Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

183 Our Father (*Pater noster*)

Our Father is aptly called God and by reason of creation, and by reason adoption spiritually, and by reason of the incarnation and redemption singularly. Therefore, with merit now Our Father is called upon in the divine prayer who formerly in the Old Testament was called Lord when we were slaves to sin, with discernment coming forth, but now mercifully condescending as Father. In the figure of which, Luke 15[:12, 18-20]: When the prodigal son said “to his father, Father, I have sinned. He kissed him.” Where Peter of Ravenna said,[[1]](#endnote-1) why do we not return to the Father, who did not say to the returning prodigal son, Where have you been, What did you do, Where did the things go that you carried away. But kissing him he said [Luke 15:22]: “Bring forth quickly the first robe.” For the power of love did not see the offenses. Thus far Peter.

¶ So, we also do, for certainly we spend our times evilly. And we say to the Father, what the son said, [Luke 15:19]: “I am not worthy to be called your son.” Just as Peter who was crucified for you, or just as Paul who was beheaded, but make me one of the numbers to be saved to whom it was said, [3 Kings 8:22, Isai. 31:3]: “He spread forth his hands,” “he shall put down his” head, just as it is evident meritoriously in the image of the crucified, but alas because Prov. 1[:24]: “I called, and you refused, I stretched out my hand, and there was none that regarded,” And notice because our Father by custom is a good leader. Birds flying in splendor he recalls through the reclamation of his reddened flesh.

¶ But many as if birds satiated on the cadavers are reticent to return, Osee [9:11]: “As for Ephraim, [their glory] has flown away like a bird.” Ephraim is interpreted as fruitful, designating those abounding in this world, who easily forget God,

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according to that of Deut. 32[:15]: “The beloved grew fat and kicked.”

¶ Wherefore then it will be for us to do as boys do who fear the beating, they themselves bear the rod to the father by which they will be beaten. Which seen, the father is merciful. So, it is and will be with us if we return because God mitigates the penalty or takes it away. Wherefore Valerius reports, book 3, chapter 3,[[2]](#endnote-2) concerning the son who always plotted the death of his father in whatever ways and finally he was led into the field, the father handed him his sword saying, Do it now what you have plotted for so long. And immediately the son was remorseful.

¶ Morally Christ daily shows us the field of his benefits which are noted above in the chapter To Give [*Donare*].[[3]](#endnote-3) And he handed us the sword, that is, the judgment of reason for following into his gratitude and [leaving] our ingratitude, as if thus saying, Son, in what have I molested you, I who have done all these things which I have handed to you. When this was heard, if we were the son we would be agreeable. Which having been done there will be no doubt that he who did not deny the kiss of peace, will not deny us.

¶ Because if there was such a great transgression that we fear to approach, we may procure mediators such as Mary and those saints which we hold dear. But it is to be feared that many honor God for a time, such as the Jews honored Christ on the day of the palms, but quickly afterwards dishonored him just as it happened in the day of Good Friday.

1. Cf. Peter Chrysologus, *Sermo* 3 (PL 52:193): Cito proferte stolam primam. Pater hic qui in secundis esse non passus est peccatorem, plus de venia quam de justitia gaudium vult habere. Cito proferte stolam primam. Non dixit, unde venis? fuisti ubi? ubi sunt quae tulisti? quare tantam gloriam tanta turpitudine commutasti? sed: Cito proferte stolam primam, et induite illum. Videtis quia delicta non videt vis amoris. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings* 5.9.4 (LCL 492:538-541): Magnorum virorum clementibus actis ignoti patris novae atque inusitatae rationis consilium adiciam. qui cum a filio insidias necti sibi comperisset, nec inducere in animum posset ut verum sanguinem ad hoc sceleris progressum crederet, seductam uxorem suppliciter rogavit ne se ulterius celaret sive illum adulescentem subiecisset sive ex alio concepisset. adseveratione deinde eius et iure iurando se nil tale suspicari <debere>[95](https://www.loebclassics.com/view/valerius_maximus-memorable_doings_sayings/2000/pb_LCL492.541.xml?result=1&rskey=b9Hpma#note_LCL492_540_95) persuasus, in locum desertum filio perducto gladium, quem occultum secum attulerat, tradidit ac iugulum feriendum praebuit, nec veneno nec latrone ei ad peragendum parricidium opus esse adfirmans. quo facto non paulatim sed magno impetu recta cogitatio pectus iuvenis occupavit, continuoque abiecto gladio ‘tu vero’ inquit, ‘pater, vive, et si tam obsequens es ut hoc precari filio permittas, me quoque exsupera. sed tantum quaeso ne meus erga te amor eo sit tibi vilior quod a paenitentia oritur.’ solitudinem sanguine meliorem, pacatioresque penatibus silvas, et alimentis blandius ferrum, ac mortis oblatae quam datae vitae felicius beneficium!

To the merciful actions of great men I shall add the device of an obscure father, of strange and unusual nature. When he discovered that his son was plotting against him but could not bring himself to believe that his own true blood had gone to such criminal lengths, he drew his wife aside and begged her not to hide the truth from him any longer, whether she had substituted the young man or conceived him by someone else. Convinced then by her assertion and oath that he should not suspect anything of that sort, he led his son to a solitary place, handed him a sword which he had brought with him concealed, and offered his throat to be cut, declaring that the other needed neither poison nor assassin to carry through his parricide. Thereupon right thinking took over the young man’s heart, not gradually but in a mighty rush, and straight away throwing the sword aside, he said: “You, father, go on living, and if you are so obliging as to allow your son to pray for it, outlive me also. I only ask that you do not think the more meanly of my love for you because it arises from repentance.” Ah solitude better than blood, forests safer than household hearth, steel more persuasive than nurture, benefit of offered death more fortunate than of life bestowed!

# See Douglas Galbi, “Valerius Maximus on a sacrificial father and his repentant son,” [Valerius Maximus on a sacrificial father and his repentant son – purple motes](https://www.purplemotes.net/2021/11/07/valerius-maximus-sacrificial-father/?unapproved=4904&moderation-hash=81ccca54ffa926116e56534d0f77481f#comment-4904)

 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. No such chapter exists in this version (F 80, Lambeth) or the later version (F 128). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)