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# Forgiveness

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*Joseph M. D.: The Our Father*

*Joseph Mattam, SJ: Who is My Neighbour in India?*

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## Editorial

### The Audacity of the Impossible

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*The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream* is a bestseller by Barack Obama. Obama was cast into the national spotlight when asked to deliver a keynote speech at the 2004 Democratic Presidential Convention. This book consists of a litany of his fundamental beliefs that have contributed to his personal and political values. . It is the “audacity of hope” that leads us to believe that we can do better. It is the “audacity of hope” that allows us to take charge of our own fate. It is the “audacity of hope” that instils in us the desire for strong leadership. The fundamental beliefs Obama shares reflect those noted in women leadership literature. The beliefs include (a) staying true to core values, (b) selecting role models and mentors. (c) establishing a support system, (d) learning to compete in an unfamiliar environment, (e) overcoming stereotypes, and (f) maintaining political rightness.

In Pope “Francis there is real cause to hope after his dazzling start that we are at the onset of a Vatican Spring that could see the Catholic Church turning the corner towards a more democratic and open institution as advocated by Pope John XIII,” writes *Times of Malta* already in 2013.

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Rev Arturo Sosa, Superior General of the Jesuits, speaks further of the audacity of the impossible. “We are called to give an audacious response to the unexpected crises of the present moment without diminishing our engagement with human tragedies that go beyond the present moment, tragedies like the migration of persons forced to leave their homelands because of poverty, violence, or lack of a future for their families.”

This is the audacity of the impossible that allowed Mary of Nazareth to trust what was announced to her by the Archangel Gabriel. Such an audacity of the impossible sustained the former Jesuit General, Pedro Arrupe’s decision to give an immediate response to migrants and refugees.

The General continues: “We are asked to be audacious with what we have, with all that we have received from the Lord who loves us. We may produce five more talents or two, according to the measure of the gift received.”

“Every priest is a gift for humanity, a person acting for the good of the human family, which is the main focus of his life,” said Archbishop Thomas Meenamparampil of Guwahati, in remarks view of the conclusion of the Year for Priests in 2010. “In the life of a priest, thanks to the presence of God, the impossible becomes possible. A priest brings joy into people’s lives, and receives joy from his mission.” This year he challenges us with the book, *Attempt the Impossible!* which will be reviewed in the next issue of our journal.

Christmas is truly an attempt at the impossible, an audacity of joy. Even in our darkest timings, the coming of Christ brings joy.

We are Easter people, and for us, Christmas will always come with its audacity of joy. In spite of ...! As Christians, we can trust in and hope for the audacity of the impossible!

The Editor



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## **Learning the Art of Forgiving**

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**Abstract:** Resentment is one of the worst enemies for a happy and healthy life because it leads to continuous stress and causes hypertension. The third reason that blocks forgiveness is depression. The wound was deeply buried but is believed to have passed. Revenge, resentment and depression are symptoms of the absence of forgiveness. The author argues in this article that once we are healed of our resentment through forgiveness, we are better prepared to forgive those who harmed us. Forgiveness is more a theological virtue than a moral virtue. This means that God inspires us to forgive, while our willingness to enter into the dynamic of forgiveness plays an important role in the early stages.

**Keywords:** Resentment, Forgiveness, Art of forgiving, Healing, Suffering

According to some psychologists, the psychiatric ward will be twice less crowded if only people knew that they are forgiven. Forgiving and being forgiven are necessary for mental health. However, there are people who refuse to forgive others for many different reasons.

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The first reason for not being able to forgive others is revenge. Revenge is natural because it comes from an instinct of justice. But the danger of revenge is the spiral of violence it engenders. We wonder why some countries have been fighting for centuries. The sense of revenge is collectively passed on from one generation to another. The second reason that makes forgiveness difficult to practice is the sense of grudge and resentment that people hold on in their hearts for years. This is also a kind of revenge, not aggressive but passive. Resentment is one of the worst enemies for a happy and healthy life because it leads to continuous stress and causes hypertension. The third reason that blocks forgiveness is depression. The wound was deeply buried but is believed to have passed. Revenge, resentment and depression are symptoms of the absence of forgiveness.

### **Dispelling Misconceptions about Forgiveness**

Before we can understand forgiveness, it is important to dispel some myths about forgiveness. In other words, we need to first understand what forgiveness is not. Unfortunately, there are many misleading ideas about forgiveness that are more harmful than helpful in practising the virtue of forgiveness. First of all, forgiveness is not about forgetting the pain succumbed to. Psychologists caution us that we do not forget the harm done to us by others. We merely bury them in our subconscious and when they resurfaces to consciousness, they bring back a bitter memory that ends up in resentment. Without the healing of emotions, forgiveness is not possible.

Secondly, forgiveness is not merely a heroic act of our will that can bridle our emotions. In fact, forgiveness involves all our faculties. It becomes important not to rush to forgive as we need time for all our faculties to reckon with the harm done to us by others. Anger is a healthy emotion that God has given us to be able to defend our integrity. It is not a sin to feel angry and, in fact, feeling angry is part of the forgiveness process. During this process, we can pass

over from destructive revenge to a sense of serenity and emotional healing. Forgiveness is not complete as long as we have not experienced inner peace and emotional healing. Forgiveness involves the element of healing (McKenry & Bruun, 2019).

Thirdly, forgiveness does not imply that we do not hold the offender accountable for his or her actions. If someone hurts us involuntarily, we can excuse that person even if the person did not apologize. On the contrary, if the person has harmed us voluntarily, his or her wrongdoing is not excusable even though we might play it down by finding mitigating circumstances. Forgiveness is the ability to accept that the other person has wronged us and enable the offender to realize this without any pretention. God appears to Moses as one who is merciful and forgiving, but he holds the people who wrong him accountable (Exodus 34: 5-7).

Fourthly, forgiveness does not mean reconciliation. Forgiveness is needed when there is a rupture in relationship. But what establishes and maintains a relationship is not forgiveness but mutual trust. If trust is betrayed, a simple decision of the will would not suffice because trust must be earned and after the relationship breakdown it has to be rebuilt. Two friends who are deeply hurt cannot decide that everything will continue as before, with a snap of a finger. Therefore, reconciliation is not synonymous to forgiveness. It involves important questions such as whether we want to continue this relationship and even deepen it. Hence, reconciliation is the result of forgiveness. We cannot achieve reconciliation until there is the experience of forgiveness with the recognition of the suffering undergone.

Fifthly, forgiveness cannot be forced upon. Forgiveness is an act of love. The person who forgives must have the freedom of choice. Forcing someone to forgive amounts to saying, "I want you to love me despite the dirty tricks that I have played on you". When Christ asks us to forgive, it is an invitation to follow him and his example of love. When Jesus invites us to pray in his words, "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" he is telling



us to ask the heavenly father to teach us to forgive as he does. Many of us, who pray this prayer taught by Jesus, have the impression that if we forgive our wrongdoers, God will forgive us, while the opposite is true. It rather means, “forgive us so that we have the strength to forgive others”. The love of God comes first. Anyone who has experienced God’s forgiveness will be able to forgive others.

Finally, forgiveness is not an abdication of our rights. It does not remove either the consequences of an unfortunate act or an insulting word. Forgiving a murderer does not bring back the victim to life. At the same time, forgiveness is not an act of justice. It is a journey of love for the rehabilitation of the offender. It aims at transforming the offender. Forgiveness enables the offerer to become aware of his or her misconduct and to change his or her attitudes and behaviour. But, at the same time, forgiveness has no power over the other, rather it has power over us, the power to heal us and free us.

### **Steps Involved in Forgiveness**

Here are five steps that describe the process involved in true forgiveness. Though all of us are capable of forgiveness, a believer recognizes two elements in forgiveness: God’s gift and human effort. Regardless of human efforts, at certain times we recognize that forgiveness first comes from God. This is especially true for deep and serious injuries. God is always ready to forgive us and give us his unconditional love. The difficulty does not come from God, but it comes from us, from our inability to be loved. How can we open our hearts to receive God’s forgiveness?

#### *Taking the Right Decision*

Forgiveness does not happen naturally. We must consciously decide not to take the road of revenge, yet to find a way out of a situation of abuse, injury and betrayal. It is also important to try and stop the offense. Forgiveness is difficult and it becomes even more difficult while someone continues to offend us. We must decide to talk to this person asking him or her to stop hurting us. Forgiveness takes

courage. Often, some hide their lack of courage behind the beautiful facade of a freely given forgiveness. But the truth is that most people cannot really forgive under the conditions of a continuous offense. They stifle their feelings because it is most comfortable.

