

LORD'S DAY 47

122. Q. What is the first petition?

A. *Hallowed be Thy Name.*

That is:

Grant us first of all

that we may rightly know Thee,¹
and sanctify, glorify, and praise Thee
in all Thy works,
in which shine forth
Thy almighty power,
wisdom, goodness, righteousness,
mercy, and truth.²

Grant us also

that we may so direct our whole life--
our thoughts, words, and actions--
that Thy Name is not blasphemed because of us
but always honoured and praised.³

1. **Jeremiah 9:23-24** Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches;²⁴ but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.

Jeremiah 31:33-34 "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.³⁴ "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Matthew 16:17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."

John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

2. **Exodus 34:5-8** Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.⁶ And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,⁷ keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."⁸ So Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped.

Psalm 145 ...¹⁵ The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season.¹⁶ You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living

thing.¹⁷ The LORD is righteous in all His ways, gracious in all His works.¹⁸ The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth.¹⁹ He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them.

Jeremiah 32:16-20 Now when I had delivered the purchase deed to Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed to the LORD, saying:¹⁷ "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You.¹⁸ You show lovingkindness to thousands, and repay the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them; the Great, the Mighty God, whose name is the LORD of hosts.¹⁹ You are great in counsel and mighty in work, for your eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, to give everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings.²⁰ You have set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, to this day, and in Israel and among other men; and You have made Yourself a name, as it is this day."

Luke 1:46-55 And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord,⁴⁷ and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.⁴⁸ For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.⁴⁹ For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.⁵⁰ And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation.⁵¹ He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.⁵² He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly.⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.⁵⁴ He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy,⁵⁵ as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever."

Luke 1:68-75 Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people,⁶⁹ And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David,⁷⁰ As He spoke by the

mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began,⁷¹ That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us,⁷² To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant,⁷³ The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:⁷⁴ To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear,⁷⁵ In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.

Romans 11:33-36 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past

finding out!³⁴ “For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?”³⁵ “Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?”³⁶ For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

3. **Psalm 115:1** Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but to Your name give glory, because of Your mercy, because of Your truth.

Matthew 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

The first petition of the Lord's prayer deals with the hallowing of God's Name. To hallow means **to set something apart from the ordinary or the common, and regard it as holy, as very unique or special.** Another synonym (a word that means the same) is *sanctify*. We can find the word “*hallow*” back in the word “*Halloween*,” which is the abbreviation of “*hallowed evening*.” To hallow God's Name, then, is to regard God's Name as extraordinarily special.

The way in which this petition is worded (“*Hallowed be Thy Name*”) leaves us with some questions. Who is the subject in this sentence? Who is to hallow God's Name? Are we asking **God** to hallow His Name? Or are we praying that **we** might hallow His Name? The Catechism does not leave us in suspense here. It teaches us that **we** are to sanctify God's Name.

This petition is a response to two things:

1. First of all, this petition is our response to the third commandment: “*You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain.*” We learned in Lord's Day 36 that though the commandments are written in the negative (*You shall not...*) there is a positive demand included (*You shall...*). God demands that we hallow His name. Thus we pray this first petition in response to the demand contained in the third commandment.
2. Secondly, this petition is our response to our inability to render what God requires. Back in Lord's Day 2 we

learned that because of our corrupt nature we are inclined to all sin. We are inclined by nature to blaspheme God's Name rather than hallow it. By nature, we cannot keep this commandment. Thus we turn to God in prayer, asking God for the power that will enable us to do what we cannot do by nature. When it comes down to the point, it is not really we who sanctify God's Name, but God who enables us to sanctify His Name.

How are we to hallow God's Name? The Catechism shows us that we are to hallow God's Name in two ways:

1. **We** hallow God's Name on account of what **God has done**.
2. We cause **others** to hallow God's Name on account of what **we do**.

We hallow God's name for what God has done

In order to praise God's Name for what He has done, we must first come to know God. This can be illustrated by an example. There are many in the world who admire nature. They take pictures and express wonder at its beauty but they do not praise God who made it. There is no exaltation of God's Name. Why not? Because they do not rightly know God, that is, they do not acknowledge God as Creator. (To know God does not merely mean that we know something about God, but it means that we **acknowledge** Him as God.) Since many do not acknowledge God as the Creator, they

do not praise Him for what He has done in creation. Thus the Catechism says that we must first come to know God before we can hallow His Name.

In order to come to know God, the Holy Spirit must illumine our minds and renew our hearts. The Holy Spirit must work faith in us before we can begin to praise God for the work that He has done.

We are to praise God in all His works. What works has God done? We may divide God's work into two main categories: **creation** and **re-creation**.

God's Work of Creation

When we see the majestic splendour of creation and the pristine beauty of nature, then we praise the Creator for His majesty and glory reflected in His work. This is what David did when he considered God's handiwork: "*O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens*" (Psalm 8:1). "*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*" (Psalm 19:1).

