

RCIA: INQUIRY SESSION TWO

INTRODUCTION TO PRAYER

Week: 10/10/22 - 16/10/22

What is Prayer?

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

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.

Some believe that if we do not say exactly the right things, or pray in the right position, God will not hear and answer our prayer. This is completely unbiblical. God does not answer our prayers based on when we pray, where we are, what position our body is in, or in what order we word our prayers. 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. God will answer all such prayers

with the gift of His peace in our hearts. The proper way to pray is to pour out our hearts to God, being honest and open with God, as He already knows us better than we know ourselves. We are to present our requests to God, keeping in mind that God knows what is best and will not grant a request that is not His will for us. We are to express our love, gratitude, and worship to God in prayer without worrying about having just the right words to say. God is more interested in the content of our hearts than the eloquence of our words.

The closest the Bible comes to giving a “pattern” for prayer is the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13.

Prayer in the Hebrew Bible is an evolving means of interacting with God, most frequently through a spontaneous, individual, unorganized form of petitioning and/or thanking.

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. Christian Tradition has particularly recognized three primary expressions of prayer: vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplation (CCC # 2699).

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.

Explain the Practice of *Lectio Divina*.

Lectio (Read)

Read a passage of Scripture. Let God's word rest. Listen carefully for any words or phrases that seem to jump out. It's important not to force things, but wait patiently for God to give gentle guidance.

Meditatio (Reflect)

Read the passage again, focusing further on the words or phrases you became aware of during the first reading. Try not to analyse the passage. It's easy to slip into "study mode" and think about interesting points rather than listening to what God might be saying.

Oratio (Respond)

After a third reading, it's time to respond. We can respond in prayer too which offers the opportunity for a conversation with God.

Contemplatio (Rest)

After the final reading, spend around 10 minutes in silent contemplation. This isn't a time of prayer or meditation — just sit quietly and allow God to work.

There are many sources of inspiration to help develop the practice of *Lectio Divina*. It's important to remember that *Lectio Divina* is not an end in itself, it helps us hear specifically and individually from God through Scripture, guided by the Holy Spirit, and deepens our relationship with Him.

VOCAL PRAYER CCC # 2700-04,2721-22

The most common form of prayer is what the Church calls Vocal Prayer. It is literally praying with your voice, alone or in communion with others. The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes vocal prayer: "Vocal prayer associates the body with the interior prayer of the heart. Even the most interior prayer, however, cannot dispense with vocal prayer. In any case, it

must always spring from a personal faith. With the Our Father Jesus has taught us a perfect form of vocal prayer.”

Vocal prayer is made using some approved form of words which are read or recited. (See below)

TYPES OF CHRISTIAN PRAYER

- Worship and Praise
- Blessing
- Petition
- Thanksgiving
- Intercession

Prayer as Worship and Praise

Worship happens any time we turn to God and recognize him for who he is and praise him for what he has done. We can worship God through song, through service, and through prayer.

Prayer as Blessing

Throughout the Bible, we come across prayers of blessing. For example, before Jacob died, he gathered his sons around him and he blessed each of them with a prayer. When God led the Israelites out of Egypt, he told Aaron, the priest, to “bless the sons of Israel.” Then, he gave him a famous prayer that has been used by countless Jewish and Christian believers: “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace” (Numbers 6:24-26). Blessing prayers are focused on asking for God’s blessing to cover the lives of others.

Prayer as Petition

Petitionary prayer is the kind of prayer Jesus meant when he encouraged his disciples to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). Jesus encouraged his disciples to petition God when they were in need.

Prayer as Thanksgiving

Nearly every time God acts, his people respond with prayer. The Israelites give thanks through prayer after they're delivered from Egypt. The Psalms are filled with prayer-songs of thanksgiving. And Paul opens up nearly every one of his New Testament letters with a thanksgiving for what God has done in the life of his people.

Prayers of thanksgiving are prayers we pray in order to give thanks either for what God has done or simply for who he is. Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians says, "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Prayer as Intercession

Intercessory prayer is prayer for the needs of others. Some of the best examples of intercessory prayer can be found in Genesis 18:16-33 or Numbers 21:7.

FORMS OF PRAYER

Liturgy of the Hours

The Liturgy of the Hours forms the official set of prayers marking the hours of each day and sanctifying the day with prayer. The Liturgy of the Hours consists primarily of psalms supplemented by hymns, readings, and other prayers and antiphons prayed at fixed prayer times. Together with the Mass, it constitutes the public prayer of the Church.

The Angelus

Traditionally recited at 6:00 a.m., noon, and 6:00 p.m., the Angelus can be incorporated into your pilgrimage journey if you are traveling near those hours. This prayer can be used at other times to invoke the protection of the Blessed Mother.

V/. The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary,

R/. And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary...

V/. Behold the handmaid of the Lord,

R/. Be it done unto me according to your Word.

Hail Mary...

V/. And the Word was made flesh,

R/. And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary...

V/. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God,

R/. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray.

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts:

that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son

was made known by the message of an Angel,

may by his Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of his Resurrection.

Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Rosary

The Rosary is a Scripture-based prayer. It begins with the Apostles' Creed, which summarizes the great mysteries of the Catholic faith. The Our Father, which introduces each mystery, is from the Gospels. The first part of the Hail Mary is the angel's words announcing Christ's birth and Elizabeth's greeting to Mary. St. Pius V officially added the second part of the Hail Mary. The Mysteries of the Rosary centre on the events of Christ's life. There are four sets of Mysteries: Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious and—added by Saint John Paul II in 2002—the Luminous. The four sets of mysteries might be prayed on the following days: the Joyful Mysteries on Monday and Saturday, the Sorrowful Mysteries on Tuesday and Friday, the Glorious Mysteries on Wednesday and Sunday, and the Luminous Mysteries on Thursday.

THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES

The Annunciation

Mary learns that she has been chosen to be the mother of Jesus.

The Visitation

Mary visits Elizabeth, who tells her that she will always be remembered.

The Nativity

Jesus is born in a stable in Bethlehem.

The Presentation

Mary and Joseph take the infant Jesus to the Temple to present him to God.

The Finding of Jesus in the Temple

Jesus is found in the Temple discussing his faith with the teachers.

THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

The Agony in the Garden

Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night before he dies.

The Scourging at the Pillar

Jesus is lashed with whips.

The Crowning With Thorns

Jesus is mocked and crowned with thorns.

The Carrying of the Cross

Jesus carries the cross that will be used to crucify him.

The Crucifixion

Jesus is nailed to the cross and dies.

THE MYSTERIES OF LIGHT

The Baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan

God proclaims that Jesus is his beloved Son.

The Wedding Feast at Cana

At Mary's request, Jesus performs his first miracle.

The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God

Jesus calls all to conversion and service to the Kingdom.

The Transfiguration of Jesus

Jesus is revealed in glory to Peter, James, and John.

The Institution of the Eucharist

Jesus offers his Body and Blood at the Last Supper.

THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

The Resurrection

God the Father raises Jesus from the dead.

The Ascension

Jesus returns to his Father in heaven.

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit comes to bring new life to the disciples.

The Assumption of Mary

At the end of her life on earth, Mary is taken body and soul into heaven.

The Coronation of Mary

Mary is crowned as Queen of Heaven and Earth.

PRAYING THE ROSARY

Make the Sign of the Cross.

Holding the Crucifix, say the Apostles' Creed.

On the first bead, say an Our Father.

Say one Hail Mary on each of the next three beads.

Say the Glory Be

For each of the five decades, announce the Mystery (perhaps followed by a brief reading from Scripture) then say the Our Father.

While fingering each of the ten beads of the decade, next say ten Hail Marys while meditating on the Mystery. Then say a Glory Be.

(After finishing each decade, some say the following prayer requested by the Blessed Virgin Mary at Fatima: O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell; lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who have most need of your mercy.)

After saying the five decades, say the Hail, Holy Queen, followed by this dialogue and prayer:

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Scripture – Praying the Psalms

The Psalms are Spirit-inspired words, given us by God to speak about God and to God. The psalms express our personal walk with God.

In praying the psalms, we pray as Jesus prayed. The Psalms express the experience, the sufferings, the faith of Jesus of Nazareth in his fully human nature during his life on earth.

Praying with the Psalms can help Christians become fluent in the language of prayer, encouraging us to pray. Based on the life and words of David, the Psalms provide insightful reflections on depression, anger, frustration, fear, and insecurity, as well as joy exhilaration, gratitude, triumph, and gladness. Praying with the Psalms offers daily readings to guide us in expressing to God the wide range of human emotions. Through this enriched communication with God, we are led to a deeper understanding of God's will.

Chaplet of Divine Mercy

The Chaplet of Divine Mercy is based on the apparitions of Jesus reported by Sr. Faustina Kowalska (1905–1938). She was a Polish religious sister of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy and canonized as a Catholic saint in 2000. St. Faustina said she received the prayer through visions and conversations with Jesus, who made specific promises regarding the recitation of the prayers.

It is recited using rosary beads while reciting specific prayers:

On the large single beads:

Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your Dearly Beloved Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.

On each of the ten beads:

For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world

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.

One can engage in devotional prayer on their own or with a group. In many parishes, there are groups who remain in the church after Mass each day to pray the Rosary, a chaplet, or a novena.

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.

Resources

Tips 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/>

CCC # 2625-2846

GOSPEL READING

Sunday 16/10/22 is the Twenty Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C) and the Gospel reading is Lk. 18:1-8.

Reader: The Lord be with you.

Response: And with your spirit.

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Response: Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus told his disciples a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary. He said, "There was a judge in a certain town who neither feared God nor respected any human being. And a widow in that town used to come to him and say, 'Render a just decision for me against my adversary.' For a long time the judge was unwilling, but eventually he thought, 'While it is true that I neither fear God nor respect any human being, because

this widow keeps bothering me I shall deliver a just decision for her lest she finally come and strike me.'" The Lord said, "Pay attention to what the dishonest judge says. Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night? Will he be slow to answer them? I tell you, he will see to it that justice is done for them speedily. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

Response: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

- 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?