

Our Father
(Anthol... Russ.
14)

OUR FATHER

The approaching New Year is a family time above all: and this week, for Christians of all sorts, is also a kind of family time, a special week each year when we're asked to reflect and pray more deeply that we all may be united together in the praise and service of God. Like, perhaps, many families, the Christian family of people all over the world has its human internal tensions and problems. They've had too divisions and misunderstandings. But these days, most of us are more conscious of the unnaturalness of these separations and divisions, of the divided witness we give as brothers & sisters with Christ in the house of our one Father in heaven. At least, we can give praise and glory to God that most of us now do talk to each other again, even if we still have not reached that unity together which we believe is God's will for His people. Some of us are impatient at what seems to be lack of progress: others are disheartened by it: and others, perhaps, have grown a bit weary and sceptical. We haven't always managed to avoid the notion that we ourselves could bring about the unity of His followers for whom Christ prayed so earnestly to His Father: we've maybe sometimes have forgotten that this is God's work and His grace, and we're but His tools and instruments, imperfect ones and at times quite intractable ones too. Maybe we've put too much importance and stress on dialogues and official discussions and conferences among experts, and not given ourselves enough encouragement to be faithful to our Christian heritages and traditions and simply try to appreciate and understand our neighbours, work-mates, the other Christians we know & meet.

So, this week of prayer comes round again: and this time it comes for us here ^{just before} here with a time of house-cleaning and renewal, of fresh beginnings and of reconciliation, of hospitality, friendliness and wishes for fruitfulness and prosperity. We might, perhaps, take a cue from all the customs and atmosphere of these Lunar N.Y. days, to help us in our prayer for each other and for ourselves, to help us give glory & thanks to Our Father for all that He does and gives to us, and to ask Him to make us more loving and sharing, more generous and welcoming to every one of His wide family. This year, the theme for this week of prayer for the unity of Christians is: "United in Christ. A new creation." This year also ^{is the U.N. Year dedicated to the homeless, people without shelter - another prick to our consciences, maybe, at this time} "That all may find their home in Thee, O Lord. (Everyone had a series of 'homes', places where they live and grow and work, places where they are 'at home', or make their home. These 'homes', of family, parents, relatives, are a focus of lunar new year activities: may they also be for us a sign and pointer to that home where our true Father lives. May the Christian family in which each of us is 'at home' help us all to find our real home with God. And let us also pray especially for all the people who don't feel at home anywhere, who are spiritually homeless, that we might be true family to them on their journey homewards to God. Today, with particular meaning, let us all pray together in the words of that prayer that all Christians recognize as their own, the Lord's Prayer, Our Father - here it is in ^{an American version of it} Russian version id. [of it that I've been beginning & ending these programmes with. His name MUSIC PRAYERS sung by the Norman Tolmach Choir

→ from 1115 p3 (unusual)

"United in Christ, A New Creation"

['That all may find their home in Thee, O Lord' ;] for Christians of all kinds, may that ^{there} (may) also be a reminder that we haven't a permanent home here, that we're pilgrims on a journey to our home with ^{a New Creation} God. But being pilgrims, we have to search too for the right roads that will lead us towards, not away from our destination. And at the same time we're not excused from being involved with people along the way, from putting down some roots here so that we can be with people in their problems & troubles. In fact, it'll more likely be by working together for the world's salvation and betterment that Christians of different traditions will learn to appreciate each other and so come to deeper understanding and unity together in the work of God. And one of those workings together must surely be on behalf of the deprived, the disadvantaged (in the world's terms) among whom we live.... the homeless, ^{particularly} for instance, wherever they are and whatever the cause of their homelessness. In this season of wishing each other happiness & prosperity, let us pray especially for everyone who is without a home ^{or shelter} at this time, without family and friends: that they may find God in His care for them is their true Father, and that with Him will be their home. [And so let us end today, as we began, with the Lord's Prayer]

MUSIC (Strausswinski: Peter Warlock)

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