When we consider the miraculous creative power of God, we break forth into song extolling God for His greatness and power, as the Psalmist did: "*By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deep in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast*" (Psalm 33:6-9).

When we consider how wisely God governs and maintains creation, we adore Him for His providential goodness." *Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts. ...The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. The LORD is righteous in all His ways, gracious in all His works. The*

LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them". (Psalm 145:3-4;15-19).

All too often we fail in this. We admire the beauty of creation, but we fail to bring our praise to God for it. We receive many good things from our Provider – food, clothing, shelter, health and strength, peace and prosperity – but we fail to give God thanks for them.

Thus in our prayer we ask that God may send us His Spirit, to open our eyes so that we see the Creator's hand behind nature, and to open our mouths to praise Him for His excellent work. We must pray that the Spirit may open our eyes so that we see His providential care, and to open our mouths to thank Him for it.

God's Work of Re-creation

In addition to praising God for His work in creation, we are also to praise Him for His work of **re-creation** which He accomplishes in Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit. We are to magnify His Name for the grace and mercy which He has shown to us in forgiving us our sins, for imputing to us the righteousness of Christ, and of making us heirs of eternal life. We are to magnify God's great Name for the work of regeneration, whereby He restores us in holiness so that we reflect His image again.

For this we again take our example from the book of Psalms: "*Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies*" (Psalm 103:1-4).

Before we can praise God for His work of re-creation, we must come to know our sin and misery, the redeeming work of Christ, and the renewing work of the Holy Spirit. Here again we state that the Holy Spirit must illumine our mind and open our hearts to receive this knowledge in

faith. Only then will our hearts be filled with gratitude and our mouths filled with praise, extolling the great mercy and love of God. Thus when we pray that God's Name may be hallowed, we are asking the Spirit to give us this knowledge.

The hallowing of God's Name, both for His creative and His re-creative work, should not be restricted to our private prayers, nor to our public worship in Church. We should glorify God's Name before all men. *"Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples"* (Psalm 96:3). This task belongs to our prophetic office (cf. LD 12).

We cause others to hallow God's name for what we do

In addition to hallowing God's Name on account of what **God has done**, we are to cause **others** to hallow God's Name by what we do.

The actions of children usually reflect on their parents, for their parents are the ones who are to teach them how they must behave. The misbehaviour of children reflects poorly on their parents. People often blame parents for their children's poor behaviour. It is supposed, though often wrongly, that these naughty children have either learned bad behaviour from their parents, or at least that their parents tolerate such bad behaviour.

We are God's children, and our misbehaviour reflects poorly upon God our Father. When the ungodly see us do things which a child of God should not do, then we give them reason to blaspheme God's Name. If, for example, we speak falsely, that reflects poorly on our Father as though God doesn't really care whether we lie or not.

Paul said that God's Name was blasphemed often because of what God's people did. *"You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For 'the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,' as it is written"* (Romans 2:23-24).

Because our actions cast a reflection on God, we must ardently strive to do what is

good and acceptable in the sight of God and man. We must seek to honour the Name of God in word and in deed, so that those who see and hear us see a good and faithful reflection of God. We are to do justice. We are to show love, kindness, patience and mercy. We are to do good to all men. When we do these things, we will cause others to glorify God's Name. This is what Christ meant when He said, *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven"* (Matthew 5:16).

If we are to conduct ourselves in such a way that those who see us hallow God's Name, we need the Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen us, for we of ourselves cannot live a life that would cause others to glorify God. Therefore we pray this petition: *"Grant that we may so direct our whole life - our thoughts, words and actions - that Thy Name is not blasphemed because of us but always honoured and praised."*

We may confidently expect that God will answer this petition, for He has promised us His Spirit who enables us to do good. In Ezekiel 36:27 we are promised, *"I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them."*



Questions:

1. What does “*hallow*” mean? What is another word (a synonym) for *hallow*?
2. In this petition, are we asking God to hallow His Name, or are we praying that we might hallow His Name?
3. In response to what two things do we offer this petition to God?
4. In which two ways are we to hallow God’s Name?
5. What must we first come to know before we can glorify God for His work? How do we come to this knowledge?
6. Into what two categories can we divide God’s work? Give some examples of things that we praise God for in the realm of creation.
7. Besides His work of creation, what do we praise God for? Give some examples of things that we praise God for in this realm.
8. Before we can praise God’s work of re-creation, what must we know? How do we come to this knowledge?
9. Should we restrict the hallowing of God’s Name to our personal, family or congregational worship? Where else must we hallow God’s Name? To which office does this belong?
10. Besides hallowing God’s Name ourselves, we must cause others to hallow God’s Name by what we do. Explain how we manage to do just the opposite sometimes. What does Romans 2:24 say?
11. Explain how we can cause others to hallow God’s Name. What does Matthew 5:16 say?
12. What do we need in order to be able to live a life that causes others to glorify God? On what basis can we be confident that God will grant us what we need?