

Prayer

He (Jesus) would withdraw to deserted places to pray

(Luke 5:16 NABRE)

Pray without ceasing.

(1 Thes. 5:17)

But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

(Luke 5:16)

Hear my cry, O God, listen to my *prayer*!

(Ps 61:2)

Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in *prayer*.

(Rom. 12:12)

The name of Jesus is at the heart of Christian prayer.

(Catechism of the Catholic Church 435)

The Church's living faith finds its expression in the rule of baptismal faith, formulated in the preaching, catechesis, and prayer of the Church.

(Catechism of the Catholic Church 249)

Prayer is the primary way we communicate with God. God first communicates with us; then we respond to God's call. Once God calls us He gives us the grace to respond in prayer so that we can communicate spiritually with Him. In order to use the gift of prayer effectively we have to open our hearts and minds to God. This is a learning process because we are accustomed to dealing mainly with physical things; possessions, pleasure, money, etc. We have to practice at praying in the same way we practice at a sport, or an instrument. And since practice makes perfect, if we practice at prayer we will definitely get better at it. St. Paul tells us in Thessalonians, "**Pray without ceasing.**" (1 Thes 5:17)

With prayer we start as infants and God helps us to grow through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. When we were children we did not start speaking in sentences all at once. We learned one words, then two words, then phrases, then sentences, and then we tried to outsmart our parents. We have to do the same with prayer. Sometimes when we get proficient at prayer we even try to outsmart God.

We are God's children but we cannot communicate with God at His level. However, He will always give us the grace to open our hearts and minds to Him in prayer. Jesus prayed always, and prayed fervently especially whenever he was faced with a major trial; "**but he would withdraw to deserted places to pray.**" (Lk 5:16)

Jesus, the Son of God, when he experienced agony in the garden before his arrest, scourging, and crucifixion, prayed fervently.

Then going out he went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. When he arrived at the place he said to them, "Pray that you may not undergo the test." After withdrawing about a stone's throw from them and kneeling, he prayed, saying, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done." [And to strengthen him an angel from heaven appeared to him. He was in such agony and he prayed so fervently that his sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground.] (Lk 22:39-43)

Jesus gave us the best examples of when to pray and how to pray. He taught us the "Our Father" which is considered the most perfect prayer. However, its perfection is in living the Lord's Prayer, not just reciting the Lord's Prayer.

In prayer we should be alone with God and nothing should be hidden from God. God knows what is in our minds and hearts so what's the point of trying to deceive God? Come before God in honesty, humility, and with the attitude of a child. If God is Our Father, then we must be His children so we should act like obedient children in His presence.

Prayer should be simple. God knows what's best for us and what we need. Jesus tells us, "**Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.**" (Mt 6:8). If we believe Jesus, what is the point in trying to tell God what we believe our needs to be? Thank God for all of His blessings, offer up prayers for those in need; troubled, sick, and dying. Pray as we are prompted to pray. Then LISTEN! The Psalmist tells us, "**Be still and know that I am God!**" (Ps 46:11) Be still, quiet your heart and mind as much as you can. It will be difficult but try. Be constant and persistent in unselfish prayer.

There are two main ways that we pray; Vocal Prayer and Mental Prayer. **Vocal Prayer** has a set form and can be said aloud or in silence. Examples of vocal prayer are The Our Father, The Hail Mary, and The Jesus Prayer (Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner). **Mental Prayer** has no set form and can also be said aloud or in silence. We could keep quiet in God's presence or we could pray in an informal and spontaneous way, -----whatever comes to our heart. We could also follow some pattern, for example, thanks giving, adoration, supplication, and petition.

We should read and meditate on Sacred Scripture as a foundational method of prayer. All Sacred Scripture is inspired by God and contains what God wants us to hear. Studying Scripture does more than enhance an individual's understanding of the Bible; it allows us to share our informed interpretations and viewpoints. And we can be assured that the Holy Spirit will guide us when we share our understanding of Scripture. Jesus tells us, "***For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.***" (Mt 18:20)

Roman Catholics believe that the Eucharist is the real presence of Jesus Christ. Eucharistic Adoration is the worship, praise, and adoration of Jesus Christ present in the Holy Eucharist. The Eucharist is displayed in a special holder called a monstrance, and people come to pray and worship Jesus continually throughout the day and often the night. Christ loves us without limit, and offers Himself to us in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. Eucharistic adoration is a way for us to give Jesus love and worship in return.

Prayer can be private or public. We can pray alone or with others. We pray together as parish communities at Mass/Service, and we should pray as families. It can be formal or spontaneous. Each person can develop his or her own style, routine, and rhythm of prayer. There are many types of prayer but all prayer should center on the living God, not asking for things we want, but on trying to discern God's will for us

Prayer is an essential component of being a Christian. Prayer helps us to listen to God. It helps us to know God intimately. It increases our faith. Prayer helps us form a sense of security and a deeper awareness of our dependence on God. It helps us to hear and understand God's will for us. Prayer helps us to be obedient to God's will so that He can use us to help others or save others. It helps us to live in this world but not be of this world. Prayer helps us to love as Jesus loves us.