### *Recognising the Harm*

Sometimes, when we have suffered injustice and betrayal, we tend to apologize in an effort to minimize the fault. In some cases, the offended people feel guilty, as is often the case with victims of sexual abuse. These are defence mechanisms that prevent us from getting in touch with our anger, inner wound and suffering. These defence mechanisms make all sorts of manoeuvres to avoid contact with our emotions. Therefore, we tend to forgive our offenders too quickly to avoid the painful process of healing our emotions. Many people are too quick to forgive their offenders quickly without observing what is happening within themselves. But if there is no purging of different emotions (grief, sadness, anger, frustration), healing does not take place.

Recognizing that we have been injured also means identifying what we have lost. It is not a question of playing the victim and whining about ourselves in general. It is important to know exactly what was lost. In all forgiveness, there is a “mourning” in relation to the expectations that we had vis-à-vis the other and the betrayal experienced. If we can then identify what has been violated, the healing process is easy as our aggressiveness begins to melt.

### *Talking to Others about Suffering*

We must be able to do something in order to be healed. There are many possible approaches, like writing a journal and talking to someone we can trust. It is not done with an intention of maligning others or to work out a master plan for revenge. We need to have already made a conscious decision to rule out revenge. Talking about our suffering helps us to describe the facts without attributing motives. It is also important that we choose the right person to talk about our suffering, who does not sit on judgement or spread false

news (Haber, 1991). Solitude is not an option as it brings out from us evil tendencies that prevent us from having a reasonable understanding of the process of forgiveness. When we come across people who silently suffer, without being able to talk about their suffering, we need to enable them patiently and give a compassionate attentive listening to their grievances.

### *Receiving Healing*

Forgiveness is not possible if our inner self is not healed. Most of the time talking to the right person allows healing to take place gradually. We then develop within us an inner restorative capacity. For a believer, this is where God becomes significant. A friend, counsellor, spiritual director or psychotherapist can help us move towards healing but they cannot offer us healing. When a wound is too deep to heal, the inner self has no strength on its own to repair the damage. We need the power of God to get healed. For a believer, God is the source of our healing. Some studies on mental health have shown that believers show better mental health than non-believers when faced with serious crises in life.

### **Conclusion: Openness to Forgiveness**

Once we are healed, we are better prepared to forgive those who harmed us. Forgiveness is more a theological virtue than a moral virtue. This means that God inspires us to forgive, while our willingness to enter into the dynamic of forgiveness plays an important role in the early stages. In the final stage, we need to be hospitable enough to receive God's love. Anyone who is open to God's love is inspired by it to forgive others. The grace of God comes upon all people who open their hearts to God's love. In this sense, our ability to forgive comes from God's grace and therefore, God is the agent of forgiveness. The dynamic force behind forgiveness is God's unconditional love of which we are beneficiaries. If we do not feel loved, then it is impossible for us to forgive. When we enter the world of forgiveness, we enter a world of abundance and generosity, and perhaps less rationality.

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## **Prudence: A Biblical, Philosophical and Theological Inquiry**

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**Abstract:** This articles explores the virtue of prudence from biblical, theological and philosophical perspectives. For Aristotle and Aquinas, the virtue of prudence is of central importance. They hold that only the prudent person is fully virtuous, and “full virtue cannot be acquired without prudence.” For them prudence is an intellectual virtue of the practical application of right reason. Although prudence is based on a naturally virtuous character, full virtue only develops when the person reasons for himself/herself that he/she will be temperate, courageous, just, etc. Prudence, then, is a form of wisdom about practical matters and actions, rather than a more general wisdom. A prudent person knows the right thing to do in each situation and acts upon that knowledge. True and perfect prudence guides us to attain, at least to understand the eternal truth.

**Keywords:** Prudence, Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Bible and prudence

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## Introduction

Very often we hear people saying, "Be prudent"! And often, I get baffled with this sort of advice, and I ask myself, what makes me prudent? This short paper is an exploration into the biblical, philosophical and theological understanding of the term 'prudence' as it is revealed in the Bible, and understood and explained by Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas.

Prudence is perceived as a virtue of all the times. People who are considered prudent are thought of as careful and cautious, circumspect and discreet. They are regarded as having an idea for the future and an aversion to risk. Josef Pieper describes a prudent man like this: "A 'prudent' man is thought to be one who avoids the embarrassing situation of having to be brave. The 'prudent' man is the 'clever tactician' who contrives to escape personal commitment" (Pieper, *Prudence*, 11).

While teaching his pupils wisdom for living, the sage of Proverbs says: "My Child, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding, so that you may hold on to prudence, and your lips may guard knowledge (Prov 5:1-2)." Human beings by nature are instilled with the quest for divine wisdom, and as we see it in Prov 5:1-2, wisdom and prudence go hand in hand. Both originate from the Divine, and only a wise person can be prudent in the hubbub of real life.

The contemporary understanding of prudence would strike Aristotle's and Thomas Aquinas' understanding of prudence. For them, prudence is the virtue of thought concerned with action in the world of contingency, i.e., the world as unpredictable and variable. According to Aristotle and Aquinas, "the person who is prudent is the only one who can be truly just, courageous and temperate, and the good person is truly good only if he is prudent" (Roche, 2020: 3). Aristotle considers prudence as practical wisdom, and he defines it as "a state grasping the truth, involving reason, concerned with action about things that are good or bad for a human being"

(Schwartz and Sharpe, 2020). St. Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle very closely, teaches that "prudence is a virtue of the practical intellect that is related in a particularly close way to the moral virtues" (Roche, 2020: ix).

### **Biblical Understanding of Prudence**

What does the word “prudence” mean when used in the context of Scripture? Though the term prudence is used in different books of the Bible, the book of Proverbs gives a clear biblical understanding to the virtue of prudence. According to the book of Proverbs, prudence is wisdom applied to practical matters: First of all, a wise person is also a prudent person as prudence and wisdom are intrinsically related (1:1-6; 8:12). Prudence will watch over a wise person (2:11). A prudent person is the one who heeds to the voices of correction (15:5), one who guards his/her mouth and keeps his/her tongue from the evil things (21:23). Prudence functions as a source of discretion and knowledge (8:12; 1:1-6; 14:8), foresight and caution (22:3; 23:1-3). The prudent is crowned with knowledge (14:18), acts with knowledge (13:16), acquires knowledge (Prov 18:15) and conceals knowledge (12:23). The prudent keeps his/her tongue out of trouble (21:23), ignores an insult (12:16). The prudent is observant and diligent (14:15) and foresees evil (22:3). The prudent restrains his speech (10:19). The path of life leads upward for the prudent, that he/she may turn away from Sheol beneath (15:24). The wisdom of the prudent is “to discern his way” (14:8a). The prudent sees danger and hides him/herself, but the simple goes on and suffer for it (27:12). The simple believes everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps (Prov 14:15). The prudent will act with discretion: “He who gathers in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who brings shame” (10:5). The prudent wife, a gift of God is a descriptive of prudence itself: “House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord” (19:14). In short, the book of Proverbs gives a multifaceted picture of prudence, a practical virtue intrinsically related to wisdom.

Prudence is given by God's grace (Eph 1:8), and it is a spiritual insight (Hos 14:9). The prudent are those who understand the ways of God (Hos 14:9), and keep silence in the evil time (Am 5:13). Prudence of the wicked will be defeated by God (Isa 29:14; 1Cor 1:19), and will be denounced (Isa 5:21; 29:15). Prudence is to be practised in day-to-day life situations (Mt 25:3.9).

Jesus acts with prudence on many occasions (Mt 9:30; 16:20; 21:24-27; 22:15-21; Mk 3:12; 5:43; 7:6; 8:30; 9:9; Jn 7:10). Jesus shows prudence by avoiding confrontations with the chief priests and the Pharisees (Mt 12:14-16; Mk 3:7; Jn 11:47-54), by avoiding in walking "no longer openly" (Jn 11:54; 12:36). Disciples of Jesus are encouraged to exercise prudence, especially in their interactions with unbelievers (Mt 10:6; Col 4:5; Eph 5:15).

