis maybe considered wrong by the few intellectuals. They are free to think so and I respect their versions..

Let us read the first pages of the Acts of the Apostles together.

When the disciples, therefore, were come together, they asked of him saying:

*"Lord, wilt thou at this time
restore again the kingdom to Israel? "--Acts 1:6.*

The disciples had been eyewitnesses to their Lord's miracles, to His heavenly preaching, to His immovable bravery and unselfish renouncements, to His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, to His shameful arrest and criminal crucifixion and death, as well as to Jesus' miraculous and victorious Resurrection. In spite of all the above intelligence, the poor disciples, without hesitation, ask their Lord, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom *to Israel?*" How confused they are mentally about the kingdom of God and *the Jewish nation!*

Jesus, soon to ascend to heaven to His Father, had only one answer to this question:

***It is not for you to know the times or periods
that the Father has set by his own authority.--Acts 1:7.***

Although the question of the disciples was very childish, the reply of Jesus should not be understood negatively. Jesus does not want us to speculate about the Kingdom of God like some people who think they can predict the time and place that He will come the second time. What Jesus wants from us, his disciples, is to be *ready and faithful* for his Coming.

Consequently, what is the true meaning of the words,

"Your kingdom come?"

When the **Kingdom of God** comes, the planet earth will be dominated and ruled by believers and followers of Jesus Christ and people will obey his commandments. Before his Holy Communion, Jesus made a promise to his disciples saying:

You are those who have stood by me in my trials; and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.--Luke 22:28-30.

Then Peter said in reply, "Look, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?"

Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."

--Matthew 19:27-30.

The Kingdom of God is a **physical, corporal and natural** state of being where there is *eating and drinking* like there is in the present time!

When Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, appealing to him and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible distress." And Jesus said to him, "I will come and cure him." The centurion answered, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed". When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to those who followed him:

Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from the east and west and

will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.--Matthew 8:11-12.

Jesus does not have chauvinistic prejudices. The individual's merit will determine whether or not a person is a citizen of the heavenly kingdom. But those who are unworthy to be called "children of the kingdom" will be pushed and thrown into the outer darkness.

After the last Supper and the institution of the Holy Eucharist, Jesus lifted the cup and made an unprecedented toast. He filled the cup with wine, and looking at each disciple and their simple love of Him, He vowed,

Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God.--Mark 14:25.

In the above passage, we can observe that the Kingdom will come to this earthly planet where Jesus will make the announcement with the New Wine as a toast to his Victory.

The followers of Jesus who travelled by foot all over this world and preached the Gospel of their Lord and His resurrection from the dead, never forgot to preach and teach about the Kingdom of God. The Apostle Paul who was not one of Jesus' original disciples, fearlessly and powerfully expresses his faith:

Then comes the end, when Jesus hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For 'God has put all things in subjection under his feet.' But when it says, 'All things are put in subjection,' it is plain that this does not include the One who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the One who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all.--1 Corinthians 15:24-28

The above paragraph of St. Paul strongly represents the final accomplishment and triumph of Jesus over death and evil and also his triumph over the powers of earthly lords and their mechanized power. After subjugating Satan and his powerful demons and annihilating all evil,

the Son will offer the newly sanctified planet earth to his Father.

The Armenian Apostolic Church also sings in her creed the following,

He is to come with the same body and with the glory of the Father to judge the quick and the dead of whose kingdom there is no end.

The evangelist, John, in his vision, gives an eloquent and crowning description of this subject:

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying,

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord And of his Messiah, And he will reign forever and ever."

Revelation 11:15

When the Apostle, John, uses the word "heaven" instead of "earth", the reason is that, henceforth, there will not be any corner in all the universe or space where evil will try again its rebellious mutiny.

YOUR WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

This is a human petitioning prayer directed to God, the Father. It is a command of Jesus for us to implore and entreat God and to become vigilant in our supplication to the Father.

As human beings, we are as tiny as an atom in comparison with the cosmos. But still we want to find an answer to the mystery of life and eternity. The effort to solve the mystery of life and to give it meaning guides humans to our divine image. Without the divine touch, we humans cannot receive our personality from clay and earth or our power of reasoning and judgement.

When humans as thinking and reasoning personalities, meet mystic ideas which have radiated from the Incarnate Jesus, it is impossible not to consider them thoroughly. Let us consider some of the thoughts and conceptions of Jesus which He revealed:

Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out.--John 12:31.

The ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me.--John 14:30.

These forceful words of Jesus urge us to conclude that this world has a prince who is the enemy of Jesus. This hostile adversary is also an anti-God mutineer. If our natural logic will direct us right, then this planet earth has been kidnapped by Satan and humanity is held hostage, and we are being ruled by a seducer.

Consequently, every believer who prays saying, "**Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven**", is complaining against the way things are under the temporary prince. The person is confirming that he or she is not a citizen of Satan's Kingdom and does not want to be subjected to unlawful deceptions.

I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one.--John 17:15.

What profound love and wisdom are revealed in the words of the above prayer of Jesus to the Father. He does not want his believers to be taken out of the world, but only kept from the evil one. Who is this evil one, if not the Satan which has kidnapped the human planet? The most delicate and intelligent action for a government is to save a hostage who has been kidnapped. To save a hostage, a person does not need only power but also wisdom and time. Our God has been busy with this type of soul consuming affair for a very long time. Therefore, He has kept the ultimate timing very secret. He has kept secret the hour and the minute when He will give that deadly blow to the kidnapper, Satan, who has brought death to God's created planet, earth. Because this pitched battle will decide the destiny of the universe (the cosmos) and because of its critical and ultimate conclusion, Jesus said,

***"But about that day and hour
no one knows, neither the angels of heaven,
nor the Son, but only the Father"
--Matthew 24:36.***

Thus, Oh Eternal Father, we also join our voices with the voices of innumerable worshippers to protest against the prince of this world and to seek only You saying,

***"Your kingdom come. Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven."***

GIVE US THIS DAY

The Lord's Prayer does not say "to me", but "to us". Children do not know the word "us", but only "me". They use only "*me*" and "*my*" words. Jesus gave his disciples a new perspective for feeling, seeing and understanding. It is a view point where the person identifies himself or herself with another person as a co-signatory. In this respect, the person willingly sacrifices his or her individuality to a partnership or brotherhood.

Presently, according to the plan of this world's prince, the majority of the population lose their rights and power. Meanwhile, a few covetous and greedy people become extremely wealthy and accumulate billions of dollars. Thus, a few people have the power to lord over the many who live in poverty.

A Christian believer's prayer should be for *daily bread*. The God who cares and provides for us will never abandon us, but cares for us continuously. God is not only a Creator, but also a Sustainer for ever. God is pleased and rejoices when He sees believers who trust and hope in his promises.

In order to become free, independent and daring, a person must avoid the temptation to accumulate piles of money and possessions. When a person has only a few possessions, he will feel so much more independent. It does not mean that a Christian should not have any possessions, but that he should not work hard to **hoard** them. The desire and longing for riches destroys a believer's faith and his ability to feel compassion. The virtue and the valour of a Christian is his temperance and moderation. In the words of Jesus, "**Give us this day.**"

OUR DAILY BREAD

Those who are loyal believers of Jesus, do not ask for their bread from the prince of this world. They implore it from their heavenly Father.

Why?

If they asked the prince of this world, they would be duty bound to obey and do according to the will of the Prince whose methods are avarice, cheating, crime and deceiving. If God does not make those, who pray to Him rich, He will never let them be hungry. By some means or other, God will feed and provide for his daring believers. A true believer's prayer for *daily bread* is what is necessary for health, not riches, authority or personal glory.

AND FORGIVE US

The word "forgive" which Jesus uses in the Lord's Prayer is very profound and penetrating. It is the word "forgiveness" which differentiates the Christian religion from other beliefs. No other religion except Christianity has the concept of forgiveness. In its place, other religions have the concept of *atonement*. The reason for this is because their gods are fearful and do not show pity. In non-Christian religions, sinners are reconciled or atoned only by sacrificing an animal. It seems identical to a business transaction. You have to give something to the gods in order to feel forgiven. Only through Jesus, did people discover God's love and his merciful spirit toward humans. When Jesus met a sick person, he said to him,

"Take heart, son, your sins are forgiven."--Matt. 9:2.

This is God's loving and true proclamation in all four Gospels for all humanity. For His part, God sent his Son, Jesus, to come to this world and give the good news of forgiveness to all who are remorseful and repent of their sins.

