

# Content of Prayer

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## **Bible Study at a Glance:**

The content of our prayer should be more than a wishlist of wants. The Catechism describes five types of content that should be part of our regular prayer lives: Blessing/Adoration, Petition, Intercession, Thanksgiving and Praise. While there is inevitably overlap in these areas, it is worthwhile to understand the meaning behind each of them.

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*(Explain to the Group) = You don't have to read this word for word, but this is the general idea of what to explain before moving on.*

- **Q: These are questions to ask the whole group**
  - ◻ *A: Hopefully the group arrives at most of the answers on their own, but if they don't, redirect the discussion towards these answers, and be sure to tell the group the answers if no one quite got it.*

*CCC/Verses and quotes to read out loud are in boxes.*

*(Explain to the group) The Catechism identifies five types of content for our prayers. For those interested, these can be found in Part four>Section one>Chapter one>Article three of the Catechism. Let's read excerpts from the Catechism describing each of these.*

### ***I. Blessing and Adoration***

**CCC 2626:** *Blessing expresses the basic movement of Christian prayer: it is an encounter between God and man. In blessing, God's gift and man's acceptance of it are united in dialogue with each other. The prayer of blessing is man's response to God's gifts: because God blesses, the human heart can in return bless the One who is the source of every blessing.*

**CCC 2628:** *Adoration is the first attitude of man acknowledging that he is a creature before his Creator... Adoration is homage of the spirit to the "King of Glory," respectful silence in the presence of the "ever greater" God.*

### ***II. Prayer of Petition***

**CCC 2631:** *The first movement of the prayer of petition is asking forgiveness, like the tax collector in the parable: "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" It is a prerequisite for righteous and pure prayer.*

**CCC 2632:** *There is a hierarchy in these petitions: we pray first for the Kingdom, then for what is necessary to welcome it and cooperate with its coming.*

**CCC 2633:** *When we share in God's saving love, we understand that every need can become the object of petition. Christ, who assumed all things in order to redeem all things, is glorified by what we ask the Father in his name. It is with this confidence that St. James and St. Paul exhort us to pray at all times.*

### **III. Prayer of Intercession**

**CCC 2635:** *Since Abraham, intercession - asking on behalf of another has been characteristic of a heart attuned to God's mercy ... In intercession, he who prays looks "not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others," even to the point of praying for those who do him harm.*

### **IV. Prayer of Thanksgiving**

**CCC 2638:** *As in the prayer of petition, every event and need can become an offering of thanksgiving. The letters of St. Paul often begin and end with thanksgiving, and the Lord Jesus is always present in it: "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you"; "Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving."*

### **V. Prayer of Praise**

**CCC 2639:** *Praise is the form of prayer which recognizes most immediately that God is God. It lauds God for his own sake and gives him glory, quite beyond what he does, but simply because HE IS. It shares in the blessed happiness of the pure of heart who love God in faith before seeing him in glory.*

- Q: Which of these do you tend to spend the most time in when you pray?
- Q: What do you think is meant in CCC 2632 about praying for the Kingdom?
  - A: *It is to pray for God's kingship over us, his will in our lives and in the world, etc. Examples of this can be to pray for faith, wisdom, humility, patience, etc. It may be praying for an enemy or for the grace to forgive them. Anything that increases our closeness to God and makes us more like him. For additional context, have the group read this passage from Matthew:*

**Matthew 6:31-33:** *So do not worry and say, 'What are we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear?' All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides*

- Q: Does praying for the kingdom preclude us from praying for specific things for ourselves?
  - A: *No, it's perfectly fine and God wants to hear what's on our mind. But we should prioritize praying for God's kingdom in our lives. This is in keeping with the hierarchy referred to in CCC 2632.*
- Q: Does the idea of us blessing the Lord feel odd or natural?
  - A: *There is no right answer. After people have shared some thoughts, direct them to Psalm 193 for an example of man blessing God.*
- Q: What do you think the difference is between asking God's forgiveness in our daily prayers as it says in CCC 2631, and going to confession?
  - A: *They are not mutually exclusive. We should do both. CCC 2631 is saying to embrace an attitude of repentance on a regular basis and seek God's forgiveness when we pray. We shouldn't wait for confession to repent of our sins.*
- Q: According to CCC 2633, God is glorified by what we ask of him when we pray. What might be some things we pray for that glorify or not glorify him?

- Q: have you had experience giving thanks in “all circumstances” as it says in CCC 2638 that have been particularly meaningful or helpful to you?
  - o *A: Often in times of hardship, it is especially helpful to give thanks to God despite the difficulties. This helps us to maintain a humble attitude before God, not allowing ourselves to fall into a sense of entitlement. It also reminds us how God is there with us in the midst of our sufferings when we reflect on the grace he’s giving us to endure.*