There are people exemplified by practicing prudence in the Hebrew Bible: Jacob (Gen 32:3-23; 34:5.9), Jethro (Exod 18:19-23), Saul in not killing the Jabesh-Gileadites (1 Sam 11:13). David (1 Sam 16:18; 18:5-30; 2 Sam 15:33-37) Joseph (Gen 41:39; 41:33-57), Abigail (1 Sam 25:18-31), Aged counsellors of Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:7), Gideon (Judges 8:1-3), certain elders of Israel (Jer 26:17-23), Jehoram (2 Kgs 7:12-13), Elijah in his escape from Jezebel (1 Kgs 19:3-4), Daniel (Dan 1:8-14) etc.

There are also characters exemplified by showing prudence in the New Testament: Joseph (Mt 1:19), the wise builder and king (Lk 14:28-32), the scribe (Mk 12:32-34), Gamaliel (Acts 5:34-39), the town clerk of Ephesus in averting a riot (Acts 19:29-41), Paul (Acts 23:6), Peter in escaping from Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:17), Paul and Silas in escaping from Berea (Acts 17:10-15), Paul and Barnabas in escaping persecution (Acts 14:6), Paul in circumcising timothy (Acts 16:3), Paul in performing temple rites (Acts 21:20-26), Sergius paulus (Acts 13:7) etc.

We also see prudence in dealing with other people: Abimelech makes a treaty with Isaac (Gen 26:26-31), Jacob prepares to meet Esau (Gen 32:3-21), Nehemiah petitions Artaxerxes (Neh 2:1-6),



Daniel's diplomacy in avoiding Nebuchanezzar's food (Dan 1:8-14), Daniel's wisdom and tact in the face of death (Dan 2:10-16) etc.

In short, the biblical understanding of prudence is a careful, wise discernment; the avoidance of rash behaviour or speech; the good management of talents and resources and the showing of discretion and wisdom in relationships with other people.

### Aristotle on Prudence

In the eighth section of the sixth book of *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle deals with prudence, and he defines it as practical wisdom. According to him, prudence is “concerned with down-to-earth, human things, and things that it makes sense to deliberate about — that is, things that have a purpose that human action can influence” (Sniggle, 2020). It “concerns things of “common sense”-knowledge that is gained via intuition but cannot be justified via logical deduction from other facts” (Sniggle, 2020).

Aristotle defines a prudent person as “the one who is truly just, courageous and temperate, and the good person is truly good only if he is prudent” (Roche, 2020: ix). According to Aristotle, a distinction between universals and particulars would help to dwell the meaning of prudence. It can be illustrated by the analogy of becoming a savant by learning something scientifically and systematically. For example, while it is possible for a person to be a savant by learning mathematics scientifically, prudence must be acquired through long experience. Aristotle thinks this is because “expertise in mathematics largely requires an intellectual understanding of abstract universals, while practical wisdom requires actual encounters with real-life particulars” (Roche, 2020: ix). Above all, according to Aristotle, there is a fundamental connection between prudence and moral virtue.

Following assertions by Aristotle may help us to understand the concept of prudence in a better way:<sup>1</sup>

- Virtues of character need the guidance of prudence to avoid the extremes of excess and deficiency, and to ensure that feelings and actions occur at the right time, concerning the right things, in respect of the right people, for the right reason, and in the right way (1106b16-24).
- Prudence is impossible without excellence of character (1144a29ff.).
- The prudent person (*phronimos*) needs the virtues of character, ‘for vice perverts us and produces false views about the principles of actions’ (1144b34-35).
- A prudent person must also at the same time be excellent in character (1152a10).
- ... the correct reason is the reason in accord with prudence; it would seem, then, that they all in a way intuitively believe that the state in accord with prudence is virtue (1144b23-26).
- One has all the virtues if and only if one has prudence, which is a single state (1145a2).
- Full character virtue is acquired only by repeated decisions made ‘in accord with the correct reason. Now the correct reason is the reason in accord with prudence’ (1144b23-25).
- Prudence is a state grasping the truth, involving reason, concerned with action about things that are good or bad for a human being (1140b7).
- Someone is not prudent simply by knowing; he must also act on his knowledge’ (1152a8-9).

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<sup>1</sup> Following citations are taken from, Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terrence Irwin, 2nd edn (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.. References to this edition of the *Nicomachean Ethics* are given after quotations in the text following Bekker’s page and line system.

- Prudence is prescriptive, since its end is, what action we must or must not do, whereas comprehension only judges (1143a8-10).

In short, for Aristotle, “prudence is a virtue of thought that is practical rather than theoretical and deliberative rather than intuitive. It is the intellectual virtue that perfects reasoning in regard to decision making in the realm of human action” (Roche, 2020: ix). For Aristotle, prudence is always about something that the one faces personally. He/she deliberates about and decides on something that he/she will actually do or not do. His/her prudential decision commands him/her to act or not to act. Aristotle’s prudent person is good at making decisions partly because he/she is able to perceive the salient features of any situation.

### Aquinas on Prudence

Aquinas follows Aristotle very closely to explain the nature of prudence especially in his Commentary on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, although more than 1,500 years of history separate Thomas Aquinas from Aristotle. Aquinas argues that “prudence is a virtue of the practical intellect that is related very closely to the moral virtues. In order to be morally good, a person needs the moral virtues, and these in turn need the judgement of prudence” (Roche, 2020: ix). Aquinas’s interpretations of Aristotle’s notion of prudence are vividly dealt with in his *Summa Theologiae*, II/ II, Question 47.<sup>2</sup> My attempt here is just to highlight a few pertinent arguments of Aquinas to understand the term prudence.

According to Aquinas, “prudence is wisdom about human affairs: but not wisdom absolutely,” (Q. 47, art.2, reply to obj.1) and therefore it is “wisdom for man” (Q. 47, art.2, reply to obj.1). It is “only the application of right reason in matters of counsel, which

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II/ II, Question 47. Prudence, Considered in Itself, <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/> (accessed October 15, 2020). As it is customary, for the references from this work following pattern will be followed: Question no, article no, objection no, or reply to the objection no or answer to the article.

are those wherein there is no fixed way of obtaining the end,” (Q. 47, art.2, reply to obj.3) and it is also “applied [application] to action, which is the end of the practical reason.” (Q. 47, art.2, reply to obj.3)

Aquinas argues that there are three acts applying reason to prudence. “The first is to take counsel which belongs to discovery, for counsel is an act of inquiry. ... The second act is to judge of what one has discovered,” and this is an act of the speculative reason. ... and its third act is to command, which act consists in applying to action the things counselled and judged.” (Q. 47, art.8, answer)

He explains that since prudence is “right reason applied to action,” “all actions are directed to prudence as their end. Therefore, prudence appoints the end to all moral virtues” (Q. 47, art.6, obj. 2). Therefore, “it is evident that prudence is a special virtue, distinct from all other virtues,” (Q. 47, art.5, obj.3) but it “helps all the virtues, and works in all of them” (Q. 47, art.5, reply to obj.2).

According to Aquinas prudence is threefold: false prudence, true prudence, and perfect prudence (Q. 47, art.5, answer). False prudence “takes its name from its likeness to true prudence,” (Q. 47, art.5, answer) but never attains a good end. True prudence “devises fitting ways of obtaining a good end; and yet it is imperfect because the good which it takes for an end, is not the common end of all human life, but of some particular affair” (Q. 47, art.5, answer). Perfect prudence is “both true and perfect, for it takes counsel, judges and commands aright in respect of the good end of man’s whole life” (Q. 47, art.5, answer).

Aquinas also makes a distinction between civic prudence, domestic prudence and personal prudence (Q. 47, art. 11, answer). He defines personal prudence as “the right plan of things to be done in the light of what is good or bad for [...] oneself” (Q. 47, art 11, answer). He claims that “personal prudence and civic prudence are substantially the same habit’ (Q. 47, art 11, reply to obj. 1). According to him civic prudence concerns things that are good or bad for the entire

civic community. Its relation to personal prudence is like that between legal justice and virtue. Aquinas sees domestic prudence as occupying a middle position between that regulating the individual and the state. “Because the whole is more important than the part, and consequently the city than the household and the household than one man, civic prudence must be more important than domestic and the latter more important than personal prudence” (Q. 47, art 11, reply to obj. 3).