OUR DEBTS

From the perspective of a sinner, confession and regret should be known as offerings and sacrifices to God. A person who knows and is conscious of his or her wrong also has an obligation not to repeat these sins again. When the consciousness and love of Jesus enlightens a person, it is already proof of divine forgiveness. Through the consciousness of being forgiven a *new person is born again*. In this new life, a new page is opened and there is a new way and a new occasion to live righteously and lovingly with one's neighbour.

There is no greater means for a person's restoration and spiritual rearmament except for his or her recognition and acknowledgment of personal guilt and sin. Through confession, a human being is regenerated and freed from innumerable debts and responsibilities. He or she feels like a freed prisoner and will not carry any heavy and endless chains or burdens.

AS WE ALSO FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS

I wish every one would reread the Parable about "The law of forgiveness".

In this parable, Jesus paints a verbal picture of God's love, pity and

forgiveness. It is sad to see the unforgiving spirit of many believing "Christians". Let us together watch the eternally unchanging characteristics of Jesus' picture:

So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything'. And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt.--Matthew 18:23-25.

In which worldly law can you find such exquisite pity? Which creditor has such a condescending spirit of compassion or is as gracious to his or her fellow human?

What does "ten thousand talents" mean? Each talent, at that time, weighed 45 kilos. If this weight was in silver, it would make \$10,000,000 but if it was in gold, you decide!

Can we now see the huge dimensions of human sin and guilt and also grasp its irreparable nature? If God freely would not pardon and grant forgiveness, there is no way humans would be able to free themselves by animal sacrifices or human blood.

When a person realizes they are in this inextricable situation and after feeling stings and remorse of conscience, that person will hear the sweet voice of Jesus who declares the forgiveness of his or her sins. Then that person truly begins to be "born again". He or she feels like they are given a new lease on life. Let us watch the continuation of Jesus' verbal painting:

But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denari; and, seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt.--Matt. 18:22-30.

It is very unfortunate that many nominal Christians are in the same category as the first forgiven slave. They will never try to copy the happiness of their being forgiven by forgiving their debtors. However, true Christians who forgive their debtors will be much more impressed with their own forgiveness from God and will love and serve Him more on earth.

Why do people forget God's pardon of their own sins?

My humble opinion is that the slave in the parable who seized his fellow slave and had no pity on him, was not aware of the horrible frightful-

ness of his own debt. The second slave's debt of a few dollars was nothing in comparison with the millions of dollars owed by the first slave.

We can call our present age which is colored by many different names, the "Age of the Possessions". In past ages, people were also greedy and lovers of money. But in the present century, it looks like *everybody*, without exception, is infected with the insatiable thirst for riches. To resign or to renounce their own material or moral right is to show unselfishness and forgiveness. People, today, think or consider that generosity is foolishness and insanity. They do not want to part with even small amounts and they hoard every penny.

Today the desire for possessions surpasses and excels all love and generosity. It seems that all human motivation springs from the self-centered perspective of "I am" and "mine." People focus only on their rights and the legitimacy of their possessions. Good will, good desire and self-sacrifice seem to have been forgotten. Compassion and human feelings about logic, reason, consciousness and truth which belong to older times are discarded and out of date. These are the present views of modern religious communities and governments.

John, the apostle who was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, stood at the threshold of his old age, glanced back for a moment to see, once again, the divine and wonderful favours, merits and mercies shown to him by Jesus. To him, it seemed impossible not to notice also the treacheries of the evil one. Therefore, at the end of his letter, he writes:

We know that we are God's children, and that the whole world lies under the power of the evil one. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.--1 John 5:19, 21.

All those who think of themselves as Christians should never listen to or be seduced by this world's evil prince, Satan, or his false authority and false morality. The final consideration should be, is my action *good* or *evil*? Does it please God? Is it edifying or destructive? Is it lawful and righteous? Does it have the spirit of self-denial and sacrifice? Does it please God?

AND DO NOT BRING US TO THE TIME OF TRIAL

The words "*And do not bring us*" seem to imply that God himself leads us into temptation. This impression gets even stronger when we read about the temptations of Jesus, referred to in the letter to the Hebrews:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin
--Hebrews 4:15

God's Spirit did not take or lead Jesus into the desert to be tested or tempted. Jesus voluntarily went into the desert to *discuss* with his Father the great commission that Jesus was sent to accomplish in an enemy world. But, because all these important discussions pertained to this earth whose prince is Satan, the cunning devil tried to take those forty days of Jesus' hunger to tempt the Son of God, especially when Jesus was physically weak. Nevertheless, our Lord emerged from this exceptional duel as an invincible conqueror.

