



## Family Prayer

### The Bishop Desires It Should Become General

Writing in the current number of the Diocesan Gazette, the Bishop returns to the subject of family prayer, and says;-

Family prayer cannot be established without great effort, especially on the part of the clergy; and I have to advise that the effort to establish it should not merely issue in sermons and addresses, followed by the distribution of the way to conduct family prayers. I hope to be able to issue some further helps in this matter, and our veteran friend Earl Nelson has already made some kind contributions to the attempt. But I would remind the clergy that the Women's Union of the diocese has already circulated some very useful cards.

My idea of family prayer, as, indeed, of all prayer, is that it should be, as an old writer has well called it, "conversation with God." It should, therefore, contain three elements:

- (1) The voice of God speaking to us in Scripture, and, if it may be, the interpretation of the lesson contained in Scripture by the living voice of man;
- (2) The reply of the human soul in an act of faith involving an acknowledgement of God's mercy, with praise and thanksgiving for them; and
- (3) As a natural outcome of this, the utterance of our needs in the confident and humble attitude of children, asking a Father's blessing.

The first element may well be supplied by reading one of the lessons of the day, or some carefully chosen portion of Scripture; the second by reading a Psalm with the Gloria patri, which is a short form of Creed, or by a Hymn, or by the Apostles Creed, or its short summary in the Catechism; the third by the Lord's prayer, and short prayers chosen by the master of the household, from the Prayer-book or other approved manuals, with personal touches or references, children's names etc., and if he is able, prayers of his own making.

In my own family I put the psalm or hymn first, then the lesson, with a short exposition (if one is needed), and then the prayers. It does not seem to matter much in what order the three elements are placed, provided they are all there.

A sufficient and yet extremely short form of prayer would be - a sentence of Scriptures, the Gloria patri, and the Lords prayer, with two or three versicles and responses. The first would be read by the head of the family and the second, one verse by him and the other by the rest, the third by all together. This might surely be a morning devotion in every household,

however early the work of the day was started. If the father and the working boys had to go out early by themselves, they might yet find time to say it, especially if the sentences of Scripture were learnt by heart, one for each working day.

On Sundays something fuller would be possible for all. On other week days the mother and any older girls, and school children, could meet before children went out to school, at a later time than the father and the boys. In the evening I should connect the gathering for prayer with the common meal, placing it probably after it, but of course pre-facing the meal with a "grace." This would be a reminder, in some ways, of the Lord's Paschal meal, which began with a blessing before supper, but ended after supper with the first Christian Liturgy, closing with a hymn. It is often a good practice to let the younger members of the household choose the hymns.

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