

PART FOUR, SECTION TWO, CHAPTER ONE, ARTICLE 3 (PARAGRAPHS 2803-2806)

FAITH: Catholicism | TEXT: Catechism of the Catholic Church | VOLUME: 1997 Volume | AUTHOR: John Paul II

OVERVIEW

This section of the Catechism provides a structural and theological breakdown of the Lord's Prayer (the 'Our Father'). It posits that the Holy Spirit stirs up seven distinct petitions within the believer. The text categorizes these into two movements: the first three petitions (Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be Done) are described as theological, drawing the believer toward the glory of the Father for His own sake. The text notes that these were technically answered in Christ's sacrifice but remain in eschatological hope. The second series of four petitions (Give us, Forgive us, Lead us not, Deliver us) are described as 'ways toward him' that commend human wretchedness to divine grace. The text draws a liturgical parallel, comparing this second movement to the 'Eucharistic epicleses' (the invocation of the Spirit over the elements). Ultimately, the text asserts that through these petitions, believers are strengthened in the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, participating in God's plan of salvation.

KEY FIGURES

God the Father, The Son (Jesus Christ), The Holy Spirit (Spirit of adoption)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. THE TWOFOLD MOVEMENT OF PRAYER

Assertion: Prayer consists of two distinct movements: one drawing the believer toward God's glory (theological) and one commending human wretchedness to God's grace (anthropological).

"the first three, more theological, draw us toward the glory of the Father; the last four, as ways toward him, commend our wretchedness to his grace."

Evangelical Comparison: Evangelical scholars generally agree with this structural analysis of the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13). The division between the 'God-ward' petitions and the 'Man-ward' petitions is a standard exegetical observation in Protestant commentaries. There is no significant friction here; both traditions affirm that true prayer begins with the adoration of God before moving to personal needs.

2. LITURGICAL PARALLELISM (EPICLESIS)

Assertion: The petitions for human need unfold with the same movement as the Eucharistic epicleses (invocation of the Spirit).

"The second series of petitions unfolds with the same movement as certain Eucharistic epicleses"

Evangelical Comparison: The Catechism explicitly links the 'give us/forgive us' petitions to the 'Eucharistic epicleses'—the part of the Mass where the priest invokes the Holy Spirit to transform the bread and wine. For an Evangelical, this creates a subtle friction. While Evangelicals believe the Spirit is active in prayer (Romans 8:26), they do not typically view the Lord's Prayer through a sacramental or Eucharistic lens. This linkage reinforces the Catholic worldview that grace is mediated through the sacraments, whereas Evangelicals see the Lord's Prayer as a direct, unmediated access to the Father through the Son.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: No

Theological Gap: In this specific excerpt, the theological gap is narrow. Both traditions affirm the content and priority of the Lord's Prayer. The divergence is primarily hermeneutical: the Catholic text interprets the prayer's movement as parallel to the Eucharistic liturgy ('epicleses'), reinforcing the sacramental worldview. Evangelicals would interpret the prayer's movement as a model for personal relationship and dependence, independent of the Mass. However, the text's assertion that the first three petitions were 'answered in the saving sacrifice of Christ' aligns perfectly with Evangelical Christology.

Shared Values:

God as Father; The centrality of the Lord's Prayer; The necessity of Grace; The finished work of Christ ('saving sacrifice'); Eschatological hope

Friction Points:

1. [Minor] Sola Scriptura – The text imposes a liturgical structure (Eucharistic epicleses) onto the biblical text of Matthew 6.

Semantic Warnings:

"Epicleses"

In Text: The invocation of the Spirit, specifically linked here to the movement of the Lord's Prayer.

Evangelical: Not a biblical term; in theology, it refers to calling down the Spirit. Evangelicals use it generally for prayer; Catholics use it specifically for the Eucharistic consecration.

Example: *In this text: The prayer unfolds like the Mass. In Evangelicalism: The prayer unfolds as a conversation between child and Father.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: The accomplishment of God's plan of salvation for us and the whole world.

How Attained: Through the name of Christ and the reign of the Holy Spirit, accessed via petition/prayer.

Basis of Assurance: The 'saving sacrifice of Christ' which has already answered the petitions for God's glory.

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text focuses on prayer and the 'Spirit of adoption' rather than explicit justification mechanics. It is compatible with Sola Fide in its reliance on God's grace for 'wretchedness,' though it does not explicitly articulate forensic justification.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Place ourselves in the presence of God
2. Adore, love, and bless God
3. Petition for 'us' (the community/world)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Prioritize God's glory over personal needs in prayer
2. Align personal desires with the 'anguish' of the Son for the Father's glory

Ritual Requirements:

1. Implicitly connects the rhythm of prayer to the rhythm of the Eucharist (epiclesis)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. The text mentions that our prayers commend our 'wretchedness to his grace.' How does that make you feel about your standing before God?
2. When you pray 'Thy Kingdom Come,' do you see that as something you must build, or something Christ has already secured?
3. The Catechism compares the Lord's Prayer to the Eucharist. Do you feel your private prayers are as powerful as the prayers said by a priest during Mass?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. Deep calls to deep – This phrase perfectly illustrates the Gospel: the depth of human sin and need calling out to the infinite depth of God's mercy and grace. [Psalm 42:7, Romans 5:20 ('Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more')]
2. Commending Wretchedness – This is an admission of total depravity and inability to save oneself, a prerequisite for receiving the Gospel of Grace. [Romans 7:24-25 ('Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver

me...? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ')]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Performance/Intensity [Moderate] – The text suggests the believer should be seized by the 'burning desire, even anguish' of the Son. This can create a burden of emotional performance, where a believer feels their prayer is inadequate if they do not feel this intense spiritual anguish.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Theological reflection on Scripture, guided by the 'Spirit of adoption'.

Verification Method: Internal spiritual experience ('Spirit... stirs up in our hearts') and alignment with the Church's liturgical understanding.

Evangelical Contrast: Evangelicals would verify the teaching solely against the exegesis of Matthew 6 and Luke 11, without reference to the Eucharistic liturgy as a hermeneutical key.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: 1997 (Latin typical edition)

Authorship: Promulgated by John Paul II; drafted by a commission.

Textual Issues: Relies on the received text of the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6/Luke 11).