Aquinas in his reply to the objection raised by Augustine’s definition of prudence, “Prudence is love choosing wisely between the things that help and those that hinder” (Q. 47, art 1, obj.1) says that, “prudence is said to be love, not indeed essentially, but in so far as love moves to the act of prudence.” (Q. 47, art 1, reply to obj. 1). In his objection to the argument that “prudence is to choose wisely,” (Q. 47, art 1, Obj. 2) Aquinas says, “The prudent man considers things afar off, in so far as they tend to be a help or a hindrance to that which has to be done at the present time.” (Q. 47, art 1, reply to Obj. 2).

In his reply to the objection raised by Augustine’s argument that “Prudence is the knowledge of what to seek and what to avoid” (Q. 47, art 1, Obj. 3), Aquinas says that “The worth of prudence consists not in thought merely, but in its application to action, which is the end of the practical reason. Wherefore if any defect occur in this, it is most contrary to prudence, since, the end being of most import in everything, it follows that a defect which touches the end is the worst of all” (Q. 47, art 1, reply to obj. 3).

Aquinas argues that it is not possible for a person to be good ‘according to moral virtue, without prudence, nor even to be prudent without moral virtue’ (Q. 47, art 4, answer). It is with regard to the moral virtues – and not the natural virtues – that a person is called good without qualification. This is because the moral virtues cannot exist without prudence, nor can prudence exist without the moral virtues. ‘When there is prudence, which is a single virtue, all the

virtues will be simultaneous with it, and none of them will be present if prudence is not there' (Q. 47, art 4,. answer). He explains that without prudence, the natural habits and inclinations do not become full virtues. As he himself states, 'natural inclinations fail to have the complete character of virtue if prudence is lacking' (Q. 47, art 4, answer).

Aquinas compares prudence with scientific knowledge. Whereas scientific knowledge is concerned with universals, prudence has to do with 'a singular ultimate, viz., the particular, since it is of the nature of the practicable to be particular' (Q. 47, art 5, answer). Thus there is a clear distinction between prudence and scientific knowledge. According to Aquinas, there are three stages in every action: deliberation, judgement and the command of the will. Prudence requires excellence in deliberation, 'which is associated with the inquiry of reason [...] (and) takes time (Q. 47, art 8, answer).

The following assertions by Aquinas may help us to understand the concept of prudence in a better way:

- Prudence is wisdom about human affairs: but not wisdom absolutely, because it is not about the absolutely highest cause, for it is about human good, and this is not the best thing of all. And so it is stated significantly that "prudence is wisdom for man," but not wisdom absolutely (Q. 47, art 2, reply to obj. 1).
- Prudence belongs not only the consideration of the reason, but also the application to action, which is the end of the practical reason. But no man can conveniently apply one thing to another, unless he knows both the thing to be applied, and the thing to which it has to be applied (Q. 47, art 3, answer).
- Prudence is a special virtue, distinct from all other virtues (Q. 47, art 3, answer).
- Prudence helps all the virtues, and works in all of them (Q. 47, art 5, reply to obj. 2).
- Prudence keeps most careful watch and ward, lest by degrees we be deceived unawares by evil counsel (Q. 47, art 9, answer).

- Prudence regards not only the private good of the individual, but also the common good of the multitude (Q. 47, art 9, answer).
- Prudence is in the reason. Now ruling and governing belong properly to the reason; and therefore it is proper to a man to reason and be prudent in so far as he has a share in ruling and governing (Q. 47, art 12, answer).
- Without the moral virtues there is no prudence (Q. 47, art 13, reply to obj. 2).
- Prudence, by its very nature, is more opposed to sin, which arises from a disorder of the appetite (Q. 47, art 13, reply to obj. 2).
- Since then prudence is not about the ends, but about the means, as stated above (Article 6; I-II:57:5), it follows that prudence is not from nature (Q. 47, art 15, answer).
- Prudence is rather in the old, not only because their natural disposition calms the movement of the sensitive passions, but also because of their long experience (Q. 47, art 15, reply to obj. 2).

As we have seen, for Aquinas, prudence is wisdom about human affairs, and the application of right reason in matters of counsel. It is the reason applied to action, which is the end of the practical reason. Since prudence is right reason applied to action, all actions are directed to prudence as their end. It is a special virtue, distinct from all other virtues, but it helps all the virtues, and works in all of them. There is no prudence without the moral virtues. Prudence is said to be love, not indeed essentially, but so far as love moves to the act of prudence. Prudence regards not only the private good of the individual, but also the common good of the multitude. What is desired is to have the third kind of prudence which is both true and perfect. In short, for Aquinas, prudence is right reason applied to action, and therefore, prudence resides only in the practical reason.

## Conclusion

As we have seen, the biblical understanding of prudence is a wise careful discernment; the ability to govern and discipline oneself by the use of reason; the avoidance of rash behaviour or speech; the

good management of talents; skill and good judgement in the use of resources; showing discretion and wisdom in relationships with other people, and caution or circumspection as to danger or risk.

For both Aristotle and Aquinas, the virtue of prudence is of central importance. They hold that only the prudent person is fully virtuous, and “full virtue cannot be acquired without prudence.” For them prudence is an intellectual virtue arising from the practical application of right reason. Although prudence is based on a naturally virtuous character, full virtue only develops when the person reasons for himself/herself that he/she will be temperate, courageous, just, etc. Prudence, then, is a form of wisdom about practical matters and actions, rather than a more general wisdom. A prudent person knows the right thing to do in each situation and acts upon that knowledge. True and perfect prudence guides us to attain, at least to understand the eternal truth.

We know that there is no package to achieve prudence. Since prudence is practical wisdom, we can achieve this only through experience by applying right reason to our actions. In short, the virtue of prudence functions as a catalyst, to master the art of wisdom.

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## **The Our Father: Embodiment of All Prayers**

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**Abstract:** Prayer is a communication between the divine and the human, it calls the almighty. Down through the centuries, different prayers have been handed down from one generation to another. Many prayers differ in forms and contents depending on the religious affiliation. The prayer, Our Father, which known as the Lord's Prayer is the most efficacious prayer acknowledged and said by millions of us humans irrespective of our difference, hence any one can say that the Our Father; is an embodiment of all prayers. This is what this research paper enlightens us titled; The Our Father, Embodiment of all Prayers.

**Keywords;,** Communication, God, Humanity, Embodiment, Petition, Father, Jesus, Commandments, Worshippers.

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## Introduction

Prayer is an act of communication by humans with the sacred or holy—God, the gods, the transcendent realm, or supernatural powers (Prayer, 2021). Prayer has been one of the fundamental aspects of human nature. Thus, found in all religions of humanity at all times, in all paces, prayer may be a corporate or personal act utilizing various forms and techniques (Prayer, 2021). Thus fundamental nature of human lives, namely, ‘prayer,’ has been described in its sublimity as “an intimate friendship, a frequent conversation held alone with the Beloved” by St. Teresa of Ávila, a 16th-century Spanish mystic. This article titled, *The Our Father; Embodiment of all Prayers*, is a reflection of the prayer, “The Our Father,” which is also termed as the Lord’s Prayer. The Bible being used for reference is *The New Jerusalem Bible*, New York: Doubleday, 1985, referred as NJB.

## The Prayer, Our Father

The Lord’s Prayer, the Our Father, is much more than a handy guide on what to pray when no other words come to mind. The prayer, if we meditate on each petition, serves as a moral compass that reveals the best way to go before the Father in requesting His guidance and protection (Smyth, 2021). Jesus, Himself, gave us the words to the Lord’s Prayer, found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-4) (Smyth, 2021). More specifically, when one of Jesus’ disciples asked the Lord to teach the disciples how to pray, Christ responded by giving us this short prayer that perfectly summarizes what Christians believe and how Christians should live (Smyth, 2021). The Lord’s Prayer, also known as the Our Father or *Pater Noster*, contains seven petitions. The number seven often connotes completion or perfection in Scripture, and the Lord’s Prayer is just that — a complete and perfect summary of divine teachings (Smyth 2021).

The prayer opens simply enough, with an address to *Our Father, who art in Heaven*. This address reaffirms our core belief as

Christians that God is our celestial Father, both with us in spirit and above us in the perfect realm of Heaven (Smyth, 2021). This opening address also unites us humanity as one community of worshippers as we pray to “our” Father and not individually to “my” Father. The Lord teaches us as he taught his disciples;

So you should pray like this way:

Our Father in heaven ,

May your name be held holy.

