

Lesson 10

Prayer

If you want to get to know someone, what must you do? First, we must spend time with that person. Second, we must have conversations with them. As we know, there are two parts to any conversation: speaking and listening. If either of these two parts are missing, then a one-sided conversation is developed. If we want to get to know God better and to understand what His will is for us, then we must be willing to spend time with Him in prayer.

Prayer is communication with God. Prayer is a dialogue with God in which we must speak and listen. Through prayer, we develop and deepen our relationship with God. Through prayer, we are able to cope with the situations in our lives, no matter how difficult they may be. Through prayer, we begin to understand what God's will is for us and how we can grow in holiness while becoming the people God wants us to be.



Prayer is an essential part of our daily spiritual life. Jesus always prayed to the Father before he did anything. If prayer is important to Jesus, then it should also be important to us. Prayer gives us the strength, courage, grace, and guidance to live our lives to the fullest.

There are **four main types of prayer** which can be remembered simply by referring to the acronym word "**ACTS**":

1. **A**doration: Prayer that acknowledges God as God; prayers that give praise to God.
2. **C**ontrition: Prayer that acknowledges that we are sinners in need of God's mercy; prayers that express sorrow for our shortcomings.
3. **T**hanksgiving: Prayers that acknowledge God's many gifts to us; prayers that give thanks to God.
4. **S**upplication: Prayer that acknowledges our need for God's help; prayers that ask God to grant a request.

Prayer involves turning our heart to God. When a person prays, he enters into a living relationship with God. Prayer is the great gate leading into faith. Someone who prays no longer lives on his own, for himself, and by his own strength because he knows there is a God to whom he can talk. People who pray entrust themselves more and more to God.

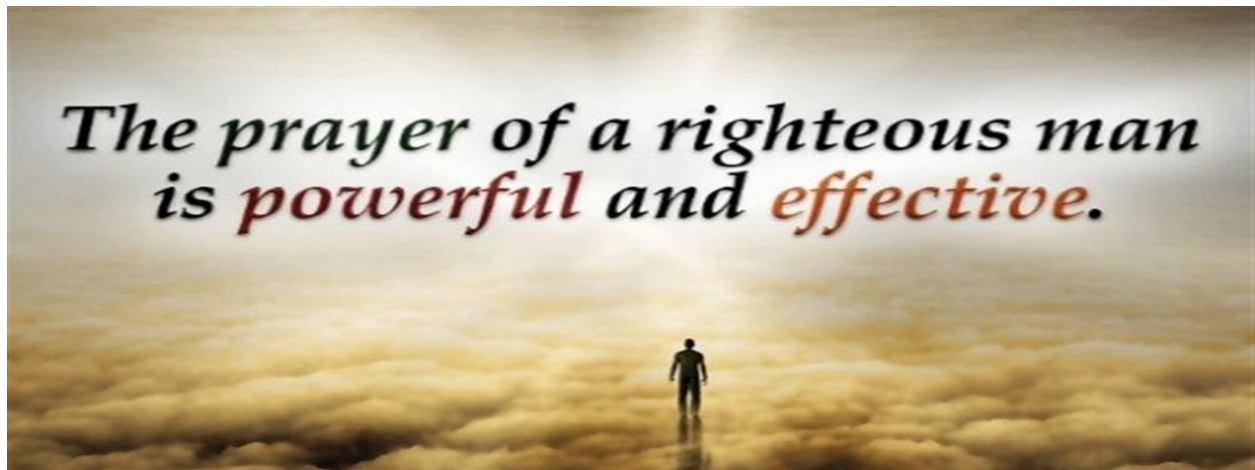
There are many different ways to pray. There is no wrong way to pray, but practice makes perfect. The key to a healthy prayer life is to set aside a standard time for prayer each day. Prayer is conversation with God. The more we talk and listen to God the more we grow to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him. Prayer is to the spiritual life what air is to our physical life. Without air we cannot live; without prayer, we spiritually die.



Why should we pray?

There are several reasons why we need to pray, but the main ones are listed below:

1. We need God's help.
2. We should give God the thanks and praise that He deserves.
3. We need to understand what God's will is for us.
4. We greatly benefit from our time with God.
5. We can focus on what is truly important in life which is our relationship with God.
6. We can assist others with our prayers.



Styles of Prayer

There is no wrong way to pray. However, most people get comfortable with one or two styles of prayer. The key to a successful prayer life is not found in which styles you decide to use but rather in setting aside a time for prayer that works for you.

The various styles of prayer are:

1. Formal Prayer

These are standard prayers that are written out and recited, such as the "Our Father" and the "Hail Mary."

2. Meditation

Reflective prayer. It is that form of mental prayer in which the mind, in God's presence, thinks about God and heavenly things.

3. Silence

Time spent in quite listening to God with the ear of your heart.

4. Eucharistic Adoration

Sitting in the presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

5. Reading Sacred Scripture

Taking time to read from the Bible and reflecting on what God might be saying to you.

6. Lectio Divina (*Latin expression meaning "Divine Reading"*)

Taking a portion of the Scriptures, reading it thoroughly, then placing yourself in the story as one of the characters, and reflecting on what God might be telling you through that character.

