

## THE OUR FATHER: CLARIFYING SOME ISSUES IN TRANSLATION

### *The Different Versions of the Our Father*

In an interview with Marco Pozzo<sup>1</sup> on TV2000, the television network of the Italian bishops' conference, on December 6, 2017, Pope Francis pointed out what to him was a misleading translation [of the Latin text] of the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer [« *ne nos inducas in tentationem* »], which when rendered in Italian reads, « *non ci indurre in tentazione* ». Pope Francis argued that it is we who fall and that it is not the Father who *leads us into* temptation, as otherwise the Italian translation he thought would seem to suggest. A father does not do that, the Pope insisted. Rather, he helps us at once to get up in such instances. On the contrary, it is Satan who does that, for that is what his task is really all about.<sup>2</sup> As a result of that comment, a lively discussion ensued on the real meaning of the petition and how it ought to be properly translated, in Italian that is, if the misleading implication that the Pope cited were to be avoided. Quite expectedly, the Pope's comments also triggered discussion of the same issue in other language groups, particularly in the English-speaking countries.

Before commenting further on Pope Francis' observations, one must take into account that this is not the only issue in translation involving the Our Father in English. In fact, the history of the English translation of the Our Father shows that it has already undergone significant evolution through the years, precisely because of varying preferences in interpretation, style and wording. The following are the more popular versions:

#### *King James Version (1611)*

Our Father **which** art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done **in** earth,  
as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our **debts**,  
as we forgive our **debtors**.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

#### *Slightly Modernized AV/KJV Version*

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 forgive our **debtors**.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

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<sup>1</sup> Marco Pozzo, a Catholic Chaplain in one of the prisons in Rome, is a presbyter, writer and an Italian television personality.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis: "...questa è una traduzione non buona. Anche i francesi hanno cambiato adesso il testo, ancora una traduzione che non mi lasci cadere nella tentazione che sono io a cadere. Ma non è lui che mi butta alla tentazione. Per poi vedere come sono caduto un padre non fa questo. Un padre aiuta anzi subito. Quello che ti induce alla tentazione satana è quello ufficio di satana." (Transcript of Pope Francis' interview with Marco Pozzo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JE8Nberp9E>, date accessed - June 7, 2021)

As one can see, the differences between the *King James Version* of 1611 (KJV) and the *Slightly modernized AV/KJV Version* are limited to those between which and who as referring to the Father, and between in and on as the preposition governing *earth*. They are hardly significant as to affect meaning.

Equally traceable to the 17<sup>th</sup> century is the *Anglican Version* (AV) as found in the *Book of Common Prayer* (1662). Very close to it in wording is the *Traditional Ecumenical Version* (TEV), which was printed in F.X. Weninger's *A Manual of the Catholic Religion, for Catechists, Teachers and Self-instruction* (1867).<sup>3</sup> The differences between the AV and the TEV, as can be seen below, are very minimal. Significantly, they agree in translating *debita* to *trespasses*.

*Anglican Version (1662 Book of Common Prayer)*

*Traditional Ecumenical Version*

Our Father, **which** art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy Name;  
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done  
**in** earth, as it is in heaven:  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
And forgive us our **trespasses**,  
as we forgive **them that trespass against us**;  
And lead us not into temptation,  
But deliver us from evil.

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 **trespasses**,  
as we forgive **those who trespass against us**;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

In 1973, the *International Commission for English in the Liturgy* (ICEL) released a version of the *Our Father* which it prepared for use in the English translation of the Roman Catholic mass, which is no different from the TEV. On the other hand, the *English Language Liturgical Consultation* (ELLC), a group convened in 1969 by ICEL and formally established in Boston (USA) in 1985, prepared and released in 1988 an ecumenical and modernised version of the *Our Father*.

*ICEL Version (1973)/Roman Missal (2008/2010)*

*ECCL Version (1988)*

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 **trespasses**,  
as we forgive those who **trespass** against us.  
And **lead us not into temptation**;  
**but** deliver us from evil.

Our Father **in** heaven,  
Hallowed be **your** name,  
**Your** kingdom come, **your** will be done,  
on earth **as in** heaven.  
Give us **today** our daily bread.  
Forgive us our **sins**  
as we forgive those who **sin** against us.  
Save us from the **time of trial**  
**and** deliver us from evil.

<sup>3</sup> See FRANCIS XAVIER WENINGER, *A Manual of the Catholic Religion, for Catechists, Teachers and Self-instruction*, John P. Walsh, 1867, pp. 146–147.

Some English-speaking countries adopted the ECCL 1988 version, but the U.S. have always preferred the ICEL 1973 version, so that when the *Missale Romanum* (MR) was translated anew in 2008/2010 with the publication of MR's *editio typica tertia*, the text of the Our Father (TEV/ICEL 1973 version) remained unchanged. This has not been the case in the Philippines, where a different version had been in use for a long time, until this was replaced by the TEV/ICEL 1973 version in 2017.

*Filipino Version (FV)*<sup>4</sup>

Our Father in heaven  
 Holy be your name  
 Your kingdom come  
 Your will be done  
 on earth as in heaven  
 Give us this day our daily bread  
 and forgive us our sins  
 as we forgive those who sin against us.  
 Do not bring us to the test  
 but deliver us from evil.

*ECCL Version (1988)*

Our Father in heaven,  
 Hallowed be your name,  
 Your kingdom come,  
 your will be done,  
 on earth as in heaven.  
 Give us today our daily bread.  
 Forgive us our sins  
 as we forgive those who sin against us.  
 Save us from the time of trial  
 and deliver us from evil.

The Filipino version above sounded more like the ECCL 1988 version, except for some minor differences. The most ostentatious difference, however, is that ECCL's *Save us from the time of trial* is rendered by *Do not bring us to the test* in the Filipino version, which has no parallel in any of the other versions. This text literally translates the Greek εἰσενέγκης (*eisenenkēs*, bring or lead to), yet prefers to replace the literal *temptation* with *test* which is the dynamic equivalent of πειρασμόν (*peirasmon*).

To see more clearly what the real issues are, it is necessary to go back to the Latin text of the *Our Father*, as follows (one must not forget that this is in itself based on the original Greek):

Pater Noster, qui es in caelis,  
 sanctificetur nomen tuum.  
 Adveniat regnum tuum.  
 Fiat voluntas tua,  
 sicut in caelo et in terra.  
 Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie,  
 et dimitte nobis debita nostra  
 sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris.  
 Et ne nos inducas in tentationem,  
 sed libera nos a malo.

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<sup>4</sup> See for instance, PAUL VI INSTITUTE OF LITURGY, *Supplement to the Roman Sacramentary*, for the Dioceses in the Philippines, approved for use by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, Paulines Publishing House (Manila), 1999, p. 116.

Looking at the different versions of the prayer, the following issues in translation emerge:

1. How to translate the relative clause *qui es*: to retain it or to do away with it?
2. How to translate *sanctificetur*: *hallowed be* or *holy be*?
3. How to translate the second personal pronoun *tuum* and *tua*: *thy* or *your*?
4. How to translate the preposition *in* before *terra*: *in* or *on*?
5. Whether to retain or omit *et* before *dimitte*.
6. How to translate *debita*: *debts*, *trespasses* or *sins*?
7. How to translate *debitoribus*: *those who/them that trespass against us*, *debtors*, or *those who sin against us*.
8. How to translate *ne nos inducas*: *do not lead us*, *do not bring us*, or *save us*?
9. How to translate *tentationem*: *temptation*, *test*, or *trial*?
10. How to translate *sed* in the last line: *but* or *and*?

Obviously, the most important issues here, and troublesome at that, are those involving the translation of *debita-debitoribus* (#6/#7), *inducas* (#8) and *tentationem* (#9), as these have something to do with meaning, while the others are purely grammatical and stylistic in nature.

In order to address these issues, it is also necessary to go back to the original Greek text to see if the Latin text is a faithful translation thereof. While it is beyond the scope of this essay to scrutinize the Latin *Pater noster* in its entirety in relation to the Greek text, it is certainly possible to examine the Latin words (and concepts they signify) that are now the subject of discussion by going back to their Greek counterparts, namely, *debita-debitoribus* (opheilēmata-opheiletai), *inducas* (eisenenkēs) and *tentationem* (peirasmon).

### Πάτερ ἡμῶν

(based on Mt 6, 9-13)

Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς·  
Pater hēmōn ho en tois ouranois  
Ἀγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου  
Hagiasthētō to onoma sou  
Ἐλθάτω ἡ βασιλεία σου·  
Elthetō hē basileia sou  
γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου,  
Genēthētō to thelēma sou  
ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς  
Hōs en ouranō kai epī gēs  
Τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον  
Ton arton hēmōn ton epiouision dos hēmin sēmeron  
καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν,  
Kai aphe hēmin ta ophelēmata hēmōn  
ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν  
Hōs kai hēmeis aphēkamen tois ophēiletaiis hēmōn  
καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν,  
Kai mē eisenenkēs hēmas eis peirasmon  
ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.  
Alla rhysai hēmas apo tou ponērou.

### Pater noster

(based on Mt 6, 9-13)

Pater Noster, *qui es* in caelis,  
*sanctificetur* nomen *tuum*.  
Adveniat regnum *tuum*.  
Fiat voluntas *tua*,  
sicut in caelo et *in* terra.  
Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie,  
et dimitte nobis *debita* nostra  
sicut et nos dimittimus *debitoribus* nostris.  
Et ne nos *inducas* in *tentationem*,  
*sed* libera nos a malo.

Moreover, it is to be borne in mind that the Latin text above is practically St. Jerome's translation of the original Greek as found in the Vulgate.<sup>5</sup> One can therefore safely say that the Latin text reflects very much St. Jerome's interpretation of the Greek text. One translating the Latin into another modern language must therefore take into account not only St. Jerome's interpretation but also the original Greek concepts.

#### *The Differences in Meaning of Debts, Trespasses and Sins<sup>6</sup>*

The first of these concepts is *opheilēmata* (ὀφειλήματα), the plural of *opheilēma* (ὀφείλημα). According to Strong's Concordance (#3783), *opheilēma* signifies *that which is owed to another, in other words a debt*. It can also refer to the *result of having a debt, the after-effect of the obligation*. This idea is rather clear in Romans 4:4, where St. Paul says, "Now to the one who works, his wages are not credited as a gift, but as an *obligation* (*opheilēma*)."<sup>7</sup> However, in Mt 6:12, it can have a broader sense and can therefore mean a *delinquency, offence, fault, or a sin*. St. Jerome's *debita* (*debitum* in the singular), therefore, corresponds more to the stricter meaning of *opheilēma* and stresses the consequence of an *obligation* (of owing someone, or of incurring a due). In English, this is best translated as a *debt*, which is reflected in the AV/KJV translation of Mt 6:12. Such being the case, the Greek *opheiletēs* (ὀφειλέτης, *opheiletais* [ὀφειλέταις] in the dative plural form) can be rendered as *debtor*, that is, one who owes something to another as a matter of obligation.

Translators who prefer *trespasses* (AV, TEV and ICEL 1973) and *sins* (ECCL 1988 and FV) to *debts* (AV/KJV), may have favored the broader meaning of *opheilēma* to include any offence, since in English, incurring a debt—legitimately that is—may not necessarily constitute an offence. On the contrary, both *trespasses* and *sins* are always offensive and in this way are really synonymous.

In Scriptures, *trespass* and *sin* both describe the same thing, that is, rebellion against God: "Everyone who commits sin commits lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness."<sup>7</sup> Lawlessness (transgression of the law), of course, is rebellion against God. Trespass, however, has an added nuance in that it underscores the fact that one is treading a path that one ought not to be doing so. In other words, one is drifting away because one would rather follow a path of one's own rather than that of God, in a manner that *intrudes into the path (personal space) of the other as to encroach on his/her rights*.

On the other hand, sin may be any kind of offence, in general, that may not necessarily include this sense of intrusion and encroachment that trespassing expresses. This idea is expressed by *ἁμαρτίας* (*hamartias*), which means *sins* (failures) in general. It is *ἁμαρτίας* (*hamartias*) which Luke

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<sup>5</sup> See Mt 6, 9-13 in NOVA VULGATA, Bibliorum sacrorum editio, Sacrosancti oecumenci Concilii Vaticani II, ratione habita, iussu Pauli PP. VI recognita, auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgata, Editio typica altera, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican, 1998, pp. 1461-1462: "Pater noster, qui es in caelis, sanctificetur nomen tuum, adveniat regnum tuum, fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo, et in terra. Panem nostrum substantialiorem da nobis hodie; et dimitte nobis debita nostra, sicut et nos dimisimus debitoribus nostris; et ne inducas nos in temptationem, sed libera nos a Malo."

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/the-difference-between-sin-sins-and-trespasses>.

