**Meal Prayers**

**The Mother says at the dinner prayer: “And please dear Lord, let Tracy and Zelda come to appreciate the gifts of your bounty in the form of Brussels sprouts, peas, carrots and bean salads of every type. Amen.” At the same time Tracy and Zelda say to themselves: “La! La! La! La! La! God can’t hear you! La! La! La!” *(Michael Fry, in Committed comic strip)***

**After extraordinary displays of patience, the parents of a “Dennis the Menace” taught him to say grace before meals. One day they heard him reciting the prayer while he was in the bath. “This isn’t the time to say grace,” called the mother. “You’re supposed to say it when you eat.” “I know,” called back the youngster, “I just swallowed the soap.” *(The Roughneck)***

**Preacher: “Did you say a prayer before you started eating?” Geech: “Uh, no. I guess I forgot.” Preacher, looking at the food, says: “I would think just seeing that would’ve reminded you how much it needed a prayer.” *(Jerry Bittle, in Geech comic strip)***

One night at dinner I asked my four-year-old son to say grace. Heads bowed and hands folded, we waited. After a few moments of silence, I looked up at him.  He glanced at me, then over to his father, then back to me again. Finally he said, “But if I thank God for the broccoli, won’t he know I’m lying?” *(Sara Treaster, in Reader's Digest)*

**The daughter says to her Dad while listening to all of the children screaming at the dinner table: “Dad, did you ever wonder why this prayer before dinner is called ‘Grace’?” *(Lynn Johnston, in For Better Or For Worse comic strip)***

**Billy: “When we say grace, do we look up at Heaven, or down at the food?” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**Every day my father-in-law, Glenn, joins his group of regulars at a nearby truck stop for a cup of coffee. One day Glenn noticed two tough-looking men in the “drivers only” area. Before digging into their food, the two bowed their heads in prayer. Glenn mentioned to his friend Dave that the two guys didn’t look like the types who would say grace in a public restaurant. Dave replied, “Maybe they’ve eaten here before.” *(Anthony M. Pastore, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Mom and Agnes sit down for breakfast and Mom says: “Please say grace, Agnes.” Agnes: “For pop tarts? Isn't that a bit excessive? We pluck thy beautiful succulent fruit from all of thy trees and most bushes. Then we throw away all stems, pits and peels and evaporate most of the juices. We take what's left and roll it thin until it's a little more like glue then we stick that glop in a pastry shell that's both dry and tasteless, too. We thank . . .” Mom: “Enough, Agnes!” Agnes: “I didn't get to mention the cute, little foil body bags.” Mom: “Enough.” *(Tony Cochran, in Agnes comic strip)***

One day I asked my Sunday-school class of four-year-olds how many of them said grace before meals. When I found that none did, I explained what it meant and taught them a simple prayer that they could say before they ate. A few weeks later one of the mothers came in after class to talk to me. “That was a lovely prayer you taught Emily, Mrs. Sproul. But I must say, my husband is getting pretty tired of saying grace every time he opens the refrigerator to get a beer.” *(Dorothy Sproul, in Reader’s Digest)*

Little Johnny and his family were having Sunday dinner at his grandmother's house, reports Bob Sallee of Coffeyville, Kansas. Everyone was seated around the table as the food was being served. When Johnny received his plate, he started eating right away. “Johnny, wait until we say our prayer,” admonished his mother. “I don't have to,” Johnny replied. “Of course you do,” his mother insisted. “At home, we always say a prayer before we eat.” “That's at our house,” Johnny explained. “But this is Grandma's house, and she knows how to cook.” (Country magazine)

**The child prays at the meal: “Thank you, Lord, for these gifts we are about to receive, except for these green things, which Mom claims are peas, but I know are caterpillar brains.” *(Michael Fry, in Committed comic strip)***

**The following appeared in the bulletin of a Minnesota church: “We thank thee, Lord, for our instant coffee, real-quick cocoa, one-minute oatmeal and pop-up waffles. In haste. Amen.” *(Sunshine Magazine)***

 **One day my wife had a terrible headache, so my 4-year-old daughter, Brooke, and I made dinner while she rested. When we sat down to eat, I asked Brooke to say the blessing to remember her mother in the prayer. She bowed her head and said, “Please bless this food, and bless Mommy and her headache that they will go away.” *(Gregg Luke, in Country Extra magazine)***