7. Open Conversation from the Heart

Talking to God using your own words to express yourself.

8. Breviary

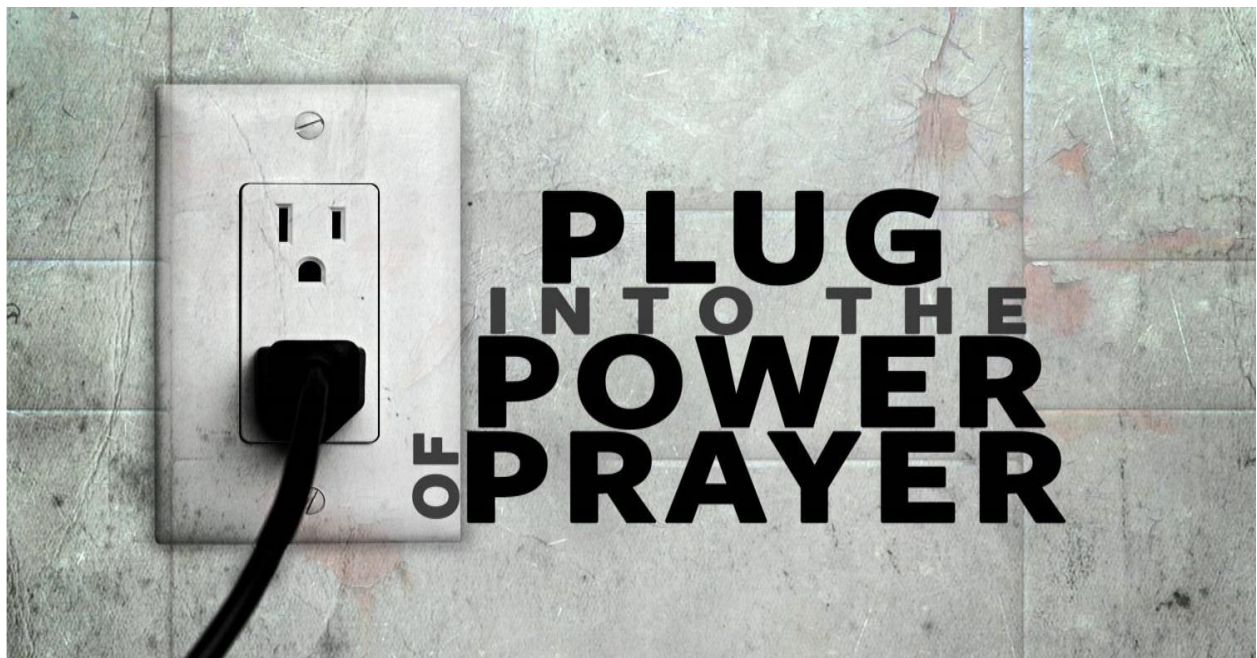
Book of Prayers that are recited five times throughout the day. Deacons, Priests, and Bishops are required to say these prayers daily. The Laity (*people who have not received the sacrament of Holy Orders*) are invited to say these prayers as well.

9. Work

Our work can be prayer when we dedicate it (*or a portion of it*) for the intention of someone and/or something.

10. Devotions

Catholic devotions have various forms, ranging from formalized, multi-day prayers such as novenas to activities which do not involve any prayers, such as the wearing of scapulars and the veneration of the saints. The Rosary is the most popular devotion in the Church.



The Our Father

*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.
Amen.*

The most popular prayer is the “Our Father.” It is also known as “The Lord’s Prayer” since Jesus taught it to us. The Our Father prayer is comprised of seven petitions. Like the Ten Commandments, these seven petitions are divided into two parts. The first three petitions lead us toward God and they are identified by the word “[thy](#).” The first three petitions are:

1. [Hallowed be thy name](#)

This petition allows us to recognize the power and holiness of God’s Name.

2. [Thy kingdom come](#)

This petition allows the Church to look forward to Christ’s final coming and the growth of his kingdom on earth.

3. [Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven](#)

This petition unites our will to that of the Son to fulfill God’s plan of salvation for us.

The final four petitions of the Our Father prayer offer up our expectations and focus on the mercy of God. These petitions sum up our wants to God and they are identified by the use of the word “us.” These four petitions are as follows:

1. Give us this day our daily bread

This petition asks God to meet our earthly and spiritual needs each day.

2. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us

This petition asks God for His mercy through forgiveness. It reminds us of our duty to forgive others for their offenses since God forgives us so generously.

3. And lead us not into temptation

This petition asks God to help us avoid the paths that will lead us to sin.

4. But deliver us from evil

In this petition, we pray to God with the Church to show forth the victory already won by Christ over Satan.

