

Jesus Christ in King  
(Temple: God in fire  
of love)

OUR FATHER

The Lord's Prayer is surely the best known of all Christian prayers — and it's a prayer of asking, a kind of prayer that always seems to cause some people great difficulty in understanding or explaining. Styles change in religious life too, and the devotion of one eye becomes forgotten in another. These past few years have seen remarkable changes in the practice of Christian prayer, particularly in two different directions, with emphasis both on prayer of praise, adoration and honour to God, and at the same time on the shared experience of what is called "charismatic prayer". But the intellectual problems of prayer of petition remain, and are felt more strongly by many people who cannot reconcile their understanding of the scientific world with asking God for anything. This is one of the questions Fr Karl Rahner treats in a new book I mentioned last Monday. If I may presume again to try and give you something of what he has to say, I hope it may help you in your prayers too. Clearly, the simple expression of one's own will in demand on God or appealing to condescension or compliance, is not in itself a prayer. Nor should we be demanding miracles. Yet in taking out any idea of 'magic' from petitionary prayer, we shd. be careful not to miss the essence of prayer itself, something that throughout the history of religion men and women in concrete situations have always genuinely resorted to. Whenever we ask anything of God, it is a prayer and meaningful before God if our desire for whatever it is we ask is also at the same time an absolute surrender to God's will. To come to God in prayer we have to give Him ourselves, our whole life, in

trustful submission and love, and in acceptance of God Himself who is beyond our understanding. The words of Jesus before his death are the essential spirit of a prayerful petition: Let your will be done, not mine. For without this we would be talking of a vital need in a void, or trying, as it were, to influence God by a kind of magic. We have to acknowledge that the opposite of what we correctly ask for can be saving too. Our desire for a determined temporal good is not just brushed aside but absorbed into the freedom we obtain when (because we have surrendered to God) we are dominated by no individual force in our existence. Everything, whether it's life or death, health or sickness, the past, the present or the future, ceases to be something absolute for us when we stand before God and lovingly surrender to him. Praying with genuine prayer, we retain our freedom, unique, ultimate and entire, and also our freedom with regard to what we will in our particular circumstances. Only in this way is the petition we try to direct to God really prayer certain to reach God. But whenever we step into God's presence in this way, yielding and entrusting ourselves unconditionally to the mystery of God, we do so as concrete persons, not abstract ideal people or even merely religious people. We do have our daily needs and anxieties, profound and banal as many of them are. We place ourselves before God just as we are, as we know ourselves to be — and our needs cannot be simply equated with religious needs, as if our prayer shd. only be about "spiritual things". Think of our new

Kneck Knock  
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as we listen to a song by the Med. African Sistas: Christ ~~is~~ King  
MUSIC  
PRAYERS  
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