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,

as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.

And do not put us to the test,

but save us from the Evil One. (Mt 6:9-13 NJB)

After this address, invoking the Lord with the seven petitions as an existential yet divine, the prayer can be explained in the following way taking every petition applying to our human nature as humans irrespective of time and place. This prayer is addressed to the divine God by us humans. Thus the Our Father, then like the Ten Commandments, begins by establishing the primacy of God, which then leads naturally to a consideration of the right way of being human (Ratzinger, 2008). For the research the text primarily used here is *Jesus of Nazareth* by Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI). The following is the analysis of the prayer Our Father, applicable to us humanity irrespective time and place, religious and political affiliation for we all belong to our creator.

## Our Father Who Art in Heaven

This prayer begins with the salutation “Father.” Reinhold Shneider writes about this in his exposition of the Our Father;

The Our Father begins with a great consolation: we are allowed to say ‘Father.’ This one word contains the whole history of redemption. We are allowed to say ‘Father,’ because the Son was our brother and he revealed the Father to us; because, thanks to what Christ has done, we have once more become children of God. (*Das Vaterunser*, p. 10). (Ratzinger, 2008)

It should be mentioned that as Pope Benedict XVI tells us that contemporary men and women have difficulty in experiencing the great consolation of the word *father* immediately, since the experience of the father is in many cases either completely absent or is obscured by inadequate examples of fatherhood (Ratzinger, 2008). In this prayer we must allow Jesus to teach us what *father* really means. For example, in Jesus’ discourses, the Father appears as the source of all good, as the measure of the rectitude (perfection) of man (Ratzinger, 2008). Benedict XVI points out; “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in Heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good” (Mt 5:44-45) (Ratzinger, 2008).

The Pope writes that the love that endures “to the end” (Jn 13:1), which the Lord fulfilled on the Cross in praying for his enemies, shows us the essence of the Father. (Ratzinger, 2008). According to him He is this love, for Jesus brings it to completion, he is entirely “Son,” and he invites us to become “sons” (daughters) according to this criterion (Ratzinger, 2008). When we address as Father there can be a question, which reminds us; Is God also mother? (Ratzinger, 2008) It is true that the Bible does compare God’s love with the love of a mother; “As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you” (Is 66:13), “Can a woman forget her suckling

child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb” (Is 49:15) (Ratzinger, 2008). The mystery of God’s maternal love is expressed with particular power in the Hebrew word *rabamim*. Pope Benedict XVI points out that etymologically, this word means “womb,” but it was later used to mean divine compassion for man, God’s mercy (Ratzinger, 2008). It can be pointed out that the Old Testament constantly uses the names of organs of our human body to describe basic human attitudes or inner dispositions of God, just as today we use the heart or brain when referring to some aspect of our own existence (Ratzinger, 2008).

In this way the Old Testament describes the basic attitudes of our existence, not in abstract concepts, but in the image language of the body. For instance, the womb is the most concrete expression for the intimate interrelatedness of two lives and of loving concern for the dependent, helpless creature whose whole being, body and soul, nestles in the mother’s womb (Ratzinger, 2008). The Old Testament understanding of the image language of the body furnishes us, then, with a deeper understanding of God’s dispositions toward man than any conceptual language could (Ratzinger, 2008).

Though this use of language is derived from man’s bodiliness inscribes motherly love into the image of Go, it is nonetheless also true that God is never named or addressed as mother, either in the Old or in the New Testament. “Mother” in the Bible is an image but not a title for God (Ratzinger, 2008).

Jesus alone was able to address this Creator God, my Father, because he alone is truly God’s only-begotten Son, of our substance with the Father. In contrast, the rest of us have to say “our Father (Ratzinger, 2008). It is only within the “we” of the disciples can we call “Father,” because only through communion with Jesus Christ do we truly become “children of God (Ratzinger, 2008).”

### Hallowed be Thy Name

This is the first petition of the Our Father. It reminds us of the second commandment of the Decalogue: Thou shalt not speak the

name of the Lord thy God in vain. The question arises, “what is this name of God”? When we turn our mind to God’s name, we see in our mind’s eye the picture of Moses in the desert beholding a thornbush that burns but not consummated. (Ratzinger, 2008). Moses is prompted to go and take a closer look at this mysterious sight, but then a voice calls to him from out of the bush, and this voice says to him; “I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” [(Ex 3:6) (Ratzinger, 2008)] The Old Testament tells us that this God sends Moses back to Egypt with the task of leading the people of Israel out of that country into the Promised Land, whereby, Moses is charged with demanding in the name of God that Pharaoh let Israel go, (Ratzinger, 2008).

### **Thy Kingdom Come**

In understanding this petition, we recall all our earlier considerations concerning the term “Kingdom of God” (Ratzinger, 2008). By this petition, we are acknowledging first and foremost the primacy of God (Ratzinger, 2008). When God’s presence is not acknowledged, nothing can be good, and humans and the world fall to ruin. Benedict XVI points out that this is what the Lord means when he says to “seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well” [(Mt 6:3) (Ratzinger, 2008)] These words are the basis for an order of priorities for human action, for how we approach every life (Ratzinger, 2008).

### **Thy will be Done on Earth as it is Heaven**

By this petition, two things are immediately clear from the words of this petition: God has a will with and for us and it must become the measure of our willing and being and the essence of “heaven” is that it is where God’s will is unswervingly done (Ratzinger, 2008). If we put it in different terms, ‘where God’s will is done is heaven (Ratzinger, 2008).’ The Pope writes that the essence of heaven is oneness with God’s will, the oneness of will and truth. Then earth becomes “heaven” when and insofar as God’s will is done there; and

it is merely “earth,” the opposite of heaven, when and insofar as it withdraws from the will of God (Ratzinger, 2008). That’s why we pray in this petition that it may be on earth as it is in heaven—that earth may become “heaven” (Razinger, 2008).

### **Give us this Day Our Daily Bread**

According to Pope Benedict XVI, the fourth petition of the Our Father appears to us as the most “human” of all of the petitions (Ratzinger, 2008). He says that though the Lord directs our eyes to the essential, to the “one thing necessary,” he also knows about and acknowledges our earthly (existential) needs (Ratzinger). When he says to his disciples, “Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat” (Mt 6:25), he nevertheless invites us to pray for our food and thus to turn our care over to God (Ratzinger, 2008). He tells us that bread is “the fruit of the earth and the work of human hands,” but the earth bears no fruit unless it receives sunlight and rain from above (Ratzinger, 2008). The coming together of cosmic powers, outside our control, stands opposed to the temptation that comes to us through our pride to give ourselves life purely through our own power (Ratzinger, 2008). According to him such pride makes man violent and cold. It will ultimately result in destroying the earth. He says;

it cannot be otherwise, because it is contrary to the truth that we human beings are oriented toward self-transcendence and that we become great and free and truly ourselves only when we open up to God. We have the right and the duty to ask for what we need. We know that if even earthly fathers give their children good things when they ask for them, God will not refuse us the good things that he alone can give (cf. Lk 11:9-11 and Ratzinger, 2008).

Reflecting on this petition Saint Cyprian draws our attention to two important aspects of it. He points out the far reaching significance of the word *our* in his discussion of the phrase “*Our Father*,” and



here likewise he points out that the reference is to “our” bread (Ratzinger, 2008). As bread is the symbol of communion or fellowship, here we pray that in the communion of the disciples, in the communion of the children of God, and for this reason no one may think only of himself (herself) (Ratzinger, 2008). In this petition as we pray for *our* bread- we also pray for bread for others. It also reminds us that those who have an abundance of bread are called to share (Ratzinger, 2008), irrespective of all differences.

### **And Forgive Us Our Trespasses, as We Forgive Those Who Trespass against Us**

The fifth petition of the prayer Our Father presupposes a world in which there is trespass-trespass of men (humans) in relation to other men, trespass in to God (Ratzinger, 2008). In our everyday life as humans, the Pope reminds us that every instance of trespass among us humans involves some kind of injury to truth and to love and is thus opposed to God, who is truth and love (Ratzinger, 2008). One of the prime existential needs for us humans is how to overcome guilt in our life. Thus the history of religions revolves around this question (Ratzinger, 2008). At our psychological level of us humans guilt calls for retaliation and the result is a chain of trespasses in which the evil of guilt grows ceaselessly and becomes more and more inescapable (Ratzinger, 2008). From the basis of our psychological level the holy Father Pope Benedict XVI tells us that with this petition, the Lord is telling us that guilt can be overcome only by forgiveness, not by retaliation (Ratzinger, 2008), in the individual level as humans and in the collectively level as humanity, for God is a God who forgives, because he loves his creatures; but forgiveness can only penetrate and become effective in one who is himself (herself) forgiving (Ratzinger, 2008).