When we come to the words, "*do not bring us*", the ancient Greek manuscripts give us this very beautiful formula which is, "Do not abandon us to temptation".

In English and Armenian, the word *abandon* means to leave, to give up, or to go away and leave one helpless.

A Christian believer who begins to have pretensions, pride and self-conceit and tries to work autocratically without God's assistance and approval, is easily lead into temptation and sin. When we read the prayers of St. Naregatsi and St. Shenorhaly, we see that those great saints never appeared to be pretentious during their labour and ministeries. These saints knew very well that this world's prince is very wise and could deceive, beguile and knock them down if God the Father did not hold them up and stand as a support to them.

At present, we exist in a world which is under the deceitful flag of our enemy. Therefore, regardless of how strongly a believer may feel, our prayer and pition should be, "***Do not abandon us to temptation***".

RESCUE US FROM THE EVIL ONE

The evil one should not fill us with fear but should keep us alert not to sin and fall into various snares and ambushes. Mostly, we should be heedful of ***pride and hypocrisy***. These two moral sins have resulted in the most destructive behaviour in the life of individual believers and, unfortunately, in the history of the church. When we study the history of the church over the past two thousand years, we find that the greatest evil and destruction, was done because of those two sins.

Let us never forget that the adversary of God, the Intriguer, is the antagonist of man and never gets tired. So "*Discipline yourselves and keep*

alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour."--1 Peter 5:8.

Because we were kidnapped and are held hostage beneath the authority of the Satan, the Lord's Prayer demonstrates our faithfulness to the Creator of universe, and proves that we are not deserters of our Lord and Saviour and that we have not surrendered ourselves to the deceitful tyrant.

If we observe the above discussion from a spiritual perspective, we who are earthly and corporal, have been given a means of ascent from the material toward the Light. Therefore, we petition God that as we reach upward to the logical and ultimate Glory, let us keep striving until we become like our Lord Jesus.

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family.--Romans 8:29.

Our salvation will find its accomplishment only when our physical and earthly reality is completely cut off or detached from the gravity of the Evil one and joins the magnetic power and attraction of Goodness, Righteousness and Truth.

FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM

What great courage a person needs, to stand erect on enemy land and sing his own national anthem. The above self-confident attitude is the national march of every Christian. This is not a bribery or fictitious glorification of God. This is the generous and true glorification of innumerable martyrs and beheaded witnesses. It is the glorification of fearless witnesses who undauntedly remained faithful despite all obstacles, torments, tortures, injustices and privations, because they believed full-heartedly and trusted in their Heavenly Father and Saviour.

These martyrs are the *blessed and happy* ones who, though they did not see with their own eyes the victorious Resurrected Lord, they believed whole-heartedly. These are the real children of the Church who, for long centuries, kept the faith and the trust of Jesus without deserting or backing down in front of fire or sword. These courageous believers gave up their necks, their possessions, their gold and silver, but never their faith and faithfulness to Jesus who is their Lord and Saviour.

Although Armenians lost their fatherland, many stony churches still stand on those national lands. Though many of those ancient churches are standing in ruins under the enemy's destructive forces, believers still sing their "national anthem"- the Lord's Prayer- in silence and in truth. Though

many Christian monuments are still being ruined, the martyrs invulnerable faith is standing erect in Christian hearts and minds today.

The eternal life of Jesus is promised to these fervent believers!

AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER. AMEN

Have you encountered any tragedy? Has sickness ever visited you? Has death approached you? Look at Jesus. Give ear to the innumerable martyrs and their exclamations and the glorified witnesses of all nations and tongues, and join them.

If you have encountered seemingly invincible difficulties and hindrances, look at Jesus as an unconquerable champion or role model. Look at Him and see His brilliance.

If your spirit is full of happiness and joy from your relationship with Jesus, you will feel luminous gaiety and share joyfulness with those who are singing the March of this Victorious King.

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Proofread by Mrs. Kay Jolly

Albert J. Noradunkian
Hai-Chrisdonia

I drink it new in the Kingdom of God."--Mark 14: