

2. Introduction to Prayer and Traditions of Prayer

In prayer, we lift our minds and hearts to God. Prayer is a relationship of love with God. Humbly, we seek to know him, and open ourselves completely to his holy will.

Key terms:

Prayer	A relationship of love in which we lift our minds and hearts to God.
Contemplative Prayer	Prayer that consists of an intense time of simply being with God, listening to him.
Devotions	Ways of non-liturgical prayer that express the piety of the people.
Lectio Divina	The prayerfully meditative reading of Sacred Scripture.
Vocal Prayer	Prayer using spoken or sung words, either prepared in advance or spontaneous
Meditative Prayer	The reading of Scripture or spiritual writings, to understand what God is asking and to act as prompted.

What is Prayer?

The most basic definition of prayer is “talking to God.”

Prayer in the Bible:

Prayer can be audible or silent, private or public, formal or informal. All prayer must be offered in faith (James 1:6), in the name of the Lord Jesus (John 16:23), and in the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26).

Prayer is described in the Bible as seeking God’s favour (Exodus 32:11), pouring out one’s soul to the Lord (1 Samuel 1:15), crying out to heaven (2 Chronicles 32:20), drawing near to God (Psalm 73:28, KJV), and kneeling before the Father (Ephesians 3:14).

St. Paul wrote, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6–7). Worry about nothing; pray about everything.

We are told in 1 John 5:14-15 to have confidence when we come to God in prayer, knowing He hears us and will grant whatever we ask as long as it is in His will. Similarly, John 14:13-14 declares, “And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”

Philippians 4:6-7 tells us to pray without being anxious, to pray about everything, and to pray with thankful hearts.

WAYS OF PRAYING

All prayer is a raising of the heart to God, but every believer responds to God's invitation differently, so this raising of the heart can be expressed in many ways.

CONTEMPLATIVE CCC # 2709-19, 2721, 2724

Contemplative prayer is taking time to "find God" in nature or sit quietly in Eucharistic adoration to simply adore God and allow Him to adore you. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us: Contemplative prayer is a simple gaze upon God in silence and love. It is a gift of God, a moment of pure faith during which the one praying seeks Christ, surrenders himself to the loving will of the Father, and places his being under the action of the Holy Spirit.

MEDITATION CCC # 2705-08, 2721, 2723

Meditation is the act of filling one's mind with Scripture, and dwelling on God and all that He offers to humanity. While the word "meditation" in the Bible has three separate definitions, it means to "mutter, speak and ponder" to oneself the words of Scripture so that we are constantly meditating on what God has spoken to us. This produces not only knowledge of the Bible, but also, a heart transformation. In essence, it means to imagine, meditate, utter, speak, study.

The Practice of Lectio Divina. *(As practiced at the end of each session)*

Lectio (Read)

Read a passage of Scripture. Let God's word rest.

Meditatio (Reflect)

Read the passage again, focusing further on the words or phrases you became aware of during the first reading.

Oratio (Respond)

After a third reading, prayer offers the opportunity for a conversation with God.

Contemplatio (Rest)

After the final reading, sit quietly and allow God to work.

VOCAL PRAYER CCC # 2700-04,2721-22

The most common form of prayer is what the Church calls Vocal Prayer. It is praying with your voice, alone or in communion with others.

TYPES OF CHRISTIAN PRAYER

- Worship and Praise
 - Blessing (Numbers 6:24-26).
 - Petition(Matthew 6:11).
 - Thanksgiving(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).
 - Intercession(Genesis 18:16-33 or Numbers 21:7)
-

FORMS OF PRAYER

Liturgy of the Hours

The Angelus

The Rosary

Scripture – Praying the Psalms

Chaplet of Divine Mercy

Devotional Prayers

Rosaries, chaplets, novenas, the Stations of the Cross, the Angelus, grace before meals, the veneration of relics, and sacramentals: all of these are related to devotional prayer. These practices often grow out of a local or cultural interest in and devotion to a particular aspect of Christ's life, of the Blessed Virgin or a special saint, season, or feast of the Church.

Intercessions

Intercessions are prayers of petition in which Christians intercede for the needs of others (e.g. the community, the church, the world, leaders) as well as for themselves.

Introduction to Prayer — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. When I pray, what do I say to God?
What might I do to improve my relationship to God in prayer?
2. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian prayer?
3. How is it different to know about someone and to know someone personally?
Do I pray to God as an acquaintance or as a close friend?
4. Why do we need faith, hope, and love to pray?
5. What places are suitable for prayer?
How can we “pray always” when we lead such busy lives?
6. What usefulness could a weekly hour of Eucharistic adoration serve in my life?
7. How does Mary show us how to pray in the Rosary?

Additional Resources for Personal Prayer

<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/franciscan-spirit-blog/7-easy-tips-for-personal-prayer>

<https://guideposts.org/prayer/how-to-pray/7-best-prayer-tips/>

PRAYER

Pray together Psalm 62 or Psalm 69

or

Gospel Reflection: Twenty Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year A Mt. 22:15-21

Year B Mk. 10:35-45

Year C Lk. 18:1-8

The following format will be used for all Gospel reflections:

- Read the text aloud.
- Pause for a minute's silence.
- Read the text aloud again.
- Ask everyone to pick a word or a phrase that struck them. They just say the word or phrase without comment or discussion.
- Read the text again.
- Ask those present to comment on their word or phrase. What struck them about it? Why/how is it speaking to them?
- Continue with the discussion.

The following questions may be helpful:

What does this mean to me?

How does it make me feel?

Did I find the text disturbing/hopeful/confusing?

What images of God emerge for me?

What do I think that God is saying in this text?

What impact does this have on my life?

Scripture and Catechism Resources

Scripture

Gen. 18:16-33	Abraham intercedes for the righteous people of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.
1Sm 1:1-2,10	Hannah's prayer for a son is answered, and she praises and thanks God.
1Kgs 17:17-24	Elijah asks God to restore a dead boy to life.
Jon 2:3-10	Jonah prays for deliverance and vows thanksgiving if his prayer is answered.
Sir 6:37	Meditation on God's law leads to insight and wisdom
Mt. 6:5-13	Jesus teaches about prayer and gives us the Lord's prayer.
Mt. 7:7-11	Jesus teaches us to petition our Father for good things.
Mt. 21:22	Jesus tells us what we need to petition God with faith.
Mt. 26:36-44	Jesus prays to avoid his Passion and Death, but submits to his Father's will.
Mk. 1:35-38	Jesus prays before setting out on his mission of preaching.
Lk. 6:12-16	Jesus prays before choosing his apostles.
Lk. 6:28	Jesus instructs us to pray to the Father in his name.
Lk. 18:9-14	God hears the humble prayer of the sinner.
Jn. 2:1-10	Mary sees a need and intercedes with her Son to solve the problem.
Jn. 14:13-14	Jesus instructs us to pray to the Father in his name.
Jn. 15:7	Jesus tells us that if we live in him, we can ask him anything and it will be done.
Acts 10:1-48	The conversion of the Gentiles begins with Cornelius, a man of prayer.
Rom 8:26	The Holy Spirit intercedes for us since we do not pray as well as we should.
Phil 4:6	Offer prayers of supplication and thanksgiving in complete trust.
Col 4:2-4	Pray steadfastly, with thanks, and particularly for Paul's mission.
1 Thes 5:16-18	Be always joyful, prayerful and thankful.
Jas 5:16	Pray for each other; the prayer of a holy person is especially effective.
Jas 1:5-8	The word of God must change us and spur us into action.
Rv. 7:9-12	The prayer in Heaven is one of adoration and praise.

Catechism

971	Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.
1174-1178	Liturgy of the Hours.
2586-2589	The significance of the Psalms as both individual and liturgical prayer.
2559-2589	Prayer: what it is, prayer throughout salvation history, the Psalter..
2598-2619	How Jesus prayed, how he teaches us to pray, he hears our prayer, Mary's prayer.
2625-2643	Why we pray.
2650-2660	The will to pray; learning how to pray from the Holy Spirit and the Church.
2663-2679	We pray in Jesus' name, guided by the Holy Spirit, in communion with Mary.
2697-2719	Kinds of prayer.