

19. 1. 70
18. 1. 73 (adapt.)

Our Father (Russian Orthodox) OUR FATHER (Mass Bk.)

By now you're probably ^{well} ~~getting~~ ^{hearing} used to ~~that~~ version of the Our Father, if you're a regular listener to these Midday Prayers or if you attend English Masses in this diocese. When it was first introduced, ^{about 3 yrs ago} (at the beginning of Advent), I must confess it didn't appeal very much to me — it didn't seem to be much of an improvement on the version we'd all been using all our lives, and our parents and grandparents before us for a couple of hundred years. Partly perhaps, it was the departure from something very familiar, if, in places, a bit incomprehensible and dated in expression. But ^{despite some remaining reservations} I've come to like it more and more with use — and I hope you have too, [or at least that you're reconciling yourself to using it, for we'll be hearing that version (or something very similar) with us for some time to come.] It's ^a the translation made by the International Committee on English in the Liturgy, and in preparing their translation of the new order of Mass, they worked with other Christian groups & churches to try and get an agreed English text for prayer in our liturgy which other Christians also use in their prayer and worship. How far agreement was in fact reached I'm afraid I don't know — so I can't say with accuracy ^{this} how ecumenical ^{will ever be — and} our present translation is. There'll ^{it hasn't found general acceptance in the English-speaking Catholic world} always be difficulties and disagreements about any translation, especially of something like a familiar prayer which is so personal to a serious Christian: it is one of the signs of the time, though, that in different languages agreements ^{have been} ~~are being~~ reached on common translations of prayer for public use by different churches, or common translations of God's word in scripture into modern languages. Even hymns and

songs have now crossed previously rigid barriers between Christian communities — as if there ever had been anything specifically Catholic or Protestant about a time! Anyway, there are all small symptoms of a general change of attitude towards one another on the part of Christian denominations all over the world. And this week, ^{that has taken place in the past decade} which is being generally observed as a week of prayer for Christian unity shd. be an occasion for all of us to reflect on the divisions between us as Christians, to pray for one another to Him whom all of us call Lord and Father, to examine our own attitudes towards one another and towards the unity of all His disciples for which Christ prayed and wants us to pray. There are many and various obstacles in the way to Christian unity, and how they are to be overcome it is difficult to see — it's certainly not by pretending they don't exist or being unfaithful to the truth which is Christ. The unity of His Church, willed by Christ, is not a man-made unity, much less uniformity — it is the work of the H. Spirit in every Christian and in the community. But this fact doesn't mean we therefore sit back and wait for God's good time to bring about the fullest of this unity. God's good time, for us, is now. And the unity between us as brothers of Christ, sons of the Father, is closely connected with our unity with God Himself. This is why there has to be prayer in the work of Christian unity, personal prayer such as these few minutes each day are intended to stimulate and encourage. We shd. pray, not only for others but that all of us may ^{really} be open to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and be renewed in the likeness of Christ. Listen now for a few moments to our common Christian prayer, the Our

Pelagius: 68 cat.
of Alex church
(about 500-600)

Father, in Stravinsky's setting: MUSIC PRAYERS.

Christ's great prayer for the union of all his disciples among themselves and with Him is in St John's gospel, i. ch. 17, words which shd. be a starting point for our prayer and reflection this week, as they are read in our churches and at other ecumenical meetings: Ja 17²⁰⁻²⁴ [P.Y.C. p 84].

This year the annual week of prayer for Christian unity happens to begin and end on a Sunday, so that more Christians shd. have an occasion to make some contact with the aims and purposes of this week. In a number of churches yesterday there were visiting preachers from other denominations; during this week, different functions have been arranged, with the idea of having people of different Christian traditions meet and talk with each other; and next Sunday afternoon in the City Hall there will be a special service of prayer, and scripture and witness to which all Christians are invited, and whose organisers represent the whole Christian unity movement in HK. As in other years, I don't suppose it will be the most attractive public event of the day, except for the rather few Christians of every denomination who are really concerned about the unity for which Christ prayed for His followers. And in any case not all of us can for one reason or another be there. Nevertheless, whatever small part each of us can take, in keeping with the mind of Christ and his church, in bringing about the oneness of each of us with each other and with Him, it will begin with our own personal prayer and renewal. This shd. be our concern this week.