### **And Lead Us not into Temptation**

In the prayer, the way this petition is phrased could be shocking to many of us, for we know that God certainly does not lead us into temptation (Ratzinger, 2008). In this regard, St James tells us; “Let

no one say when he is tempted 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one" (Jas 1:13 and Ratzinger, 2008).

We, humans are helped a further step along when we recall the words of the Gospel: "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (Mt 4:1 and Ratzinger, 2008). Pope Benedict XVI explains to us that temptation comes from the devil, but part of Jesus' messianic task is to withstand the great temptations to the point of dying on the Cross, which is how he opens the way of redemption for us (Ratzinger, 2008). According to him it is not only after his death, but already Jesus by his death and during his whole life that the Lord Jesus "descends into hell," as it were, into the domain of our temptations and defeats, in order to take us by the hand and carry us upward (Ratzinger, 2008). Here again, the Pope takes us to the Scripture. For example, the Letter to the Hebrews places special emphasis on this aspect, which it presents as an essential component of Jesus' path: "For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted" (Heb 2:18). "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15 and Ratzinger, 2008).

### **But Deliver Us from Evil**

The last petition of the Our Father takes us once again to the previous one and gives it a positive twist (Ratzinger, 2008). Benedict XVI tells us that the two petitions are therefore closely connected. He explains that in the next-to-last petition the *not* set the dominant note (do not give the Evil One more room to manoeuvre than we can bear) (Ratzinger, 2008). He writes that in the last petition we come before the Father with the hope that is at the centre of our faith: "Rescue, redeem, free us!" (Ratzinger, 2008). The prayer, Our Father, in its final analysis, is a plea for redemption and as humans what do we want to be redeemed from? (Ratzinger, 2008) The Pope claims that the new German translation of the Our

Father says “*vom Bösen*,” thus leaving it open whether “evil” or “the Evil One” is meant. He tells us that the two are ultimately inseparable. We can see before us the dragon of which the Book of Revelation speaks [(cf. chapters 12 and 13) (Ratzinger, 2008)] Thus, John portrays the “beast rising out of the sea,” out of the dark depths of evil, with the symbols of Roman imperial power, and he thus puts a very concrete face on the threat facing the Christians of his day: the total claim placed upon man (humans) by the emperor cult and the resulting elevation of political-military-economic might to the peak of absolute power-to the personification of the evil that threatens to devour us, which is coupled with the erosion of ethical principles by a cynical form of skepticism and enlightenment (Ratzinger, 2008). Thus, in this imperiled situation, the Christian (anyone in search of truth) in time of persecution calls upon the Lord as the only power that can save him (her): “Deliver us, free us from evil” (Ratzinger, 2008).

## Conclusion

We as humans are faced with different forms of hunger everyday, such as physical hunger, psychological or mental hunger as for love, recognition, achievement, forgiveness, peace, healing and consolation (Vattathara, 2020), which remind us that we are created beings by our creator. This research is not a mere nostalgia for the past whether in our religious or psychological realm of our being in our everyday life situation. We humans are placed in the temptation to seek God in the past, or in a possible future (Francis, 2014), which is the greatest hunger of us humanity. In this regard, we take the words of Holy Father Pope Francis as he writes;

God is certainly in the past because we can see the footprints of His presence. And God is also in the future as a promise. But the ‘concrete’ God, so to speak, is today. For this reason, complaining never, never helps us find God. The complaints of today about how “barbaric” the world is-these complaints sometimes end

up founding within the Church the desire to establish order in the sense of pure conservation, as a defence. No: God is to be encountered in the world today (Francis, 2008).

The answer to this teaching is the Lord's Prayer, *The Our Father*. This is what this research paper has been dealt with from a human point of view, reminding us that the prayer stands as the greatest prayer of all prayers, which has been said from time immemorial. Thus, Pope Benedict XVI writes that in this prayer Our Father, we know that he is with us to hold us in his hand and save us (Ratzinger, 2008). He says that, for example, Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, the Superior General of the Jesuits, tells us the story of a *staretz*, or spiritual advisor of the Eastern Church, who yearned "to begin the Our Father with the last verse, so that one might become worthy to finish the prayer with the initial words-'Our Father'." (Ratzinger, 2008). The *staretz* explains that we would be following the path to Easter, where we begin in the desert with the temptation, we return to Egypt, then we travel the path of the Exodus, through the stations of forgiveness and God's manna, and by God's will we attain the promised land, the kingdom of God, where he communicates to us the mystery of his name: 'Our Father' (*Der österliche Weg*, pp. 65f cited in Ratzinger, 2008). This is the joy of the Prayer Our Father, the Lord's Prayer; an Embodiment of all Prayers, which has come into this world among all religious leaders and religions of all humanity at all time.

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## Who Is My Neighbour in India?

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**Abstract:** In our country due to the caste mentality that ruled the minds and hearts of people for centuries, ill treatment of Dalits continues. I give a list of events where Dalits have been mistreated in various parts of the country, especially in North India. It seems something natural to Indians to ill treat a Dalit, as if it is his/her due; they deserve to be treated that way. That is the way the caste people seem to think and behave. It is high time that we recognize the foolishness in the caste system and give it up completely and treat every human as equal to one another. This call to equality does not go against the need to see the other as always more important than myself and give preference to other's point of view in any conflict situation.

**Keywords:** Dalits, Caste system, Good Samaritan, Equality.

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## Introduction

The title might seem strange to those who are familiar with the New Testament and the story of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10.25ff) but to those who are familiar with what is happening in India, especially to Dalits, the title is very relevant. After the BJP came to power at the centre in 2014, the attacks on Dalits have gone up enormously. What is happening in our country is really horrible and shameful. This makes one wonder in which century are we in, for it does not seem to be fitting our present twenty first century. Some centuries ago when caste was very strong and was ruling the country, what is happening today may have made sense. But in the present century, after the Independence of India and the promulgation of our Constitution, what is happening makes one hang his/her head in shame. There is not a single day one looks at a newspaper without seeing at least a dozen accounts of attacks on Dalits in any part, especially, of North India. “Dalits are collateral victims of Hindutva,” says French scholar Christophe Jaffrelot. He says proponents of Hindu nationalism have not transcended caste differences. Speaking to Malini Nair of *Indiaspend* about Dalit mobilization Jaffrelot says why it is exceptional and why right-wing politics will always have limited appeal to backward castes.

## Situation of Dalits in India

Practically every day newspapers bring news of rapes of Dalit women. I quote a few report items: A 30-year-old Dalit woman was allegedly raped by two men in Bansdih area of Ballia district in Uttar Pradesh. A 16-year-old Dalit girl allegedly gang-raped in a moving car by four men in Ludhiana on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2017; they then dumped her near the Jalandhar Bypass and threatened her with dire consequences and made casteist remarks against her. These men were known to this girl who is a beautician; they came to her telling her that they needed her services; as she knew them, she went with them. The men then raped her in the moving car. Two days later, she told her parents, who then lodged a complaint. In Rajkot a 30

year old Dalit man was stoned to death on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2017 over a petty issue. Before he reached a hospital, he died. In Rajasthan Sohni Devi, 44, a *Jat*, chose to live with Narayan Balai, a Dalit. Devi was a widow and Balai a widower. When she died of TB the elders of the *Jat* dominated village pronounced that nobody would help cremate her. There was no one to lend a hand. He called many friends. Except one, no one came. Finally with the help of the police Balai managed to cremate his wife. In a horrific incident of brutality, a minor Dalit girl in Rajgarh (MP) was allegedly torched after she resisted rape. The perpetrator was trying to rape the victim but she fought back and resisted, so he torched her. A Dalit woman from Sultanpur was allegedly gang raped by two persons in the presence of her husband in Khutahan police station area of Jaunpur district on Sunday night. Rajasthan is a very caste driven state. In 2016, Rajasthan reported 5,134 cases of atrocities against Dalits, the third highest in the country after Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Recently there was a huge rally organized by Dalit groups in London to protest against atrocities against Dalits in many parts of India. They demanded the release of some 7000 Dalits imprisoned in Bhima-Koregaon in Maharashtra. A large number of Dalits had gathered for a celebration of the anniversary of 1 January 1818 when a small group of Dalit soldiers defeated a mighty Peshwa army. Upper caste Marathas and the police attacked this group. One was killed, and many hundreds were wounded. The protestors said that the continuing incarceration of Dalit leader Chandrashekhar Azad was unjustified. They called for the protection of human life, instead of caring only for cows.

