

**„Europe for Christ!“**

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## **It is not the perpetrators who have the last word, but those who pray.**

Dear Friends,

Several thousand people in more than 40 countries pray with us every day an „Our Father“ for a Europe based on Christian values. The common faith and the shared desire make us part of a European wide network of God.

The “Our Father” wasn’t chosen by chance as prayer for Europe. Every invocation and every prayer is extremely timely. F. Johannes Lechner, an Austrian priest of the Community of the Brothers of St John founded in France, has described in this November newsletter the profound relation between the thoughts entailed in the “Our Father” and our society.

In fact this text is a meditation. So take the time en let your-self be touched by the depth of these thoughts. Maybe you can also take them to a prayer meeting and invite others to pray in Gods network for a Christian Europe.

Your Europe for Christ! team.

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**Pater noster. Vater unser. Notre Père. Our Father. Padre nuestro.**  
**Pater hemon. Padre nostro. Otče náš. Ojczy nasz. Oče naš. Vor Fader. Meie Isa.**  
**Isä meidän. Musu Tevs. Téve musu. Mi atyánk. Onze Vader. Missierna. Fader vår. Pai nosso. Tatäl**  
**nostro. Göklerdeki babamız. Отче наш.**

## **Reflections on the Our Father for Europe**

by F. Johannes Lechner

### **In God’s Network**

Networks play an important role at all levels in Europe: complex networks of regions, organizations, businesses and member states. “Networks are based on the presumption that each participant depends on the other... In this complex, multilayered, interactive global world, no one succeeds by himself.”\*

The strongest network in which we are embedded is the one of



those who pray. Do we understand that, when we pray the "Our Father", we are putting ourselves as individuals into a greater "whole", into history in the large sense, into the Mystical Body of Christ? We are a worldwide family, the children of one Father. We belong to each other and need one another.

"It happened, that when he finished praying in a certain place, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray'" (Lk 11:1). And He taught his disciples to pray the "Our Father" and thereby gave them "a summary of the whole Gospel" (Tertullian, or.1). The first Christian communities prayed the prayer of the Lord "three times a day" (Didache 8,3). One can't count how many times, in all languages of the earth, the "Our Father" has been prayed: In order to begin the day and, in the evening, to entrust it back into to the hands of the one, whom Jesus calls "Abba"; before work, in the hours of silent meditation, in the trenches during the world wars, in the moment of the loss of a beloved one, in the moments of intense happiness and before meals...Jesus provoked a flood of prayer, a shower of blessings and graces. Jesus' praying has been continued in all times and places of history. 2000 years of spiritual "networking," or better, "netpraying" through the "Our Father."

Ora et labora. Our hearts united with the heart of God, and in the heart of God united with all those who pray. The Lord teaches us to pray together for our brothers. Because he doesn't say "My" Father, who art in Heaven, but: "Our" Father, so that our prayer might come as from one soul for the whole Body of Christ (St. John Chrisostomo hom. Mt 19:4) . When we pray with the words of the Lord, it is always the "newborn" people that pray and ask for the mercy of God. (1 P2, 1-10). It is in this way that we create a spirit of Europe: the "Our Father" gives Europe its soul.

Who prays hopes and who hopes prays. Prayer is *applied* hope. What can we hope for? What should we pray for? "Prayer is somehow the translator of our desire before God. We justly pray therefore only for what we can wish for justly. In the prayer of the Lord we don't only pray for what we justly wish for, but also in the order and hierarchy in which we should wish for it. This is why this prayer not only teaches us how to pray, but also shapes all our wishing and feeling." (Aquinas, ST II-II, Q 83, a 9). In the seven petitions of the Our Father, the Lord shows us where to direct our efforts. What do these petitions mean for Europe? Are these seven petitions not exactly what current Europe needs?

### **Europe needs a Father**

Abba. This is how Jesus called God in his native language. According to St. Paul, we can experience in the Holy Spirit the intimacy of God and call him: "Abba, Father", as brothers and sisters of Jesus (Rom 8:15-16). God is the father of Jesus Christ. Jesus has showed to us His real face: He is the merciful father, the one who waits faithfully for His prodigal son, goes towards him, embraces him and kisses him, clothes him and celebrates his return (Lk 15:20-24). He is generous and forgiving. He is longsuffering and patient. The father of mercy and the God of all consolation reaches out to look for us. He gives life, lets grow, gives space, encourages, and communicates freedom and hope. He has founded the best of Europe: the wine stock and wheat, the beauty of art and the fruits of the Spirit. Europe is sometimes like the prodigal son. How severe is her No to God! But a father never ceases to be a father, even when his son doesn't care for him. He is the father of all people of this wonderful continent: of those who accept him gratefully as well as those who deny or refuse his paternity, of those who pray to him as well as those who stay indifferent. He is good. He let's sun and rain fall on the righteous and the bad. He is equally good to those who curse him. He is the unfailing source of an eternal endowed love; His authority is that of compassion. Ceaselessly He is working to bring love where there is none, in order to awake love... He is love without reproach.

We have received the grace to know the Father through Jesus in the Spirit. We have the duty to be ambassadors for all, we should ourselves be icons of this love and pray for all: for the leaders of Europe, the scientists in the universities and the laboratories, artists, journalists, doctors, pastoral teams, families, fathers and single mothers, the elderly in the old peoples homes... we pray with all for all those who don't know the Father yet. God's love is without limits, and our prayer should be similar.

## **Europe needs forgiveness and redemption**

European culture gives the impression of a silent apostasy of saturated people living as if God didn't exist. Forgetting God leads to the fall of Man. Evil lives in the non-culture of death through abortion, euthanasia and terror, in indifference, fear of the future and the loss of sense; in isolation, the crisis of the family, and the beginning dictatorship of relativism. There is no nation in Europe that hasn't at one point harmed another. Cupidity, desire for power, vainglory and folly cross the bloody history of Europe. We need forgiveness. We need to purify our memory. We need to pray and to work for peace. The faults of our fathers shouldn't rest on our shoulders. Our prayer can liberate those entrapped in evil. Christ offers us a new beginning, a new creation, real freedom. Many things darken our hope. As disciple of Jesus Christ, let's not fall into resignation thinking of all the evils of our time. Let us lift up our eyes full of hope towards the Father who can deliver us from evil. "It's not the perpetrators who have the last word, but those who pray." (Reinhold Schneider).

Let's throw our nets out again with every new "Our Father" (according to Lk 5:4). Let us throw out over Europe the network of prayer. Even if everything seems desperate and we experience solitary and barren nights, the Lord promises us a wealthy catch. It all depends on your prayer.

\* RIFKIN *The European Dream* Tarcher; New Ed edition (August 19, 2004)

\*\* JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Europa*, N° 9.

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