**“Making Of” - The Father Wants to Heal You**

**“The Father Wants to Heal You - a Retreat with the Lord’s Prayer”**

I’d been wanting to write a commentary of the Our Father for years! Yes, it’s been done before.

The theme of healing seemed to be appropriate, particularly with regard to father-wounds that so many people carry, and all that hinders our knowing God as Father.

**Vienna, January 2020**

I booked a tiny self-catering studio in Vienna, Austria for 10 days. All being well I’d get most of the book done. (As the Jewish proverb states, if you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans!). Laptop issues, health issues, complete writer’s block - not to mention rumblings of a strange new virus coming from the Far East. I met up with 2 old friends I hadn’t seen for years and consumed much schnitzel - but barely managed to write more than a few random paragraphs.

On the last day, feeling it had all been a waste of time, I checked out of the studio early; my flight wasn’t till the evening, so I decided to do a Holy Hour in the beautiful Franciscan church in Vienna city centre. Now I’m not saying the text of the book floated down from heaven (that would have been nice). However, during that hour, the plan came to me strongly: how the 7 sacraments are contained in the Lord’s Prayer (see Appendix), which gives the whole thing a new dimension! I’m not the first person to find the 7 sacraments in the Our Father; there are various different theories. I’m *not* saying mine is the definitive order but it gives a framework and helps us encounter God’s loving plan for us revealed by his Son Jesus, through the Church.

It took another 2 years or more, all through the Covid-19 pandemic - at last the book was published by Veritas in April 2022!

**New perspective**

Looking back, the often painful experience of writing gave me new perspective. Not only discovering things about the Our Father (which I did) but above all, learning to pray this prayer in a new way, as a conversation, a face to face with… the heavenly Father - my Father and *our* Father! So finally, I’ve tried to communicate how the Lord’s Prayer has changed me and helped me to know God better (hopefully) - and if at least one reader has a similar experience, it will have been worth it.

**Love of story**

A permanent deacon in Dublin told me the book would be ideal as a resource for RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, for those preparing to enter the Catholic Church) - who am I to disagree? The casual reader can see my love of story, which grew on me particularly during more than 15 years based in Ireland: Jesus told stories (the parables) which everyone can relate to, and which can convey a message more attractively and more powerfully than a lecture! So I’ve included tales from my own experience (the French police exploding my suitcase, insomnia in India, lying on a beach in Israel and so on) and some favourite stories I’ve heard over the years - like the priest I know who baptised his own mother, my uncle who met the Beatles, an acquaintance who found Jesus in prison - and the example of various saints: St Charles de Foucauld, St John Bosco, St Teresa of Calcutta and of course, St Joseph, “icon of the Father”.

I hope this book comes across as unashamedly Catholic, but that it would also appeal to other Christians and the merely curious. As well as citing popes and the Catechism, I’ve included quotes from other Christian, Jewish and secular sources.

**To sum up**

“May our efforts in contemplation and study of this miracle prayer help us to meet the gentle touch of our Creator and Father - as did Saint Ignatius of Antioch, who wrote, not long before his martyrdom in Rome: ‘Within me is the living water which says deep inside me: *Come to the Father*.’ May the Father of goodness himself speak to our hearts, as we seek his face and ask for his guidance on our journey to the kingdom.” (*from the Preface, page 15*).

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