*Dalit Media Watch* is a news channel in the internet; every issue has a minimum of 10 cases of atrocities against Dalits in the country. Every day stories of atrocities against Dalits are reported in all newspapers. Recently, in Punjab a Dalit woman's household is afraid to leave their home and go out because a Dalit girl had complained about discrimination in her school; the government took some action against the culprits. A Dalit girl has stopped going to



school out of fear of attacks by the upper caste, as she had lodged a complaint against some teachers for discrimination. The 17-year-old's mother, elder sister and father have stopped working as daily wage labourers and simply avoid going out. So scared is the family that some of their relatives stay with them during the day and night to ensure their safety. In a number of villages, the Dalits are not even allowed to use the common village toilet; and when they go to the fields, they are chased away from there. The upper caste people throw cow dung and other dirt near the house of the Dalits.

### Some Concrete Cases

Many years ago, once I was travelling to Bhavanagar from Ahmedabad; the bus I got into was packed except for one seat by a young lady in front. She had a bag on that seat and when I asked her if that seat was free, she picked up her bag and gave me that seat. She was a college student; we had an interesting conversation; after about ten minutes she asked me what caste I was. I said: you are an educated lady and you believe in this crap? She was embarrassed, but wanted to know my caste. I told her I was a Dalit; then I could feel her distancing herself from me, though she could not go very far. Then I took out a book and read till I reached Bhavanagar.

Lalitha Devi is 65 and remembers how, during her childhood, when she worked in the fields of a high caste landowner, when she was thirsty she asked for water. The lady of the house would pour water into the air near Devi who had to catch it in her cupped hands to drink it. "I wasn't allowed to touch any utensil of hers because my touch would contaminate it," recalls Devi. Devi says caste discrimination or "untouchability" has lessened over the decades, particularly in the cities. But a new survey published in January (2018) had a nasty surprise: it showed that three-quarters of those surveyed in rural Rajasthan and 48 per cent – almost half – of all respondents in rural Uttar Pradesh still practice untouchability.

NACDOR's project manager in Johripur, Ganesh Gautam, like Devi, has a painful memory of caste hatred from his childhood. It

was the time when the upper castes in his village, angry over some incident, forbade Dalits from going to relieve themselves in the fields. With no toilets in their homes, the fields were the only option, but even this was denied to them. “People had to creep into the fields late at night so that no one would notice them,” he said. As an educated dalit, Gautam mixes with some upper caste people in Johripur. When an acquaintance from the Brahmin caste invited him to his son’s wedding recently, Gautam accepted the invitation. However, he added that he would only attend the wedding if the Brahmin promised to attend his nephew’s wedding a few weeks later. Both men attended the respective weddings.

“Every day I am looking at far worse figures, such as these,” said Ashok Bharti, chairman of the National Confederation of Dalit Organisations (NACDOR) pointing to a sheet of paper. On it is a table showing 799 murders, 2545 rapes and 35,692 atrocities committed against Dalits in 2016. These are official figures, which he has collated. In addition to these crimes, there are the daily endless humiliations and slights heaped on Dalits, particularly in the villages: being denied access to the village well, living in segregated huts, roadside eateries that keep a different set of cups to serve tea to Dalits, Dalit children not just segregated in the classroom but forced to clean the classrooms and toilets, and upper caste classmates refuse to eat school meals cooked by a Dalit. “The most progressive institutions in India are guilty of caste bias because all institutions, including the judiciary, are reflective of Indian society and also reflect the power dynamic, and in this dynamic, Dalits have remained excluded from socio-economic empowerment,” said Bharti. The survey’s findings show that even those who had five years or more of education were just as bigoted about Dalits. It was no surprise, Bharti said.

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has taken to task a DGP of Rajasthan over the state police inaction in dealing with cases of atrocities against Dalits. He was asked to submit an action taken report about errant police officials. A 30-year-old Dalit

woman, a victim of gang-rape on July 22, 2017, was forced to commit suicide at Booth Rathoran village in Barmer after police failed to act against the accused despite the fact that the victim had named the culprits. With rising impunity, the two men allegedly began to threaten the family of the rape survivor, a mother of two. Unable to bear the constant threats and fearing for the safety of her family, the woman jumped into a water tank and drowned on September 12, 2017. Another FIR was registered for abetting the suicide of the woman but the police have taken no action.

“When they see us wearing nice clean clothes, speaking well and eating well, they engage with us,” says Tridevi, a Dalit graduate. Still, she is aware of the limits. “My upper caste friends are fine with me but their parents are wary. They keep a distance and are not very friendly when I run into them.” “The upper castes don’t want us to rise and become their equals because that way, they lose their superior status. So they will do anything to hang on to their presumed higher status,” Tridevi thinks. Recently there was a report of a Dalit being beaten in Gujarat for wearing a mustache. In recent months so many very young Dalit girls were raped and murdered in UP.

The Dalits belonging to Kancharagunta in Andhra face boycott for not obeying the diktat by Kammas against using the thoroughfare, as there is a statute of a deity on the road. But Mahendra, a Dalit disregarded the diktat and was on his way to Kandukuru town on his bike; then the Kammas stopped him and forcefully took away his vehicle keys. The Kammas couldn’t stomach the fact that the Dalits were attaining education and owning vehicles. They are agitated by the fact that the Dalits are not subservient to them anymore. As a result of the social boycott, members of the upper caste community refused to sell milk to Dalits, and denied them work in the fields.

## Becoming a Neighbour to Everyone

It is a great shame that even 70 years after independence our people have not become free of the sick caste mentality; their mental powers are to be doubted, because they do not see this nonsense of high and low caste is a mere mental fabrication with no foundation in reality. But fools hold on to it and ill treat people.

It is on this background that I have raised this question given in the title. When will we Indians become human enough, rational enough to recognize the caste system which was originally a division of labour to enable the people of a village to attend to all their needs, like farming, carpentry, leather works, etc. were assigned to certain groups who would specialize in those areas and the village could survive in a healthy manner. There was no hierarchy in that system. This system was made into a divinely ordained system by the Brahmins to preserve their presumed superiority, which others accepted and the caste system survived in the country for centuries.

With our independence and the promulgation of the Constitution, we have been freed from this nonsense. But people continue holding on to the system and hence we see Dalits being ill-treated even today. We need to go beyond the caste system to recognize that all humans are equal as brothers/sisters; there is no high or low human. Jesus had made us aware of this long ago through the story of the Good Samaritan that we become a neighbour to every person in need by reaching out to that person with compassion and love, as the Good Samaritan, did in the story of Luke.

Illiteracy is one of the reasons why this system continues to be alive in our country. We look forward to all becoming sufficiently educated to realize the foolishness within the caste system and reject the whole idea of some humans are superior to others, and some are inferior to others.

In the West racism was alive which justified slavery for centuries and holding on to the superior status of the Europeans by which they justified colonialism, slavery and the wholesale genocide in Americas when the Europeans went there. The apartheid in South Africa, the practice of the superiority of the whites in America, the racist practice in Europe are as shameful as the casteist practice in India. But these do not justify what goes on in India and it is high time that we recognize the madness that we Indians have practiced for centuries and come to our senses and become

fully humans by accepting every human as dignified and deserving of respect from everyone. Every person in need is my neighbour and I need to reach out to that person in love and compassion.

## Conclusion

When I was in Europe, one day I was waiting at a table in a restaurant in Strasburg; long after me, came a European on the next table. When the waiter came, he went straight to the European and I protested and walked out, making a lot of noise; then even the manager came out to pacify me and took me inside and I was served first before the one who came in after me. They seemed to think that a European had the right to be served first than an Indian which of course I did not allow. In India, all the right thinking people will have to take the initiative to make people aware of casteist practices when they occur and stop them.