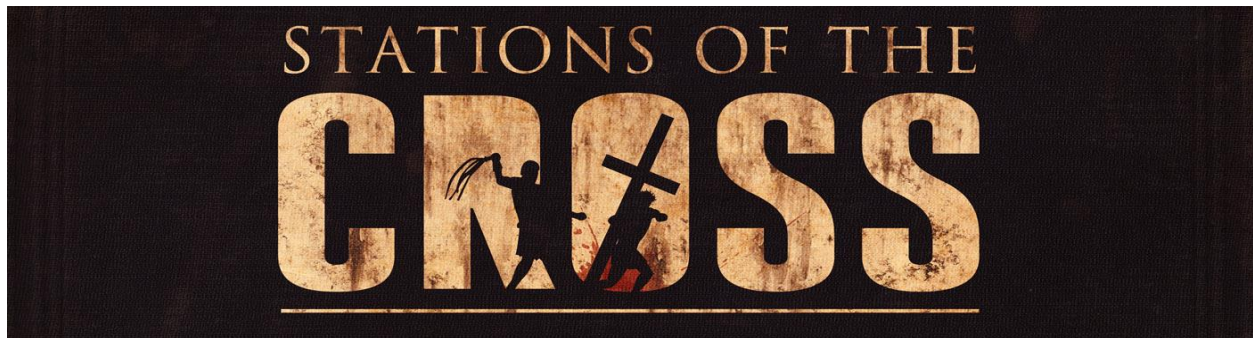
All prayers end with the word “**Amen**.” Amen means “*so be it*” or “*I believe*.” Therefore, it is an expression of our faith. What we pray is what we believe. By saying “Amen” we are in essence making a verbal contract with God because we are agreeing with everything stated.

The second most popular prayer is the “Hail Mary” (*See Lesson 4 for the teaching on this prayer*).

Devotions

Catholic devotions are particular customs, rituals, and practices of worship of God or honor of the saints which are in addition to the liturgy of the Catholic Church. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops describes devotions as “expressions of love and fidelity that arise from the intersection of one's own faith, culture and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” Catholic devotions have various forms, ranging from formalized, multi-day prayers such as novenas (*nine days of prayer*) to activities which do not involve any prayers, such as Eucharistic adoration, the wearing of scapulars, and the veneration of the saints. Common examples of Catholic devotions include the Rosary, the Stations of the Cross, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, scapulars, the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Seven Sorrows of Mary, novenas to various saints, pilgrimages, devotions to the Blessed Sacrament, and the veneration of saintly images.

The Rosary is the most popular devotion in the Catholic faith (*See Lesson 4 for the teaching on the Rosary*). Eucharistic adoration and novenas are also very popular among the faithful.



Another popular devotion is the Stations (*or Way*) of the Cross. This is especially popular on Fridays during the Lenten Season. Lent is the 40-day period of preparation for the celebration of Easter. Lent is a time to focus on the sufferings of our Lord. The Stations of the Cross provide a great summary of the events that took place on Good Friday (*the day our Lord died on the Cross*). Some of the stations are not found in Scripture, but are rooted in Tradition.

There are many different ways to pray the Stations of the Cross. The standard way is to pray this devotion in a group. A priest or deacon usually introduces each station and recites a brief meditation followed by the crowd praying the second portion of the reflection. There are 14 Stations which provide a reflective journey with the Lord as he makes the ultimate sacrifice for humanity. The 14 Stations of the Cross are as follows:

Station 1: Jesus is condemned to death

Station 2: Jesus takes up his Cross

Station 3: Jesus falls for the first time

Station 4: The Virgin Mary meets Jesus

Station 5: Simon of Cyrene is made to help Jesus bear the Cross

Station 6: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Station 7: Jesus falls for the second time

Station 8: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

Station 9: Jesus falls for the third time

Station 10: Jesus is stripped of his garments

Station 11: Jesus is crucified

Station 12: Jesus dies on the Cross

Station 13: Jesus is taken down from the Cross

Station 14: Jesus is laid in the tomb

Sacramentals

Sacramentals are sacred signs instituted by the Church and they prepare us to receive the fruits of the sacraments. They also sanctify various circumstances of our lives. In other words, Sacramentals are sacred signs that bring us closer to God's grace and they help us develop an attitude of prayer, faith, holiness, and devotion.

The word "Sacramental" means "little sacrament." Sacramentals help us to grow in faith and thus increase our love for the sacraments of the Church. They are things set apart and blessed by the Church to excite good thoughts and to increase devotion in those who see and/or use them. The use of sacramentals is like working out with weights, the more we use them the stronger our faith becomes. However, sacramentals are not magic; they are not good luck charms. The purpose of sacramentals is to provide an occasion for a deeper relationship with God.

There are two types or classes of sacramentals: holy actions and holy objects. **Holy Actions** are things we can do. Some examples are: making the sign of the cross, praying, genuflecting, bowing, or a blessing. **Holy Objects** are blessed items such as: rosaries, scapulars, religious medals, crucifixes, bibles, ashes, palms, oils, candles, statues, holy water, and incense.

Below is a list of the most common sacramentals.

Types of sacramentals

- Exorcism
- Holy Water
- Rosaries
- Candles
- Icons
- Holy images
- Holy vessels
- Incense
- Relics
- Blessed Palms
- Bibles
- Scapulars
- Medals
- Crosses
- Bow
- Bells
- Genuflection
- Prayers