<sup>7</sup> 1 John 3:4

prefers,<sup>8</sup> to Matthew's ὀφειλήματα (*opheilēmata*, debts). Yet Luke could not avoid referring to the agent of such sins or failures as ὀφείλοντι (*opheilonți*),<sup>9</sup> which means "those who incur a debt" or "those who are indebted" (debtors). Given these nuances in meaning, Matthew's *opheiletais hēmōn* could be translated as either "those who trespass against us" (AV, TEV and ICEL 1973) or "those who sin against us" (ECCL 1988 and FV), or finally "those who are in debt to us" or simply "our debtors" (KJV & AV/KJV).

Based on the above analysis, translating the original Greek *opheilēmata* (St. Jerome's *debita*) into *debts*, *trespasses* or *sins* actually appears to be a matter of choice or preference, but whatever is preferred, it does not really digress from the meaning of *opheilēmata* as it can mean all of these, depending on the nuance one wishes to focus on or emphasize.

### "Inducas" and "Indurre"

What is more problematic is the translation or rather the interpretation of *inducas* (εἰσενέγκης, *eisenenkēs*), especially in combination with *tentationem* (πειρασμόν, *peirasmon*). Pope Francis' comments on the translation of the Latin *inducas* into the Italian *indurre* sparked anew the debate on how the sixth petition in the Our Father ought to be interpreted/translated. Referring to the recent move in the French Church to replace « *ne nous soumetts pas à la tentation* » (do not submit us or do not subject us),<sup>10</sup> with « *ne nous laisse pas entrer en tentation* » (let us not enter into temptation),<sup>11</sup> Pope Francis indicated that the Italian translation « *non ci indurre in tentazione* » is not actually a good translation because it would seem to imply that God, rather than or like Satan, leads people into temptation. Incidentally, the new French text somehow matches the Spanish version « *no nos dejes caer en la tentación* » (do not let us fall into temptation),<sup>12</sup> which was also approved for use in some Spanish-speaking countries. In his explanation, Pope Francis suggested to rewrite the verse in question to read this way to better explain the role of Satan as the tempter for that is his task, and to dispell the false impression (misconception) that God induces people to sin because he cannot and does not in fact do that. As a Father, Pope Francis insists, God rather helps people get up immediately after a fall, not lead people into it.

Reacting favorably to Pope Francis' comments, the Italian bishops' conference, in approving the new edition of the *Messale Romano* (based on the *editio typica tertia*) during their November 2018 general assembly, also approved among other things the new translation of the sixth petition of the Our Father to read « *non abbandonarci alla tentazione* » (do not abandon us to temptation).

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<sup>8</sup> See Luke 11:4: "...καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν, καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ ἀφίομεν παντὶ ὀφείλοντι ἡμῖν· καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκης ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν...."

<sup>9</sup> Dative masculine singular, present participle active of ὀφείλω.

<sup>10</sup> This is the ecumenical version agreed upon by the French Church and Protestant/Orthodox churches in 1966, opting to translate the Latin "*ne nos inducas in tentationem*" into "*ne nous soumetts pas à la tentation*." which in English can be translated "do not submit us" or "do not subject us" to temptation. A more literal translation in French would be "*et ne nous induis point en tentation*".

<sup>11</sup> The mandate from the French Catholic bishops for this new translation to be used came into effect on the first Sunday of Advent, on December 3, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> Previously, the Spanish text read: "*y no nos metas en tentación*".

Months later, on May 22, 2019, the new Italian text was confirmed by the Apostolic See, with Pope Francis himself eventually using the new text publicly for the first time on April 11, 2021.<sup>13</sup>

Curiously, unlike some patristic authors, Pope Francis – while open and eager to replacing *non ci indurre* with *non abbandonarci* – makes no attempt to change *ne nos inducas* which is the very source of his objections! According to a 1945 study by A.J.B Higgins,<sup>14</sup> Tertullian, in his *De Oratione*<sup>15</sup>, interprets *ne nos inducas in tentationem* to mean *ne nos patiaris induci ab eo utique qui temptat* (do not allow us to be led into temptation by him who tempts). According also to the same study, the later works of Cyprian (particularly his *De oratione dominica*) used the same expression not simply as an interpretation but as a part of the actual scriptural text itself. In this third-century work, Cyprian gives the following as a Gospel citation: *et ne patiaris nos induci in tentationem*<sup>16</sup> – or in English, “and do not allow us to be led into temptation.” Moreover, Ambrose, in his *De sacramentis*<sup>17</sup>, does not only regard the variant expression as part of the scriptural text itself but went as far as rejecting St. Jerome’s *ne inducas nos in tentationem* as translation of the Greek text. In fact, Higgins’ study also pointed out that the great Church Father, Augustine, in spite of his familiarity with St. Jerome’s *ne nos inducas*, observed that when people prayed the Our Father they actually meant saying *ne nos patiaris induci in tentationem*.<sup>18</sup>

More recently, J. Fitzmyer<sup>19</sup> cites the same Church Fathers, i.e, Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose, and Augustine, as having paraphrased the petition with the same permissive formula. He adds to them though Hilary of Poitiers, who used a different permissive paraphrase: “... *non derelinquas nos in tentatione*” (do not leave us in temptation).<sup>20</sup>

Despite these initiatives to reformulate the sixth petition of the Our Father in Latin, St. Jerome’s *ne nos inducas in tentationem* prevailed and continues to endure to this day. The more recent attempts to reformulate the same petition in the modern languages do nothing to change St. Jerome’s Latin text.

That may be said of the new Italian text, *non abbandonarci alla tentazione*, which Pope Francis started to use. It does not translate, much less change, the Latin *ne nos inducas in tentationem*. It does rather translate Hilary of Poitier’s paraphrase (*supra*). St. Jerome’s Latin text – in the subjunctive mood – expresses the desire that the Father not lead us (*non nos inducere*) into temptation, thus literally, « *may you not lead us into temptation* » which is different from what the Italian text says. There is very little that separates *inducere* from *indurre* in meaning, for both

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<sup>13</sup> See <https://twitter.com/catholicsat/status/1381177548558712835?lang=en>.

<sup>14</sup> A.J.G. HIGGINS, “‘Lead Us Not into Temptation’: Some Latin Variants,” in *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 183/184 (July/October 1945), pp. 179-183. See CHARLES MCNAMARA, “Lead Us Not into Temptation? Francis Is Not the First to Question a Key Phrase of the Lord’s Prayer,” in *Commonweal Magazine*, January 1, 2018 (<https://www.commonweal magazine.org/lead-us-not-temptation>).

<sup>15</sup> TERTULLIAN, *De oratione* 8.1; CCLat 1.262; see also IDEM, *Adv. Marcionem* 4.26.5; CCLat 1.615.

<sup>16</sup> CYPRIAN, *De oratione dominica* 25; CCLat 3A.106.

<sup>17</sup> AMBROSE, *De sacramentis* 5.4.29; CSEL 73.7.

<sup>18</sup> As cited in Higgins’s study, these were the words of Augustine: “...*multi autem precando ita dicunt, ne nos patiaris induci in tentationem; exponentes videlicet quomodo dictum sit, inducas.*” See See C. MCNAMARA, “Lead Us Not into Temptation?”

<sup>19</sup> JOSEPH FITZMYER, “And Lead Us Not into Temptation,” in *Biblica* 84/2 (2003), pp. 259-273, p. 265-267.

<sup>20</sup> HILARY OF POITIERS, *Tract. in Ps. 118,15*; CSEL 22.369.

can mean *to lead into, to induce, to bring into, to push/persuade someone to do something or to make something happen*. One cannot object then to the use of *non ci indurre* without objecting to St. Jerome's *ne nos inducas* as a faithful rendering of the Greek *kai mē eisenenkēs hēmas* in Mt 6,13 – thus, the need to modify the Latin as well, that is, if Pope Francis were to be consistent. With the Latin text remaining intact, the faulty impression which the Pope is “supposedly” trying to rectify persists – at least in Latin.

### *Arguments in Favor of Pope Francis*

Quite expectedly Pope Francis' comments drew both favorable and adverse reactions. Among those who accepted the Pope's insinuation at changing the translation, as already mentioned above, were the Italian bishops. Bruno Forte, Archbishop of Chieti-Vasto and one time member of Vatican's *International Theological Commission*, announced in the name of the Italian Conference that such change would come into effect in Advent of 2020.<sup>21</sup> He argued that in Greek, the verb used « εἰσενέγκης, *eisenenkēs* » literally meant *to bring or lead (us)* which the Latin *inducas*, it is true, quite literally expresses. The Italian *indurre*, however, means *to push* in the sense of *making something happen*. It would then be strange according to Forte to imply that God *pushes us to fall into temptation*. Moreover, he pointed out, echoing Pope Francis' thinking, that the verb that ought to correspond to *peirasmon* (temptation) must be a verb that makes it clear that God is a Father who helps people not to fall into temptation and not a God who sets up a trap for people to fall into, for otherwise that would be such an absolutely unacceptable idea. Following such logic, the Italian verb *abbandonar*, according to the collective opinion of the Italian bishops, fulfills that requirement.

In support of the Pope's comments, Charles McNamara cites the Church Fathers mentioned above because he believes that they expressed such objections comparable to those of Pope Francis in that **their “understanding of temptation in the Our Father aligns well with Francis's proposed modification.”**<sup>22</sup>

Paul Zulehner, an Austrian theologian, echoed the Pope's views. Arguing that Christians ought to be absolutely sure that God loves people and that he does not want them to perish, he supported the change introduced by the Italian Bishops into the text of the Our Father.<sup>23</sup>

The best argument, however, on which Pope Francis' views find a strong anchor is a statement from the Letter of James (1:13) which says, “No one experiencing temptation should say, ‘*I am being tempted by God*’; for God is not subject to temptation to evil, and *he himself tempts no one*.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, though allowed by God, temptation *cannot* come from him. Addressing the

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<sup>21</sup>See <https://www.vaticannews.va/it/chiesa/news/2020-01/padre-nostro-bruno-forte-nuova-versione-cei-uso-29-novembre.html>.

<sup>22</sup> CHARLES MCNAMARA, “Lead Us Not into Temptation?”

<sup>23</sup> See [www.kathpress.at/goto/meldung/1851931/theologe-zulehner-begruesst-geaendertes-vaterunser-in-italien](http://www.kathpress.at/goto/meldung/1851931/theologe-zulehner-begruesst-geaendertes-vaterunser-in-italien) (*Theologe Zulehner begrüßt geändertes Vaterunser in Italien*, Kathpress.at: “Künftige Formulierung « überlasse uns nicht der Versuchung » spiegle Gottes Liebe zum Menschen besser wieder - Veränderungen der Sprache müssten auch in Gebeten Niederschlag finden.”).

<sup>24</sup> James 1:13: “Μηδεις πειραζόμενος λεγέτω οτι Ἀπο Θεου πειράζομαι· ο γαρ Θεος ἀπειραστός ἐστιν κακῶν, **πειράζει** δὲ αὐτὸς **οὐδένα**.”



early Christian churches—the twelve tribes in the dispersion—James meant to tell them that although God may test their faith, he does this without any *solicitation to evil*. James somehow knew that most people had a tendency to blame God when they found themselves in trials. But James insisted that by his very nature, God is *unable* to either be tempted nor can *he himself tempt anyone*. Here then, temptation is understood as *solicitation to evil* which can never be attributed to God.

### “Peirasmos” and “Tentatio”: Keeping the Traditional Translation

That said, it would seem, however, to some that the Pope’s objections can be more appropriately addressed if the English *temptation*—which translates the Latin *tentatio*—were to be properly understood, and not necessarily by altering the translation, in particular *non ci inducere (ne nos inducas)*. N. Frankovich, for instance, believes that *temptation*, a concept whose meaning has shifted over the centuries, needs to be understood literally and dissociated from its acquired negative meaning (*i.e.*, something that has to do with *naughtiness, bad thoughts, and sin*).<sup>25</sup> Only then is it possible to see that *ne nos inducas in tentationem* (lead us not into *temptation*) need not necessarily suggest the possibility that God might just enable people to do something wrong.

Frankovich’s main premise is that *temptation* is cognate with *attempt*, a concept that is certainly morally neutral. According to Frankovich, a better rendering for *attempt* would be to call it a *trial*. Thus, *to tempt* means *to subject one to a trial*. In Frankovich’s view, that is exactly what God did to both Paul and Abraham—he subjected them both to a trial and in both instances God never intended to induce them to do something wrong, but rather to persist in doing what is best that would serve him. As far as Paul’s story goes, God called him to be “... a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites, and I will show him what he will have to suffer for my name.”<sup>26</sup> God must have exposed Abraham to the same anguish when he asked, in fact *commanded* (tempted), him to sacrifice his son Isaac.<sup>27</sup> The idea that God “tempted” Abraham is better shown in Greek, for as Frankovich indicates, the verb (*i.e.*, to test or to tempt) that is used in the Septuagint is *ἐπιείραξεν*<sup>28</sup> (*επειράσε*), which is a form of *πειράζω* (*peirazō*).<sup>29</sup> This is the same root from where *peirasmos* (*πειρασμός*), which is preserved in the Our Father, is derived and gets translated as *temptation* in English.<sup>30</sup> Frankovich further points out that the word *peirasmos* is related to the English *peril* and to the Latin *periculum*, meaning

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<sup>25</sup> NICHOLAS FRANKOVICH, “Don’t Over-Spiritualize ‘Temptation’, What We Ask For in the Lord’s Prayer,” in *Commonweal Magazine*, January 17, 2018 (<https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/dont-over-spiritualize-temptationSpirituality>).

<sup>26</sup> Acts 9: 15-16.

<sup>27</sup> Genesis 22: 1.

<sup>28</sup> Genesis 22: 1: “...και εγένετο μετά τα ρήματα ταύτα ὁ θεός **επειράσε** τον Αβραάμ και είπεν αυτό, Αβραάμ και είπεν ιδού εγώ.”

<sup>29</sup> Πειράζω (*peirazo*) occurs forty two (42) times in the New Testament, and gets to be translated into English alternatively as *to test*, *to tempt*, or *to try*. (See G3985 *πειράζω* - Strong’s Greek Lexicon Number; on this see for instance Mt 4:1, 4:3, 16:1, 19:3, 22:18, 22:35; Mk 1:13, 8:11, 10:2, 12:15; Lk 4:2, 11:16, 20:23; Jn 5:9, 6:6, 8:6; Acts 15:10, 16:7, 24:6; 1 Cor 7:5, 10:9, 10:13; 2 Cor 13:5; Gal 6:1; 1 Thess 3:5; Heb 2:18, & 3:9).

<sup>30</sup> In the modern languages, *πειρασμός* is translated as *tentation* in French, *tentación* in Spanish, *tentazione* in Italian, *tentação* in Portuguese, *Versuchung* in German, and *verleiding* in Dutch.

danger. He concludes, “To try and be tried, prove and be proved, imperil and be imperiled – these define the contours of πειρασμός, the ‘temptation’ that we ask God not to lead us into.”<sup>31</sup>

What this analysis shows us is that *temptation* can in fact be understood in a good sense as a “test” or “trial” (reflected in the FV and ECCL 1988), meant to be a gauge of the strength and fidelity of the one being “tested” or “tried”. But this is not to deny either that it can be understood in a bad sense, as it does have this negative meaning especially when ascribed to Satan or to the devil. In this sense, it can mean an *attempt* or an *enticement* to get a person into doing something wrong/evil.<sup>32</sup> Given this two pronged meaning and usage, it is therefore the context that will tell whether *temptation* (πειρασμός, *peirasmos*) ought to be taken positively or negatively: *positively* when it is God who subjects one to such a “test”, but *negatively* when its source is the devil. It is the motive that separates God from the devil, for whereas God wants the person being subjected to the test *to succeed*, the devil wants the person he tempts *to fail*. This is best illustrated in the story of Jesus’ threefold temptation in the desert.<sup>33</sup> In Matthew’s version of the story, in particular, Jesus is led (ἀνήχθη<sup>34</sup>, *anēchthē*) by the Spirit into the wilderness in order to be tempted (πειρασθῆναι<sup>35</sup>, *peirasthēnai*).<sup>36</sup> A similar idea is expressed in Luke’s parallel text,<sup>37</sup> namely, that Jesus was led (ἤγετο<sup>38</sup>, *ēgeto*) by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted (πειραζόμενος<sup>39</sup>) by the devil. J. Fitzmyer expressed it this way: “Clearly, the Spirit is not the source or the origin of the testing or temptation but acts as the divine agent in bringing Jesus into a situation where his filial fidelity is tested.”<sup>40</sup> As Fitzmyer further points out, God subjecting his people to tests, trials, or temptations is, in fact, a theme that runs through many Old Testament passages, the story of Abraham in particular, as already mentioned above.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, what is perhaps even more shocking according to Fitzmyer is that the testing often involved an action on the part of God that was not always good for the people involved, sometimes it was evil. Fitzmyer backs this up with multiple examples, for instance – to mention but one – when God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the lords of Shechem in Judges 9:22-24.<sup>42</sup> But in all these instances, God’s motive was always for “the good” to come out as the

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<sup>31</sup> NICHOLAS FRANKOVICH, “Don’t Over-Spiritualize ‘Temptation’...”

<sup>32</sup> See for instance Mt 4:1, 16:1, 19:3, 22:18.35, 26:41; Mk 14,28; Lk 4: 1-2; 1 Thess 3:5; 1 Tim 6:9, and James 1:12.

<sup>33</sup> On this, see also JOSEPH FITZMYER, “And Lead Us Not into Temptation,” p. 262. The story of Jesus’ temptations is narrated in Mk 1:12-13; Mt 4:1; Lk 4:1-2.

<sup>34</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, aorist indicative passive.

<sup>35</sup> Aorist infinitive passive.

<sup>36</sup> Mt 4:1: “Τότε ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀνήχθη εἰς τὴν ἔρημον ὑπὸ τοῦ Πνεύματος, πειρασθῆναι ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου.”

<sup>37</sup> Lk 4:1-2: “Ἰησοῦς δὲ, πλήρης Πνεύματος Ἁγίου, ὑπέστρεψεν ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἰορδάνου καὶ ἤγετο ἐν τῷ Πνεύματι ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ἡμέρας τεσσαράκοντα πειραζόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου. Καὶ οὐκ ἔφαγεν οὐδὲν ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις, καὶ συντελεσθεισῶν αὐτῶν, ἐπίνασεν.”

<sup>38</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, imperfect indicative middle or passive form of ἄγω (*agō*) which means *to lead into*, *bring* or *carry*.

<sup>39</sup> Nominative masculine singular, present participle middle or passive form of ἀνάγω (*anagō*) which means *to lead up* or *to bring up*. It is not difficult to see that ἄγω and ἀνάγω are cognates.

<sup>40</sup> J. FITZMYER, “And Lead Us Not into Temptation,” p. 262.

<sup>41</sup> Other examples which Fitzmyer gives include: Ex 6:4, 20:20; Deut 8:2-3.16, 13:3; Prov 3:12, and Job 1:8-12.22, 40:8, 42:2.7; and Tob 12:14 (3:17). See J. FITZMYER, “And Lead Us Not into Temptation,” p. 262.

<sup>42</sup> J. FITZMYER, “And Lead Us Not into Temptation,” p. 262 (other examples: 1 Sam 18:10; 2 Sam 24:1; 1 Chr 21:1; Dan 1:1-2; and Is 42:24-25).

victor. So why should it be offensive if God were conceived of as “tempting” or “testing” his people this way?

More recently, Pietro Bovati also probes into the meaning of *peirasmos*, saying that it is better understood and translated as “*trial*”. In Italian, he prefers that it be translated as “*prova*” (a test or trial), thus, his proposed translation of the sixth petition in Italian: “*E non metterci alla prova,*” which in English reads “*And do not put us into the test.*”<sup>43</sup> Commenting on Bovati’s explanation, S. Cielo believes this translation presupposes the idea that, in fact, “...‘putting to the test’ is in the entire Bible that which God does with man, in various moments and in sometimes unfathomable ways, and is what Jesus experienced to the highest degree in the Garden of Olives before the passion, when he prayed in these words: “*My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me!*”<sup>44</sup> This somehow matches Fitzmyer’s findings in his analysis, only that for Bovati the English “temptation” (and presumably its cognates in the Romance languages) is bereft of any positive sense in that in Scriptures it has the **negative meaning** of “*an action directed toward making the other fall by means of seduction or deception.*”<sup>45</sup> It is in this sense that it is also said in Scriptures that “temptation” can never be attributed to God.<sup>46</sup>

Going back, however, to the story of Jesus’ temptations, the action of the Holy Spirit leading Jesus into a situation where he might be “tempted” or “tested” (πειρασθῆναι, *peirasthēnai*) can nary be described as “ill-intentioned” (negative meaning).

Thus, if Frankovich’s and Fitzmyer’s analyses were also to be correct, and taking cognizance of the good sense in which temptation might also be taken to mean and understood, when we ask God “not to lead us into temptation”, this does not necessarily put God in such a bad light, as Pope Francis and those who share his views would like to imagine. Accordingly, why should there be a need to change the translation?

### *The Moral Import of Temptation*

Another way perhaps of dealing with Pope Francis’ objections without having to fiddle with translation is to recognize the *moral import* of temptation, that is, to *value* it for what it truly is. Temptation may indeed be associated with danger and may, by its very nature, make one feel bad or wrong, but it is not the same as sin. In other words, it is not in itself “the sin”. There are scriptural passages that demonstrate this, the best example being the three temptations that

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<sup>43</sup> PIETRO BOVATI, “‘Do not put us to the test’ Reflections on a difficult petition in the Lord’s Prayer,” in *Civiltà Cattolica*, Vol. 2, no. 4 (15 April 2018), pp. 40-53, p. 46.

<sup>44</sup> See SETTIMO CIELO, ‘Pater Noster,’ No Peace. The Battle Begins Among the Translations (see <https://www.catalunyareligio.cat/ca/blog/settimo-ciello/pater-noster-no-peace-battle-begins-among-224666>

<sup>45</sup> PIETRO BOVATI, “‘Do not put us to the test,’” p. 46. This certainly is the meaning of “temptation” when attributed to the devil.

<sup>46</sup> See James 1:12-15. Cfr. PIETRO BOVATI, “‘Do not put us to the test,’” p. 47.

Jesus had to encounter and experience.<sup>47</sup> Jesus did not commit sin while being tempted, much less when he overcame those temptations. He is *without sin* in the first place.<sup>48</sup>

Paul also acknowledged that temptation is very much part of our lives. He recognized that deep within us, there is this principle that keeps inclining us towards sin. He wrote: “*For I take delight in the law of God, in my inner self, but I see in my members another principle at war with the law of my mind, taking me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.*”<sup>49</sup> In other words, we are all tempted even if we take delight in doing good. But that “inclination” even if it may predispose us to sin is not yet sin in itself.

Temptation becomes a sin only when we allow it to get translated into action, whether this be external (e.g., *stealing, lying, etc.*) or internal (e.g., *evil thoughts, greed, hatred, etc.*). In other words, sin occurs the moment we *consent* and yield to temptation and allow it to take root in our hearts and in our actions. On the contrary, temptation is not a sin when we flee from it or if we deal with it in a way that demonstrates our fidelity to the will of God. In this way, temptation can even dispose us towards virtue. Thus, when we say in prayer “lead us not into temptation,” we say this not because temptation is a sin, but only because it can induce us to sin.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, going back to Jesus’ temptations, we observe two movements: *first*, he *was led* by the Spirit to a situation where he might be tempted; *second*, he was actually *tempted* by the devil. While it was certainly wicked for the devil to tempt Jesus because of his malicious intent, was it wrong for the Spirit to lead him to such danger? Clearly, God had a hand in this whole story. With that in mind, why should it put God then in such bad light when we beg him to “*lead us not into temptation?*” Could we ever imagine the Spirit harboring the same malicious intent? Being led into temptation (which is not sin in itself) is one thing, pushing (tempting) us to fall into sin, which is the work of the devil, is quite another. Temptation can elicit both a *virtuous* and a *sinful* response. Thus, being led into temptation is not necessarily being pushed towards this sinful response for the opposite could be true as well, that is, it is a summons to overcome the devil by doing the opposite of what it entices us to do. What is incomprehensible then is to think of God as pushing us towards sin, but not when we think of him as putting (leading) us into such a situation (temptation) where he precisely wants us to fight back and win. “*Lead us not into temptation*” is therefore a plea that God spare us from this situation.

#### *The Way Most of Our Petitions/Prayers Sound*

But why should we ask God to spare us from being tempted by the devil? Need God be told? Need he be reminded? Does he forget? Doesn’t he care? Is he insensitive, indifferent, perhaps even negligent, that we always need to tell him that? Our prayers and petitions would seem to imply all these! It is just the way most of our prayers and petitions sound! Besides that, we

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<sup>47</sup> See footnote 33 above.

<sup>48</sup> Hebrews 4:5: “*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin.*”

<sup>49</sup> Romans 7:22-23.