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## **The Pandemic as Paradox: Preserving Life within a Global System that Denies Its Flourishing**

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**Abstract:** Professor Kuruvilla Pandikattu invited me to share some thoughts on our current pandemic situation and the challenges we face. The author first provides a very short bio, so that the readers may know something about the origins of the author's perspective: As a scientist with a PhD in molecular biophysics, training in virology, and interests in evolutionary biology and the origins of life, and more recently in semiotics and metaphysics, the author has received his formal education through the public schools of Texas, an enormous state within the U.S. sharing its entire southern border with Mexico. He is a second generation American: his mother emigrated and his father and his family had to emigrate from fairly comfortable lives in Latin America. Then the author looks at the paradox of the pandemic that we face today.

**Keywords:** Pandemic, Paradox, Flourishing of Life, Universal Basic Income

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We are in the middle of a global pandemic that by official counts, which are always underestimates, has infected roughly 3% of us in under two years. 3% of *all* of us – 219 million of our 8 billion lives, with 4.55 million lost. The pandemic is extraordinary in its scale and speed. And perhaps equally impressive, we have developed, tested, and given billions of doses of vaccine against the relevant viral pathogen, SARS-CoV-2, with most of us inhabiting ‘wealthier’ countries getting the first chance at protection; this asymmetric response helps indicate a larger problem in need of solving: our economic backwardness, which is both global, existing between borders, and present in the majority of our nigh 200 countries.

Let me rephrase the title of my short essay as an assertion: the pandemic is a paradox in which we struggle to preserve life, our own and the lives of those we love, within a global system that denies life’s flourishing by existing, in large part, at the expense of the many: the bulk of humanity and the greater part of the living world. I will illustrate by considering our failure to prioritize three basic necessities of human life: food, shelter, and medicine (yes, medicine — even in the face of the absolute triumph of billions of doses of vaccine given across the world in less than two years).

## Food

I live in Houston, Texas, one of the biggest cities in the U.S., and the so-called ‘energy capital of the world’ for its concentration of companies in the oil and gas industry; and I work in the Texas Medical Center, the largest collection of hospitals and biomedical research institutes in the world — so much wealth and power in a single city. On several occasions starting a few months into the pandemic, my 40-minute commute swelled to two hours from a miles-long queue of cars whose drivers were waiting to receive food from a charity operating out of NRG Stadium, a massive venue where our local professional football team plays (athletes who make millions of dollars a year for crashing into each other at high speed and taking an oblong ball from one side of a field to the other). My fellow people in their hulking gas-guzzling machines of engineered steel and glass, each vehicle an extraordinary artefact of our technological civilization, complete with air conditioning and comfortable seats

designed to promote upright and attentive posture while driving, each waiting for a box of food to avoid the pain of hunger. *Must I go on?* Something is deeply wrong here. We place the horse in front of the cart and overdesign the cart while leaving the horse to starve. We need a safety net that works, one that makes us more robust to the spasms of our increasingly unstable world. A universal basic income (UBI) would help ensure that all people have the means to avoid hunger. UBI of the right size would also liberate us from a subsistence economy organized around maximizing profit for a few, allowing us to work not out of desperation but out of a desire to grow and contribute to meaningful activity. UBI could also support an effort to incentivize localized and sustainable food production. Integrating the production of food into massive and grey cities like Houston would beautify them, provide meaningful employment, and make us more resilient to natural and economic disasters to come.

## Shelter

Another story, but one concerning events occurring immediately before the pandemic. For several years, I would walk 1.5 miles from an open parking lot to my place of work. (The open parking lot is cheaper than the garage attached to my building.) The route, like all routes through Houston, is hardly safe for soft-bodied humans; but, like any winding path touched by the sun and wind, it has its beauty. One day I noticed a man living in a tent on a patch of well-kept grass overlooking Buffalo Bayou, one of the main drainage canals for the city, and across the street from one of MD Anderson's newest buildings, which happens to look like an ultra-modern luxury cruise ship. (MD Anderson is one of the largest and most prestigious biomedical research centers here, known for their advancements in anti-cancer therapies, especially immunotherapy.) I admired the clean camp he kept each of the ten or so times I passed before one day finding the lot empty, the grass cut, and a new shiny sign indicating that the patch of green belonged to no one but the cruise ship across the street. And the cruise ship permitted no camping or loitering of any kind; and the grass must be kept cut, free of weeds and people... We value property over lives and our cities show it. Homelessness continues to increase here and across the country. This crisis combines with the rampant use of methamphetamines and opioids among many of the most desperate, making zombies out of us, and is fundamentally part of a larger instability in housing that has only been made worse by the pandemic. A



few wealthy people can become interested in an area, a neighborhood, ‘invest’ in it by buying homes and property and trigger a wave of displacement by the rise in property taxes accompanying the increase in home prices. The displaced often have nowhere to go. A society that values life would not allow this to occur. Housing and ensuring people can stay in their homes must be prioritized over profit, during and forever after this pandemic.

## Medicine

Medicine is more than drugs and surgery. It is every therapeutic, intervention, action, attitude, and daily activity taken and performed to preserve and/or enhance health. Early in the pandemic, the message from our public health authorities was to wear a mask and socially distance, wash our hands, and wait for a vaccine. We now have effective vaccines (which many of my neighbours refuse, a symptom of growing instability and general distrust of authority that we can discuss elsewhere) and the message is to get vaccinated if you are not already, and to wear a mask and perhaps socially distance when in public and indoors; we are also awaiting the potential need for new vaccines to cover emerging variants of SARS-CoV-2. I am convinced that our public health authorities should be empowered to say more about the ways in which all of us can maximize our chances of surviving this pandemic and, in general, lead happier and healthier lives. For example, in their repeated messaging, our public health authorities make little to no mention of the major risk factors associated with severe COVID-19: age and general health status. The elderly have been far more likely to become severely sick or die, as well as those of us with any number of comorbidities (asthma, hypertension, diabetes, obesity, renal disease, etc.): only 8% of American adults hospitalized with COVID-19 have no known comorbidities. This is not to suggest that terrible surprises are impossible. COVID-19 is sometimes severe to deadly in young people of apparently perfect health. But in their conformity and perhaps fear, our public health authorities repeat only what is incontrovertibly true in a simple world ruled by logic, thereby coming across as cold and distant messengers of bare truths. We need generalists empowered to lovingly speak to the masses of us, to help guide us through our stress-filled lives and out of this mess. Such an authority could lead the creation of a slate of public service announcements (PSAs) communicating actions that can be taken by everyone to better their health

and maximize their odds of surviving COVID-19. For example, a PSA appearing on YouTube might describe the connection between vitamin D levels and immune health. It would make clear that vitamin D (a steroid hormone) is a critical component of general and immune health and is synthesized in our bodies through a process requiring sunlight; darker-skinned people require more sunlight to obtain adequate levels of vitamin D than lighter-skinned people; but everyone needs it, and nearly everyone can make use of going outside and certain dietary sources (fatty fish, fortified foods, supplements) to obtain it. But we don't do these things. We succumb to fear, especially the fear of being wrong, and we prioritize corporate will over the needs of all of us. This has to change.

Our technological hyper-sophistication and difficulties providing the basic necessities of human life (food, shelter, medicine) point to the painful paradox we find ourselves in: preserving life in the face of a pandemic within a global system that denies life's flourishing. We did not even touch on the climate and ecological crises menacing us, our young people especially. *What can we do?* We can meet our high science and technology with legal and economic systems that prioritize the basic needs of a humanity living sustainably on a living Earth. We can and must make a global economic system unlike the present one: one that is a gardener, not a devourer, of worlds.



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# Our Father in Heaven



**A**ter noster  
/ qui es in caelis /  
sanctificetur  
nomen tuum. Adueniat  
regnum tuum. Fiat uoluntas  
tua / sicut in caelo et in terra.  
Panem nostrum  
quotidianum da nobis hodie /  
et dimitte nobis debita nostra  
sicut et nos dimittimus  
debitoribus nostris. Et ne nos  
inducas in tentationem / sed  
libera nos a malo. Amen.

**U**r Father  
Who art in Heauen  
/ hallowed be Thy  
name: Thy Kingdom come /  
Thy uill be done on earth as  
it is in Heauen. Giue us this  
day our daily bread: and  
forgiue us our trespasses as  
we forgiue those who  
trespass against us: and lead  
us not into temptation / but  
deliuer us from euil. Amen.





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