**One Thanksgiving Day, a mother decided to serve a more healthy fare than the family had come to expect. She served a turkey, all right, but no potatoes and gravy. There was no stuffing. She did serve a green salad and there were peas and carrots, but no butter. There was no pumpkin pie, no mincemeat pie and, of course, no dollop of ice cream on top. Instead there was fruit salad. It was all very healthy, but when the father asked a son to say grace, the little guy surveyed the table, bowed his head, and said, “Lord, I don’t like the looks of it, but I thank you for it, and I’ll eat it anyway.” *(Bits & Pieces)***

**My three-year-old granddaughter was visiting us and we were about to have lunch.  Rachel sat with her hands properly folded and eyes closed as I began Grace. “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Immediately Rachel’s eyes flew open. “You are not supposed to say ‘the Holy Ghost,’” she admonished. “You’re supposed to say ‘the Holy Spirit.’” Then, afraid she may have hurt my feelings, she quickly added, “You can say ‘the Holy Ghost’ at Halloween.” *(L. M. Shaw, in Catholic Digest)***

**Finished with a number of unscheduled patients one morning, I needed a break and took an early lunch. In the hospital canteen, I sat down, placed my hands over my eyes and thought, I’ll scream if another patient shows up without an appointment. Opening my eyes, I saw an elderly woman approach me. “You know, I was nervous about bringing my husband to the hospital,” she said. “But now I know this place is okay, because the doctors pray before eating.” *(Barry F. Luterman, in Reader’s Digest)***

**We sat down at the dining room table. On the menu: leftovers. As we were saying grace, I noticed that my young son wasn’t joining in. I asked him why. His response: “Because I already blessed it last night.” (Judy Moore, in Reader’s Digest)**

**A woman invited some people to dinner. At the table, she turned to her 6-year-old daughter and said, “Would you like to say the blessing?” “I wouldn’t know what to say,” the girl replied. “Just say what you hear Mommy say,” the woman answered. The daughter bowed her head and said, “Lord, why on earth did I invite all these people to dinner?” *(Denver Rocky Mountain News)***

**One day I picked up my seven-year-old daughter, Emily, from CCD, dashed home, and made a simple meal. With dinner on the table, I reached out my hands to hers to say grace, but she would only take one. I began the prayer anyway, though feeling slighted by her unwillingness to take my other hand. After the prayer, I questioned her about it. “Mama,” she explained, “at CCD today we learned that when two or more people are gathered together for God, Jesus is here. I was holding Jesus’ hand.” From then on, we always left a spot for Him. *(Christiana Mavroudis)***

**One child says to another child: “The kind of cook my mother is has nothing to do with us saying a prayer before we eat a meal!” *(The Clergy Journal cartoon)***

**As Dolly looks through the picture Bible she says to her mother: “At the Last Supper, betcha I know who they asked to say grace.” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**The child eyes the food, and then says to her Mother: “They’re leftover, we already thanked God.” *(The Lutheran Witness)***

**As soon as Billy's plate was set before him at the holiday dinner at Grandma’s house, the little guy started eating. “Billy, wait till we say our prayer,” his mother said. “We always do at our house.” “We don't have to here,” Billy replied. “Grandma knows how to cook.” *(Rocky Mountain News)***

**Little Johnny liked church pretty well except for the long pastoral prayer. So when his dad asked the visiting minister to say grace when dinner was served, Johnny was worried. But to his surprise, the prayer was very brief and to the point. Pleased, Johnny turned to the minister and observed, “You don’t pray so long when you’re hungry, do you?” *(Mike McCall, in Progressive Farmer)***

**The Army often gives out field rations to soldiers sent on training missions far from the unit. However, many soldiers despise these MREs--Meals Ready to Eat. During a 20-minute lunch break at Fort Benning, Ga., my company of trainees gathered under some trees to eat our prepackaged rations. One soldier observed me bow my head in reverence over the bundle in brown plastic. When I looked up, he said, “Your prayer didn’t work. The MRE is still there.” *(1st Lt. Matthew A. Ritchie, in Reader’s Digest)***

**My nephew Aaron is quite a picky eater. One evening, his mom insisted he eat the casserole she prepared. But before she dished up the food, it was Aaron's turn to say grace, and he began, “Dear God, please don’t make me eat this.” *(Amy Drabek, in Country Extra magazine)***

