

# LIVING THE LORD'S PRAYER

*The Way of the Disciple*



ALBERT HAASE, O.F.M.

FOREWORD BY GERALD L. SITTSER

  
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# Contents

Foreword by Gerald Sittser . . . . .	9
Preface: <i>Guiding Spiritual Formation</i> . . . . .	13
<b>1 God as Father</b>	
<i>Shaping a Healthy Image of God</i> . . . . .	17
<b>2 “Our” Father</b>	
<i>Recognizing the Family of All Creation</i> . . . . .	36
<b>3 Who art in heaven</b>	
<i>Experiencing the Extraordinary in the Ordinary</i> . . . . .	57
<b>4 Hallowed be thy name</b>	
<i>Walking in the Presence of God</i> . . . . .	73
<b>5 Thy kingdom come</b>	
<i>Promoting God’s Intention for the World</i> . . . . .	90
<b>6 Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven</b>	
<i>Making Faith-Based Decisions</i> . . . . .	112
<b>7 Give us this day our daily bread</b>	
<i>Becoming What We Receive</i> . . . . .	135
<b>8 Forgive us our trespasses</b>	
<i>Running into a Father’s Open Arms</i> . . . . .	155

<b>9</b>	<b>As we forgive those who trespass against us</b>	
	<i>Seeing with the Eyes of Compassion . . . . .</i>	172
<b>10</b>	<b>Lead us not into temptation</b>	
	<i>Refusing to Dance with the Devil . . . . .</i>	193
<b>11</b>	<b>Deliver us from evil</b>	
	<i>Embracing the Cross . . . . .</i>	214
	<i>Conclusion: Living the Lord's Prayer. . . . .</i>	236
	<i>Notes . . . . .</i>	239

## Foreword



MOST PEOPLE, EVEN THE MOST IRRELIGIOUS, can recite it as if it were passed down from one generation to the next through the religious gene pool of humanity. Yet few of us, even the most religious, think much about it, though it has served as *the* prayer of the church since Jesus first taught it some 2000 years ago. Tertullian of Carthage was right when he said that the Lord's Prayer is "an abridgement of the entire Gospel."

Father Albert Haase, O.F.M, has written *Living the Lord's Prayer* to help us *think* about what we pray when we utter the most famous prayer in the world. But more than that, he challenges us to *live* the Lord's Prayer too. It is a novel idea, really. Accustomed, as we are, to pray it, we assume that it is God's responsibility to answer it. God is the one who acts; we are the ones who receive. Isn't that how prayer works? We ask God to do his will on earth, to give us our daily bread, to forgive our sins, to keep us from temptation, to deliver us from evil. Then we expect God to do what we ask. Not that Father Haase disputes that. But he dares to suggest that we should act, too, and thus be changed by our praying and

perhaps even help change the world at the same time.

I have not known Father Albert (as his friends call him) for a long time. I met him in the spring of 2008, though we had corresponded on occasion before that. I remember his emails bursting with energy. When I met him face-to-face I discovered why. He is joyful, passionate and luminous. He has become a dear brother in Christ to me.

I make my living as a university professor, which means that I read many books, including books on spirituality. I assumed that *Living the Lord's Prayer* would be insightful and inspirational but not especially new and fresh. It is, after all, about the Lord's Prayer. Is it possible to write anything new and fresh about that subject? I discovered soon enough that I was wrong. Consequently, I found myself reading the manuscript more slowly than I had expected. There are three reasons why I think the book is compelling.

First, Father Albert challenges us to live what we pray, which will engender a seamlessness between our spiritual practices, narrowly understood, and our ordinary lives. What good is a spiritual life if it remains confined to formal religious activities? *Living the Lord's Prayer* advocates the proper kind of spirituality, one that is deeply Christ-centered, steeped in the historic faith and applicable to ordinary life.

Second, Father Albert has read the classics, which is abundantly clear throughout the book. Not that he is self-consciously learned. But he has breathed the air of the spiritual masters for so long, especially St. Francis (for obvious reasons), that he exhales their wisdom on almost every page. It is obvious that they have become his teachers and friends. The book therefore has a *gravitas* to it, even though it is also delightfully energetic and accessible.

Third, *Living the Lord's Prayer* is well written. Father Albert knows how to turn a good phrase. I have written enough myself to appreciate how difficult it is to write in a way that seems natu-

ral and effortless. Father Albert did not settle for worn-out phrases and ponderous prose. His writing is terse, lively and cogent. For example, there is this: “In our relationship with God especially, we are all infants, hitchhikers waiting for grace, beggars in need of a handout. To be human is to be in need.” Or this: “Constantly reminding us of our sin, the ego then condemns us to forced labor in a cemetery where we are repeatedly exhuming skeletons only to bury them and exhume them again. This is the death camp of the ego.” And this: “Indeed, the feeling of abandonment *by* God is a challenge to make an act of abandonment *to* God. That’s putting blind faith into action.”

I commend my dear friend Father Albert for writing this book on the Lord’s Prayer, and I commend his book to you, the reader, to relish it, ponder it, pray it and live it.

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