

## The Pater Noster

While going through some pictures this week, I found an album of pictures of Israel that were from a trip in 1984. In them was a picture of a place called the Church of the Pater Noster or Our Father. This is located near the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. This church contained illustrations of the prayer, "Our Father," translated into 62 languages. I was fascinated all over again as I looked at these pictures. I was intrigued and mesmerized by Israel. To be in the same land that Jesus walked in was humbling. To see the Sea of Galilee where Peter and others fished, and Peter briefly walked on water until his mortal self-told him it was impossible and so he started to sink, was amazing. I, who could drown in a teacup actually floated in the Dead Sea. We stayed in a kibbutz beside the Sea of Galilee for a few days and to wake up and see the sun shining on that Sea was like receiving a blessing. To see the history and the struggles of the Jewish people to build their homeland there was intriguing. Our tour guide was a woman from Massachusetts whose Jewish father had talked for years about returning to the homeland but passed away before he could. She and her husband took their children on a trip to Israel in her Father's memory. They were there and learned about the history and the centuries old struggles and stayed for a few weeks. They returned to the U.S., quit their jobs and sold their home and belongings and moved to Israel. It was the home of her roots. I was fascinated by their history and their love of their "homeland." Israel was a country divided even then and when we went to Bethlehem our tour guide had to wait just outside the city while we had a Palestinian guide for Bethlehem. It was a fascinating place and a very memorable trip. We have been studying the "Lord's Prayer" in a bible study class. I am anxious to show the class these pictures. When I saw the pictures of this fantastic building housing all the beautiful translations of the Lord's Prayers, I was reminded of a book I owned years ago. The book was a collection of pictures that depicted Jesus as he is seen in different countries. His features change depending on the nationality. He can be blue-eyed white or dark-eyed dark skinned, slant eyed or round eyed according to where the country is. We tend to see him as a version of ourselves. He is seen differently by different people but his love for us and his love for others never changes. I have always known that he may look different, but his love and his lessons remain the same. His appearance doesn't matter and neither does ours, it is his love and his message for each of us that matters. We are as one when it comes to the "Our Father" prayer no matter the translation.

Matthew 6:9=13 Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen

Dear Lord, we come to you today with gratitude in our hearts. May we be good stewards of what you have given us so that others may be fed, clothed, and housed. Be with our Pastor bless his ministry and be with him in all he does. Be with our staff and leaders, bless their work and bless their efforts, be by their side. Be with each of us and our families, strengthen us and watch over us. Be with those who are ill and those who grieve, comfort them. Lord help be the church you would choose us to be. A church where all are welcome and valued. Be with our country Lord, unite us where we are divided, heal us where we are broken, protect us and our children where there is danger, be with us when we doubt, be with us when we think we aren't enough, and may we feel your strength in us when you say we are enough. In the name and love of Jesus who died on a cross for our salvation we pray. Amen

Grace Epperson