

Lesson 6 . . . Relating to Our Heavenly Father

# Gospel of Matthew

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## ***Suggested responses to questions about Matthew 6:1-34***

**Note:** Be sure to respond to all the questions yourself before reading the suggested responses in order to make the most of this study.

1. In paragraph 2447 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the Church teaches that “the *works of mercy* are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities. Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God.”
2. In an Angelus teaching reprinted in the *Rome to Home* excerpt, Pope John Paul II taught that fasting can be considered “therapy for the soul” and that “it helps one in the interior effort of listening to God.” Regarding penitential fasting, he taught: “One of the meanings of penitential fasting is to help us recover an interior life.”
3. An intimate relationship with God includes an element of respect for privacy in regard to piety. Mark 1:35 records that Jesus demonstrated a private, intimate relationship with God the Father when “in the morning, a great while before day, he rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed.” Luke 9:18 describes another incident of Jesus praying alone. Paragraph 2602 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains that Jesus’ “words and works are the visible manifestation of his prayer in secret.” Paragraph 2655 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that “the heart that prays” continues the mystery of salvation made present and communicated in the sacramental liturgy: “The spiritual writers sometimes compare the heart to an altar. Prayer internalizes and assimilates the liturgy during and after its celebration. Even when it is lived out ‘in secret,’ prayer is always prayer *of the Church*; it is a communion with the Holy Trinity.”
4. Paragraph 2736 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that Jesus encourages his followers to petition God who “awaits our petition because the dignity of his children lies in their freedom. We must pray, then, with his Spirit of freedom, to be able truly to know what he wants.” Paragraph 2766 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains that in the “Our Father,” “Jesus does not give us a formula to repeat mechanically” because he “not only gives us the words of our filial prayer; at the same time he gives us the Spirit by whom these words become in us ‘spirit and life.’”
5. Exodus 4:22 shows that God relates to the people of Israel as a father to a son in his instructions to Moses: “And you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is my first-born son.’” In 2 Samuel 7:12-13, God promises David that after his death he will raise up a kingdom from his offspring that will be established forever, and in 2 Samuel 7:14, God

## Matthew Lesson 6 Suggested Responses

specifically promises: “I will be his father, and he shall be my son.” St. Paul writes in Romans 8:14-16: “For all who are led by the Spirit are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” In Galatians 4:4-7, St. Paul teaches: “But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying ‘Abba! Father!’ So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir.”

6. In John 6:32-35, Jesus teaches that just as God gave the Israelites manna in the wilderness, the Father now gives the world life through “the true bread from heaven. . . . I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger.” Paragraph 2837 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* points out that the word “daily” occurs nowhere else in the New Testament: “This word . . . [confirms] us in trust ‘without reservation.’ Taken in the qualitative sense, it signifies what is necessary for life, and more broadly every good thing sufficient for subsistence. Taken literally (*epi-ousios*: “super-essential”) it refers directly to the Bread of Life, the Body of Christ, the ‘medicine of immortality,’ without which we have no life within us. Finally, in this connection, its heavenly meaning is evident: ‘this day’ is the Day of the Lord, the day of the feast of the kingdom, anticipated in the Eucharist that is already the foretaste of the kingdom to come. For this reason it is fitting for the Eucharistic liturgy to be celebrated each day.”
7. In the thirty-first chapter of the Old Testament book of Sirach, the author cautions that a person possessed with material wealth will waste away because of anxiety and sleeplessness and severe illness. And in Sirach 31:5, the author writes: “He who loves gold will not be justified and he who pursues money will be led astray by it.” In 1 Timothy 6:10, St. Paul warns that “the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs.”
8. Deuteronomy 15:9 warns against having eyes that are “hostile to your poor brother,” because it is sin to “give him nothing.” The author of Sirach 14:8-10 also associates stinginess with those who have unsound eyes: “Evil is the man with a grudging eye; he averts his face and disregards people. A greedy man’s eye is not satisfied with a portion. . . . A stingy man’s eye begrudges bread, and it is lacking at his table.” In Matthew 6:22, Jesus says that the eye is the lamp of the body and determines whether one’s whole body will be filled with light or darkness. The way we view others affects our spiritual condition—those with sound eyes share their goods with others who are needy.
9. Mammon is an Aramaic word that means “wealth” or “property.” Jesus cautions that it’s impossible to serve both God and mammon because love of earthly possessions draws people’s love away from God.

10. Jesus teaches in Matthew 6:25-34 not to be anxious about life, about what to eat or drink, about our bodies, about what to wear, or about tomorrow because God will provide for our needs. This is evident in how God cares for the birds and the lilies and the grass. Christians should seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. In Philippians 4:6, St. Paul reinforces these words of Jesus by writing to Christians: “Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”

*Responses to the Questions for Reflection will vary.*

**Matthew Notes**