**An old farmer, after taking care of some business at a neighboring estate was asked to stay for lunch. Noting that his well-to-do companions began immediately to eat, the old man bowed his head and quietly said grace for himself. When he looked up, his host was smiling indulgently. “Do many of the people around here follow such an old-fashioned custom?” he asked. “Most do,” replied the old farmer. “This must be a more backward area than I thought when I bought this place,” remarked the gentleman in a bantering tone. “Isn’t there anyone nearby sufficiently enlightened not to parade their prayers at the table?” The old man thought a moment and said, “Well I reckon there are some over at my place who never pray over their food.” “College graduates, no doubt?” “No, sir,” said the farmer, “my pigs.” *(St. Andrew’s Episcopal Buttetin, Ft. Worth, TX)***

**Thirteen-year-old Ginny had been a bad girl, and part of her punishment was to eat dinner alone at a small table in the corner of the kitchen. No one paid any attention to her until the family became aware of the Grace that she was saying aloud: “I thank Thee, Lord, for preparing a table for me in the presence of mine enemies.” *(Charles Chich Govin, in Catholic Digest)***

**A Christian in ancient Rome was being pursued by a lion. He ran through the city streets and into the woods, dodging back and forth among the trees. Finally it became obvious that it was hopeless – the lion was going to catch him. So he turned suddenly, faced the beast and dropped to his knees. “Lord,” he prayed desperately, “make this lion a Christian.” Instantly the lion dropped to its knees and prayed. “For this meal of which I am about to partake . . .” *(Vauna J. Armstrong, in Reader’s Digest)***

**One day I picked up my seven-year-old daughter, Emily, from CCD, dashed home, and made a simple meal. With dinner on the table, I reached out my hands to hers to say grace, but she would only take one. I began the prayer anyway, though feeling slighted by her unwillingness to take my other hand. After the prayer, I questioned her about it. “Mama,” she explained, “at CCD today we learned that when two or more people are gathered together for God, Jesus is here. I was holding Jesus’ hand.” From then on, we always left a spot for Him. *(Christiana Mavroudis, in Catholic Digest)***

**In our parish one of our youngsters was hanging his head as if in silent prayer after the rest of the family had finished saying Grace at the table. When our other child noticed her brother sitting with his head bowed, she remarked. “He’s praying for second helpings now.” *(Bob Brown, in Catholic Digest)***

**A distinguished minister and two elders from his congregation attended an out-of-town meeting that did not finish until rather late. They decided to have something to eat before going home, but unfortunately the only spot open was a seedy bar-and-grill with a questionable reputation. After being served, one of the elders asked the minister to say grace. “I’d rather not,” the clergyman said. “I don’t want him to know I’m here.” *(Phyllis R. Martin, in Reader’s Digest)***

**My grandsons take turns saying grace at dinnertime. Peter was excited when his turn came. “Thank you, Lord, for this food,” he said. “We've had it once, and we'll have it again. Amen,” All of the adults tried not to laugh at his sincere prayer. *(Dollie Buffington, in Country magazine)***

**The child sitting at dinner says to her parents: “I can’t quite get myself around to saying grace over a spinach casserole!” *(The Clergy Journal cartoon)***

Saying grace at mealtime was a tradition at Grandma’s house. At breakfast, lunch and supper, all who gathered around the table would bow their heads to give blessing for the food they were about to eat. Much to Grandma’s sadness, this tradition was not brought to our home by my mother, so as a three-year-old, the practice of saying grace was very confusing to me. Mother embarrassingly recalls that once, while Grandma rambled through one of her lengthy mealtime thanks to God, I asked in a rather loud voice, “Why is Grandma talking to her plate?” *(Glen DeVuono)*

**As the family sits down for dinner, Zoe startsd to pray: “And thank you for Mommy and Daddy and Grandma and especially for Baby Wren.” Hammie: “What about me?” Zoe: “Oh, thanks for reminding me!” Zoe then continues talking with God: “Could you please connect me with the Returns Department?” *(Rick Kirkman and Jerry Scott, in Baby Blues comic strip)***

**Bill Moyers, who was an ordained Baptist minister during the time he was President Johnson’s press secretary, was saying grace at a White House dinner one evening. Johnson was seated at the other end of the table and was having trouble hearing. “Speak up,” he said, “I can’t hear you.” “I wasn’t talking to you,” replied Moyers. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Dolly: “I know why we say grace. It’s to let our food cool off.” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***