<sup>50</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 2846-49.

even seem to be urging God, if not commanding him, to do things for us, or to spare us from what we perceive would hurt or harm us or would make our lives difficult. Bovati expressed this so well:

It is nevertheless necessary to note that the very act of turning to God in supplication is marked by elements of ambiguity that are not easily perceived. We must draw attention not only to the ways in which we mistakenly understand these petitions, even if they are held sacrosanct by the one praying them, but also the fact that the invocation is presented as an *imperative* to God, as if the creature were dictating to the Creator how he should behave; as if the Lord needed to be reminded to fulfill his duty.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, going back to the other petitions of the Our Father, why do we ask the Father to “*give us this day our daily bread*”? Doesn’t he do that now? Doesn’t he know we need bread (food) from day to day? Why do we implore him, “*Forgive us our sins*”, is he lacking in forgiveness? Hasn’t he done that yet? Why do we beseech him to “*deliver us from evil*” or “*from the Evil one*”, is he oblivious that we constantly struggle with evil and feel weak against it? All of these sound either like we do not trust God enough or he is not really paying attention to our needs. In some, if not many of our prayers, we even seem to reproach him. We sound very much like Jesus himself when he, as he hung on the cross, made the words of the Psalmist his very own: “*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*” (“*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*”)<sup>52</sup> The Psalmist Jesus echoed even continued on to say, “*Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?*”<sup>53</sup>

And if the Psalmist (and with him Jesus) could “blame” God in such wise, what about Job when he laments?:<sup>54</sup>

<sup>18</sup>With great difficulty I change my clothes,  
the collar of my tunic fits around my waist.  
<sup>19</sup>He has cast me into the mire;  
I have become like dust and ashes.  
<sup>20</sup>I cry to you, but you do not answer me;  
I stand, but you take no notice.  
<sup>21</sup>You have turned into my tormentor,  
and with your strong hand you attack me.  
<sup>22</sup>You raise me up and drive me before the wind;  
I am tossed about by the tempest.  
<sup>23</sup>Indeed I know that you will return me to death  
to the house destined for everyone alive.  
<sup>24</sup>Yet should not a hand be held out  
to help a wretched person in distress?  
<sup>25</sup>Did I not weep for the hardships of others;  
was not my soul grieved for the poor?

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<sup>51</sup> PIETRO BOVATI, “Do not put us to the test,” p. 41.

<sup>52</sup> Ps. 22:1.

<sup>53</sup> Ps. 22: 2-3.

<sup>54</sup> Job 30: 18-25.

That is just the way many of our prayers and petitions sound. It is as if we do not trust God enough. Even the new Italian text *non abbandonarci alla tentazione* is not completely bereft of such tone, for it may also very well express the “fear” that the Father might just abandon us. The same observation applies to the new revised French text *ne nous laisse pas entrer en tentation* and to the new Spanish text *no nos dejes caer en la tentacion*. Why should we say “do not let us enter” or “do not let us fall” ... “into temptation”, both of which are not expressed in the original Greek? Are we afraid God might just do so?

Bovati describes this tone as (seemingly) “offensive and inappropriate”, in the same way that “it might even suggest a lack of faith.”<sup>55</sup> But must it be so? Bovati insightfully suggests that “the only way to justify the utterance of a petition, especially when it is made with such persistence, is to regard it as an *act of faith* in God: to understand it as an expression of a prayerful, progressive discovery of what the Lord wants to give.”<sup>56</sup> The suggestion here is that we may sound “offensive” in our petitions. We might even be echoing a disappointment or discontent, however slightly, but deep within, all we want is simply to express our conviction (act of faith) that God will ultimately do his part. Does not “lead us not into temptation” express just that?

### Conclusion

When Pope Francis expressed his objection against the Italian translation *non ci indurre in tentazione*, he actually ignited once again a debate on an ancient disputed question, that of interpreting the Greek *kai mē eisēnenkēs hēmas eis peirasmon* and St. Jerome’s rendering of this text into *ne inducas nos in tentationem* in Latin. An uproar ensued. But in France and in some Spanish-speaking countries, the question has become moot insofar as the translation of the text in question has already been previously modified even prior to Pope Francis’ comments. The French Church began using *ne nous laisse pas entrer en tentation*, replacing the previous text, *ne nous soumet pas à la tentation*. In some Spanish-speaking countries, the text was modified to read *no nos dejes caer en la tentacion*, in place of “*no nos metas en tentación*”.

It is in the English-speaking countries where the clash of opinions between *retentionists* and *revisionists* has been felt most, and where the debate has raged no end. Yet curiously, Episcopal Conferences in this part of the world have so far resisted changing the present text, preferring instead to keep the traditional text (*ICEL Version 1973*). In the U.S., Wilton Gregory, the Archbishop of Washington who used to chair the USCCB’s Committee on Divine Worship noted at one time that the Pope’s objections only concerned the Italian version of the text of the Our Father. He reported in one interview that during one of their meetings, none of the other bishops intervened during the discussions to suggest that the matter of translation of the disputed text be considered.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> PIETRO BOVATI, “Do not put us to the test,” p. 42.

<sup>56</sup> PIETRO BOVATI, “Do not put us to the test,” p. 42.

<sup>57</sup> See <https://www.thewitnessonline.org/archbishopjackelsmessages/archbishop-addresses-confusion-around-our-father-translation/>.

The English and Welsh Bishops have rejected as well making changes to their versions up until now.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, sometime in 2018, the German bishops in stead of changing their text « *und führe uns nicht in Versuchung* » called for a more adequate catechesis on what the Our Father, particularly the sixth petition, really meant.<sup>59</sup> Most of the resistance to the change is held by those who believe that by tinkering with the translation “... the Pope not only overlooks the many biblical examples where God works with the devil to tempt his followers and even his own son. The new version actually goes against the plain meaning of the Greek of the gospel text”.<sup>60</sup>

Significantly still, the *International Commission on English in the Liturgy* (ICEL) – the commission organized by a number of episcopal conferences of English-speaking countries for the purpose of providing English translations of the liturgical books of the Roman Rite – is seemingly not bent on making changes to the present translation in spite of Pope Francis’ objections. *Patrick Dunn*, Bishop of Auckland (New Zealand), and one of the representatives of ICEL, though finding the Spanish and Italian translations as adoptable in English, announced that the subject of changing the English translation of the sixth petition of the Our Father was not on ICEL’s agenda.<sup>61</sup>

There seems, however, to be a move in the Philippines to change the translation. This was raised during the January 2021 virtual plenary meeting of the bishops. The question however is, is this supposed to be a direct reaction to the Pope’s observations? If so, where is the initiative to change the translation coming from? From the Holy See, particularly from the *Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments*? If so, is there a consultation now going on in the English-speaking countries on the issue? Or is this purely the initiative of the CBCP Episcopal Commission on Liturgy, or of some Filipino bishops and joined in by local liturgists and theologians?

