

Our Father...

Category: Prayer

written by William Cayley | September 30, 2016

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

When I found myself alone with a family and their dying son, the familiarity and dependability of the Lord's Prayer was the best I could muster. Not yet a family doc, I was a fresh seminary graduate, struggling as a chaplain to bring comfort in the face of impending grief. Familiar words, with which we could together come before the Almighty, seemed the best place to start.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Who among us can read the daily news of refugees, shootings and racism, and not cry out from the depths of the soul for divine renewal and justice? Lacking the eloquence of King David or the prophet Jeremiah, at least I can cry out with the simple words taught by Jesus. When I do pray with my patients (less often than I'd like), with these words we can together raise our plea for things to be better. We cannot make it so, but we can trust in the One who can.

Give us today our daily bread.

WIC, food stamps, food banks...True food insecurity is relatively scarce here, yet I see one patient after another living day-to-day. I may imagine security in my financial planning, yet all is ultimately temporary and contingent. Praying for today, attending to the needs of the now, is what my patients need when facing an uncertain future.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

"It's not your fault"—the politically correct way to ostensibly prevent patients feeling bad when sick. Yet maybe it is, or maybe they think it is. In our rush to absolve blame, how often we overlook needs for reconciliation and forgiveness, which may be the true paths to healing.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Delivery—from "evil," the "Evil One," or the evils of suffering. Isn't that part and parcel of what medicine is all about? Whether our understanding of illness is the same or radically different, if I can stand with my patient in praying for deliverance, then I relinquish my "in charge" role and we share together in dependence on the Almighty for what lies ahead.

Amen.

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