

Walking with God - Prayer

Bible Study at a Glance:

Prayer is how we relate to God. It is what makes up our personal relationship with our creator. Prayer can take on several forms, but in all cases, it must be from the heart. Through prayer, we nurture our communion with Christ, and through him, with the Holy Trinity.

- **Q: What would you say is prayer?**
 - *A: Allow open discussion and let people say whatever they think*

(Explain to the Group) *Let's take a look at what the Catechism says prayer is.*

CCC 2558: *This mystery [of faith], then, requires that the faithful believe in it, that they celebrate it, and that they live from it in a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God. This relationship is prayer.*

(Explain to the Group) You can see the emphasis on the idea that prayer is our personal relationship with God. There are many ways we can respond to God in prayer. Let's read what the Catechism says about forms of prayer.

CCC 2565: *In the New Covenant, prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their Father who is good beyond measure, with his Son Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit. The grace of the Kingdom is "the union of the entire holy and royal Trinity . . . with the whole human spirit." Thus, the life of prayer is the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God and in communion with him. This communion of life is always possible because through Baptism, we have already been united with Christ. Prayer is Christian insofar as it is communion with Christ and extends throughout the Church, which is his Body. its dimensions are those of Christ's love.*

(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.

CCC 2699: *The Lord leads all persons by paths and in ways pleasing to him, and each believer responds according to his heart's resolve and the personal expressions of his prayer. However, Christian Tradition has retained three major expressions of prayer: vocal, meditative, and contemplative. They have one basic trait in common: composure of heart. This vigilance in keeping the Word and dwelling in the presence of God makes these three expressions intense times in the life of prayer.*

The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, starting at paragraph 569

(Note, the Compendium is a summary of the Catechism):

569. *How can vocal prayer be described?*

CCC 2700-2704 and 2722

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.

570. *What is meditation?*

CCC 2705-2708 and 2723

Meditation is a prayerful reflection that begins above all in the Word of God in the Bible. Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion and desire in order to deepen our faith, convert our heart and fortify our will to follow Christ. It is a first step toward the union of love with our Lord.

571. *What is contemplative prayer?*

CCC 2709-2719, 2724 and 2739-2741

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. Saint Teresa of Avila defines contemplative prayer as the intimate sharing of friendship, "in which time is frequently taken to be alone with God who we know loves us."

(Explain to the Group) Jesus prayed often. Let's look at how Jesus modeled prayer for us.

Matthew 14:23: *After doing so, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When it was evening he was there alone.*

Luke 5:15-16: *The report about him spread all the more, and great crowds assembled to listen to him and to be cured of their ailments, but he would withdraw to deserted places to pray.*

(Explain to the Group) Lastly, a common question is how often are we supposed to pray. Let's see what St. Paul said about prayer.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: *Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.*

- **Q: How do you pray? How often? What works for you?**
- **Q: Did anything from the passages we read stand out to you, or hit you in a special way?**
- **Q: Does prayer feel like a personal relationship with God to you as the Catechism says? How so, or if not, why do you think that is?**
- **Q: If God already knows everything, including what we're about to pray for, why do you think he wants us to still pray?**
 - *A: So that we may engage in a relationship with God. As CCC 2558 says, that relationship is prayer.*
- **Q: Looking at the two Gospel passages about Jesus praying, what commonalities do you see between those two verses?**
 - *A: He would go off somewhere alone, solitude is an important aspect of personal prayer.*

- **Q: In the verse from Thessalonians, St. Paul talks about praying “without ceasing”.
What does that look like in your prayer life?**