



INTERIOR LIFE: PRAYER

Prayer takes many forms. The greatest prayer is the Holy Mass when we join our hearts and souls to the complete self-giving of the Son to the Father in the Paschal Mystery. Devotional prayer, such as the Rosary, novenas, intercession to the saints, nourishes our spirits. We speak to God in prayer, asking for forgiveness, praising and thanking Him, seeking help and blessings on our special intentions.

Prayer is the ultimate human action by which we seek union with God through conversation, meditation, and contemplation.

Lectio Divina is an ancient prayer practice of focused meditation on the Scriptures. Find a quiet place, open your Bible, start with one of the Gospels, and read the passage slowly several times. Let the words, the scene, the meaning of the text, fill your heart and mind. What is Jesus saying and doing? Put yourself in the narrative. What are you feeling and thinking? What phrase, sentence, image, stands out? Meditate on that for a while. Let your reflection move into prayer, as you speak your heart to the Lord. Finally, is there a resolution or action that inspires you from this prayer? How will you live the meaning of this prayer today?

Prayer is to our soul what eating is to the body. A life without prayer quickly becomes aimless and lost. Prayer is the compass that keeps us focused on our pilgrimage to the Lord; it elevates the heart, gives peace to the soul and roots us in the eternal, as we make our way through this passing and challenging world. Fill your life with prayer—the Mass and other sacraments, Scripture, the Rosary and other devotions, conversation with God in your own words. Seek silence and peace amidst the haste and the noise. We will hear the still, small voice of the Lord when we seek Him in prayer.

A NOTE FROM BISHOP HYING

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PERSEVERANCE IN MENTAL PRAYER, ACCORDING TO THE UNANIMOUS TESTIMONY OF ALL THE SAINTS, IS THE NARROW GATE THAT OPENS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN TO US.

- FR. JACQUES PHILLIPPE

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YEARLY FORMATION NEWSLETTER TOPICS

EASTER 2020

The Paschal Mystery

JUNE 2020

Evangelization

JULY 2020

Discipleship

AUGUST 2020

Baptism and Confirmation

SEPTEMBER 2020

Reclaiming Sunday

OCTOBER 2020

[Interior Life: Prayer](#)

NOVEMBER 2020

Interior Life: Mortification

DECEMBER 2020

Confession

JANUARY 2021

Goodness

FEBRUARY 2021

Beauty

MARCH 2021

Truth

APRIL 2021

New Methods

AT THE HEART OF PRAYER

MICHELLE NILSSON

There is no other way to know and love Jesus Christ but through prayer. To be a disciple of Christ we must have a lived relationship with him through personal mental prayer. Prayer is not just a task to be accomplished. It is a call to respond to God from the heart: *The living and true God tirelessly calls each person to that mysterious encounter known as prayer. In prayer, the faithful God's initiative of love always comes first; our own first step is a response. As God gradually reveals himself and reveals man to himself, prayer appears as a reciprocal call, a covenant drama. Through words and actions, the drama engages the heart.* (CCC 2567)

As part of the Go Make Disciples initiative, Bishop Hying has challenged all of us to build or reinforce a habit of spending at least 15 minutes in prayer every day. What does that look like in practice? Fr. Mike Schmitz has a great video on Ascension Presents called [Tips for Praying](#), where he shares four practical tips for building and maintaining an intentional prayer life.

First, **WHEN** are you going to pray? This says a lot about the importance of prayer in our lives. Prayer should not be squeezed into the free spaces of our days; it should be the focal point that we build everything else around. Most of us cannot spend the entire day in prayer, but by ordering our other activities around prayer, we allow God to fill and transform all that we do. Consecrating the day to God by a morning offering as soon as you wake up invites God into everything else that happens that day.

Second, **WHERE** are you going to pray? Praying in a church may be ideal, but is not always possible. To pray well at home, we need to find a quiet place where we can be free of distraction for a designated period of time. Maybe it's a family altar, or a prayer room, or just a comfy chair with your Bible nearby. Giving God a sacred space in our homes shows how he takes precedence over all other spaces.

Third, **WHAT** are you going to pray? This can be overwhelming for Catholics because there are so many great options (Lectio divina, Rosary, Liturgy of the Hours, etc.). Fr. Mike's recommendation is to choose one thing and commit to it for a season (e.g. one month). That will give your routine some stability while also allowing you to evaluate and adapt over time. There are many great forms of prayer and God can speak to our hearts through all of them; we simply need to give him the opportunity.