If change is being proposed, what exactly is this change and what is the justification for such a change? What exactly is the issue in question or does this rather involve many other issues as detailed above? Does the change involve going back to the Filipino version, without this being necessarily a reaction to Pope Francis’ insinuations? If so, why go back to it, when the bishops already previously voted for the present text almost overwhelmingly when they approved the English translation of the *Missale Romanum editio typica tertia*?

In any case, issues must be made plain, and arguments must be carefully weighed. One issue concerns the translation of *opheilēmata* (ὀφειλήματα), which St. Jerome translated as *debita*. Other issues have something to do with the interpretation and translation of *eisenenkēs* (*inducas*) and *peirasmon* (*tentationem*). As far as these issues are concerned, the following points need to be taken into consideration:

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<sup>58</sup> See for instance <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/06/led-not-into-temptation-pope-approves-change-to-lords-prayer>. See also <https://novenanews.com/new-our-father-prayer-introduced-in-italy/> (C. DOODY, “Abandon us not to temptation”: new Our Father prayer introduced in Italy).

<sup>59</sup> See <https://www.ncronline.org/news/theology/lords-prayer-germans-stick-wording-italians-change-mass>.

<sup>60</sup> See <https://novenanews.com/new-our-father-prayer-introduced-in-italy/>

<sup>61</sup> See <https://nzcatholic.org.nz/2018/01/25/father-translation-not-icel-agenda-yet/>

1. Translating the original Greek *opheilēmata* (St. Jerome's *debita*) into *debts*, *trespasses* or *sins* actually appears to be a matter of choice or preference, but whatever is preferred, it does not really digress from the meaning of *opheilēmata* as it can mean all of these, depending on the nuance one wishes to focus on or emphasize.
2. There have already been attempts in the (remote) past to reformulate St. Jerome's *ne nos inducas* as translation of the original Greek *mē eisenenkēs hēmas*, namely, *ne nos patiaris induci* (Tertullian); *ne patiaris nos induci* (Cyprian, Ambrose and Augustine); and *non derelinquas nos in temptatione* (Hilary of Poitiers).
3. Regarded as a literal translation of the original Greek *mē eisenenkēs hēmas*, St. Jerome's *ne nos inducas* prevailed over such permissive paraphrases down the centuries.
4. Most recently, to avoid the implication that God, rather than or like Satan, leads people into temptation, some language groups, eventually echoing Pope Francis' views, have reformulated the Latin *ne nos inducas* (*mē eisenenkēs hēmas*) into: *ne nous laisse pas* replacing *ne nous soumet pas entrer* (French); *no nos dejes caer* replacing *no nos metas en tentación* (Spanish); and *non abbandonarci* replacing *non ci indurre* (Italian).
5. The best argument on which Pope Francis' views find a strong anchor is a statement from the Letter of James (1:13) which says, "No one experiencing temptation should say, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God is not subject to temptation to evil, and he himself tempts no one." Here, *peirasmos* (temptation) is understood as solicitation to evil.
6. According to some authors, the translation of *ne nos inducas* need not be changed. Rather, it is *peirasmos* (temptation) which needs to be properly understood, and if need be, retranslated.
  - a) *Temptation* is cognate with *attempt*. As such it literally means a *trial*. Thus, *to tempt* means *to subject one to a trial*. The stories of Paul and Abraham are illustrations of this meaning. (Frankovich)
  - b) The meaning of *temptation* is two-pronged. In a good sense, it means a "test" or "trial" (reflected in the FV and ECCL 1988), thus, a gauge of strength and fidelity of the one being "tested" or "tried". In a bad sense, it means an *attempt* or an *enticement* to get a person into doing something evil. It is the context that will tell whether *temptation* ought to be taken positively or negatively: *positively* when it is God who subjects one to such a "test", but *negatively* when its source is the devil. It is the motive that separates God from the devil: God wants the person being subjected to the test *to succeed*, the devil wants the person he tempts *to fail*. This is best illustrated in the story of Jesus' threefold temptation in the desert.
  - c) That God subjects his people to tests, trials, or temptations is a theme that runs through many Old Testament passages. In these passages, the testing often involved an action on the part of God that was not always good for the people involved, the story of Abraham being a good example. Still, in these instances, God's motive was always for "the good" to come out as the victor. (Fitzmyer)



- d) *Peirasmos* is better understood and translated as “*trial*”. In Italian, it is better translated as “*prova*” (a test or trial); thus, the sixth petition is better expressed in Italian as “*E non metterci alla prova,*” which in English reads “*And do not put us into the test.*” (Bovati)
  - e) Temptation may indeed be associated with danger and may, by its very nature, make one feel bad or wrong, but it is *not the same as sin*. Temptation becomes a sin only when we allow it to get translated into action. Sin occurs the moment we *consent* and yield to temptation. Temptation is not a sin when we flee from it or if we deal with it in a way that demonstrates our fidelity to the will of God. In this way, temptation can even dispose us towards virtue.
7. Most of our prayers and petitions sound offensive and inappropriate. They sound either like we do not trust God enough or he is not really paying attention to our needs. But more than putting God in such a bad light, such prayers and petitions on the contrary constitute “*an act of faith in God ... an expression of a prayerful, progressive discovery of what the Lord wants to give.*” (Bovati) “*Lead us not into temptation*”: rather than implying that God might just *entice (tempt)* us to do something evil, it is rather much more an expression of our profound confidence (an act of faith) that God would not lead us astray!
8. It might be good to remember that the petition *kai mē eisenenkēs hēmas eis peirasmon (et ne nos inducas in tentationem)* is part of the very prayer that Jesus taught us. It is a petition of him who experienced and knew what it was to be **led** by the Spirit into the desert in order to be **tempted** by the devil.

Modifying the translation of the Our Father is a complex matter. The present study is an attempt to show what this complexity is all about. Caution must, therefore, be taken in introducing any change in translation. Bishops who, according to *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, are “*the first steward(s) of the mysteries of God in the particular Church entrusted to (them),*” and who are “*the moderator(s), promoter(s) and guardian(s) of her whole liturgical life,*”<sup>62</sup> must exercise this role with diligence and care. If liturgy is a medium in expressing such divine mysteries, ensuring that these same mysteries are faithfully and adequately captured in liturgical language requires that bishops do their utmost to fulfill this task. Towards this end, what the present study hopes to accomplish is provide the bishops the necessary information that would allow them to make an *informed decision* on the matter of translation of one of the most revered Christian prayers, the prayer that the Lord himself knew so well.

✠ J. ROJAS  
CBCP ECDF Chairman  
24 June 2021

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<sup>62</sup> CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, An Instruction on certain matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist, Vatican, 2004, n. 19.