

THE LORD'S PRAYER

June 4, 2019

Since the beginning of his Papacy in March 2013, Pope Francis has frequently spoke of the Church's need to reexamine the existing English translation of the "Our Father" or Pater Noster prayer (originally written in Greek in the Gospels of Matthew (6:9-13) and Luke (11:2-4)) and enacted by the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy in December 1963. Pope Francis is not the first person to question a key phrase of the prayer in order to alleviate an age-old confusion surrounding the phrase: "[Lord God] *lead us not into temptation.*" Historically, even some of the Early Church Fathers (i.e., Saints Augustine, Ambrose, and Jerome (3-4AD)) couldn't settle on a definitive text or single clear and understandable interpretation of Christianity's central prayer; uttered by Jesus to his disciples.

"That is not a good translation," the pope has said. And he's correct. An alternative is the phrase "*do not let us fall into temptation,*" which has been used by the Catholic Church in France. In a recent interview, Pope Francis suggested this phrase could be adopted universally.

This portion of the scriptural passage in its original Greek written texts utilizes the Greek verb to "lead" as "*eisphero*" and the original Greek word for "testing or temptation" as "*peirasmos.*"

Of particular note, the Greek word *peirasmos* first appears in Luke 4:13, in a phrase referring to Jesus' temptation by the evil one (Satan), not by God (the Father).

- God permits (but does not cause or create) sin, temptation or evil for a greater good. (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church #395, 412, et al).
- One consideration is how today we are to understand *peirasmos*: it refers to *testing* (in a sense of determining one's character) or of *tempting* (in the sense of enticing one to sin).

In totality, Pope Francis' recommendation is both theologically sound and exegetically (the process of deriving interpretation solely from the biblical texts—but not adding to it) defensible.

For example, James 1:13 makes clear that **God does not tempt**. God cannot be tempted with evil, nor does God tempt anyone. Enticement and sin comes from one's own desires and actions.

Additionally, in 1Corinthians 10:13, St. Paul insists that God does not allow one to be tempted beyond one's strength, and provides us with "*a way out, so [we] may be able to bear it*".

Did you know:

- French-speaking Catholics in Benin, France and Belgium began using a similarly revised translation of the Lord's Prayer on the Feast of Pentecost last June (2018)?
- The long-standing common Spanish translation (after the Second Vatican Council) already reads: "*no nos dejes caer en la tentacion*" or "*do not let us fall into temptation*"?
- The Italian bishops' conference in 2008 adopted a revised translation of the Lord's Prayer as: "*do not abandon us in temptation*"?

"The one who leads us into temptation is Satan!" the Pope said. "That's Satan's job."

Information regarding any formal language revision and/or implementation will be forthcoming.