Finally, **WHY** are you going to pray? This is essential in order to approach prayer from the right perspective. If your motivation to pray is focused exclusively on getting short-term "results" like passing a test, getting a raise, or even healing for a loved one, it becomes easy to lose heart, because God does not always answer that kind of prayer the way we want him to. But if your motivation to pray is primarily a desire to grow in relationship with Christ, then you will find the strength to persevere even through challenging times.

St. Louis de Montfort once said, "Pray with great confidence, with confidence based on the goodness and generosity of God and upon the promises of Jesus Christ. God is a spring of living water which flows unceasingly into the hearts of those who pray."

FURTHER STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

- [1% Challenge \(Evangelical Catholic\)](#)
- [Lectio Divina Guide \(Marian Catechists\)](#)

TO READ

- Thomas a Kempis, [The Imitation of Christ](#)
- St. Francis de Sales, [Introduction to the Devout Life](#)
- Jacques Phillippe, [Thirsting for Prayer](#)
- Thomas DuBay, [Fire Within](#)

TO WATCH

- Fr. Mike Schmitz, [Tips for Praying](#) (YouTube)
- [Lectio: Prayer](#) (Formed)
- [Oremus: A Guide to Catholic Prayer](#) (Ascension)

TIPS FOR PARISH LEADERSHIP

Everyone on our staff and in leadership is on a different journey in prayer. Some folks in our midst may not have a personal relationship with Christ and may need to be encouraged to begin. Some may be eager to share about their life of prayer; for others, it may feel very overwhelming to share about their private prayer life or feel like they lack experience in prayer.

The one thing we all have in common is the call to a life of prayer and the next step that God has for each one of us. We should not be afraid to challenge each other in a loving way to take that next step in seeking a deeper communion with God.

Some ideas for this discussion might be to devote time with staff and leadership to an extended time of prayer. This will allow all folks in your staff and leadership to have time to pray in the context of formation together. Some ways to do this may be a shared Lectio Divina experience or Eucharistic Adoration.

FORMATION IN THE PARISH

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

- Do you take time each day to pray?
- Do you "fit him in" or is your life centered around the Lord?
- Can you name your When, Where, What, and Why?
- What do you think the Holy Spirit may be leading you to in prayer?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR LEADERSHIP MEETINGS

- What is your first experience of prayer or memory of prayer in your life?
- Share about your journey with prayer in your own life and how you have grown in your relationship with Christ.
- Have you ever taught another person to pray? How did you teach that person to grow in relationship with Christ?
- How important may an outsider think prayer is in the life of your parish? How can you give it greater priority?

PHASE ONE

LEADERSHIP FORMATION | Begins Pentecost 2020

- SOWDI formation should be underway for principals and school staff. SOWDI this year consists of studying along with these monthly newsletters according to an adapted schedule from Aug/September through April.
- Don't let the difficulty of getting people together in person become an obstacle to the formation of your parish leadership. If live meetings still are not possible, you can still have virtual meetings or better yet the pastor can call each of his key leaders to check in on their personal progress in fulfilling the primary formation goals of (1) daily prayer, (2) monthly confession, (3) Friday penance, (4) keeping Sunday holy, and (5) using the monthly newsletters well.
- In the midst of this month devoted to growing in our lives of prayer, consider spending time with your fellow leaders praying through Lectio Divina together.
- Remember that our primary focus right now is on deepening our own intellectual and spiritual formation as leaders in our parishes. So don't get caught up yet in thinking ahead to the next phase. There will be time dedicated to planning for that when it comes closer.
- One thing we should be doing now, which we didn't anticipate when we first outlined the phases back in February, is thinking of ways to reach out and stay in touch with all those people who were involved in the parish but whom we haven't seen since March because of COVID.

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L'ANGÉLUS, 1859

JEAN-FRANÇOIS MILLET

According to the artist, this painting portrays a peasant couple working in the fields who, upon hearing the bells of the church ringing for 6pm, take a moment to pray the Angelus at the end of the work day. This painting reveals something about what it means to pursue holiness in our daily lives. There is a certain humble sincerity in their demeanor. They are ordinary working-class people who have stopped what they were doing—the mundane tasks of the day—and took time to pray, even though they must be very tired at the end of the day's work. Their commitment to prayer shows their sense of reverence and awe before God.

There is something compelling about their spirituality in the midst of a very human life. The image shows that their devotion to the Lord is not limited to when they are kneeling in the church on Sundays. By stopping to pray in that place where they work, they are sanctifying that space and those tasks by inviting God there.

The dusky evening atmosphere of the painting reminds us not to allow the sun to set without taking time to stop and pray. "At the end of the day," so to speak, the one thing—the only thing—that really matters is my relationship with the Lord. And so we have to ask ourselves: Have I placed Jesus Christ and my relationship with him at the center of my day, my week, my work, my whole life?