

Christian Prayer

We Believe

From Our Series on The Four Pillars of the Catholic Church

Creed
(We Believe)

Mass/Sacraments
(We Worship)

Christian Morality
(We Live It!)

Christian Prayer
(We Pray)

Prayer is dialogue with God. It's as simple as a conversation with the Lord. Most of us pray every day, even in small ways: "Thank you, Lord." or "Help me, Lord." As Catholic Christians, we learn traditional formal prayers, and we also learn about the many types of prayer. One way is not better than another. The end goal is the same - that we grow closer in intimacy with the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Our children learn prayers best by repetition and practice. If a child is learning a formal prayer it should be repeated with a family member often until it is learned. If a child is learning TO pray, than it is most helpful to make prayer a part of the family routine: meal time prayer (grace) is one way to do this. Because children have bed time routines, it is often easy to make prayer a part of that routine.

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.



Christian Prayer

Prayer and Christian Life are inseparable (CCC 2757).

You may pray more often than you think

We are made with a desire to be in union with our Creator. Prayer creates and sustains that connection. Teaching our children to pray is important. Our own prayer life influences our children's faith, and our children's prayer lives. That seems like a lot of pressure, when in the midst of all the day-to-day chaos, we often have a difficult time remembering to pray ourselves, but the truth is you may pray more often than you think. Do you turn your thoughts to God when you see a beautiful sunrise? Do you look upon the magnificence of a tiny baby with awe and praise God for his wondrous deeds? Do you sigh in frustration when things aren't going as they should and turn to God with a plea. "Help me Lord." Do you look for guidance when a decision looms on the horizon? "Lord, thy will be done." Do you pray for loved ones, for their health, their quick recovery, their happiness?

Turning our thoughts to God

We turn our thoughts to God often, and that is the definition of prayer. Most likely, we pray more often than we think. As a parent become mindful of your prayer life. Recognize the moments of your day when your thoughts turn to God. Share those moments with your children. Teach them to look for those moments and to acknowledge God with their prayer.

To become more mindful as parents ask yourself a few questions:

Do we lead our children in bedtime prayers?

Do we take turns leading meal time grace?

Do we model a reverent and prayerful attitude on Sundays at Mass?

As parents, do we nurture our own prayer life by attending retreats, a prayer group or even workshops on types of prayer? Do we participate in the Rosary for Life? Or a Holy Hour of Adoration in front of the Blessed Sacrament?



Even when we don't know
what to say- when we don't
know how to pray...
...the Spirit prays for us

Romans 8: 26-27

In the same way, the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings.

And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because it intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will.

Scripture as Prayer

Scripture tells us that even when we do not know how to pray the Spirit comes to our aid. When we are at a loss for words, or struggling to feel the connection we desire with our Lord, the Spirit helps us, and in the end God knows our heart.

Scripture is abundant with instructions about prayer. Reflect on these verses.

- **Pray without ceasing.** (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
- **Give thanks in all circumstances.** (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
- **Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done.** (Psalm 105:1)
- **Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.** (Psalm 105:2)
- **Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.** (Matthew 26:41)
- **Then he told them a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary.** (Luke 18:1)
- **With all prayer and supplication, pray at every opportunity in the Spirit.** (Ephesians 6:18)
- **If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you.** (John 15:7)

Activity and Discussion

1. There's a saying, "If the only prayer we ever say is 'thank you' that is enough." Gratitude is an important practice for the Christian. It is one of the easiest prayers to teach our kids. There are a number of ways we can make our children aware of the blessings we receive from God.
 - At dinner time lead a discussion of highs and lows (Wows! and Pows!). Family members (and friends who join us for dinner) can share as many highs (Wows!) from their day as they care to list, but they can only have one low (Pow!) and we offer that up to God, or ask his help to turn it into a blessing. As people share their highs, we turn the conversation to God and give Him thanks for the many blessings we acknowledge today.
 - Help your child keep a gratitude journal. Each night the child choose three things (or 5 or more) for which he/she is grateful.
 - Keep a gratitude jar (or shoebox or some other such container). Each family member writes down the things for which they are grateful each day. Fill the container throughout the week. On Sunday, discuss these blessings with your children. Remind them when they are at Mass today, to say a special prayer of thanks for these gifts!
2. Children have a significant response to the opportunity to experience God in profound silence. Take your child into the church at a quiet time of the day or evening, when very little is going on in the parish (not at Mass times, not immediately before or after class). Spend some time in front of the tabernacle, in quiet prayer. Explain to your children that they do not even have to say a prayer. They can sit quietly and ask God to speak to them in deepest corners of their hearts. Or set a time aside at home for a quiet prayer service. Dim the lights, light a candle and ask God to be present. Tell your children to speak to God only in their minds (not aloud). Tell them to ask God to be with them in all that they do. Start this practice of quiet presence in small blocks of time - maybe beginning with 2 minutes, then graduating to 5 minutes. Your child may choose to extend that time on their own.
3. Teach children the formal prayers of our Church. Share with them the fact that Catholics have been praying some of these prayers for centuries. In Scripture, Jesus gave us the "Lord's Prayer" (the Our Father). We find the words of the "Hail Mary" in scripture as well. Tell your children about learning these prayers when you were young - did your parents teach you? Did you learn them in Catholic school? In CCD? If your parents were Catholic, and their parents before them, tell them this is a prayer that their grandparents and their great-grandparents said many years before they were born. This prayer is one of the many traditions that ties them to their ancestors. When we say these prayers now at Mass we are joined with the communion of saints, all our family and friends who went before us, all who are with us, and our Catholic family around the world, as we pray to God. We can even ask them to **intercede** for us. Explain to your children that we don't pray **to** the saints - but we ask them to intercede for us - or to pray for us, just like we would ask a friend to pray for us. That means we can ask Saint Francis to pray for us, or we can ask Grandma Helen to pray for us.



Practice the ancient prayer form of

Lectio Divina

St. John Chrysostom, (a.d. 347-407) said “To get the full flavor of an herb, it must be pressed between the fingers. So it is the same with the Scriptures; the more familiar they become, the more they reveal their hidden treasures and yield their indescribable riches.”

Lectio Divina is the **ancient practice** that allows the Living Word of God to become familiar to each of us. It asks that we press it between our fingers like an herb, that we chew on it, and make it our own. We must sit with Scripture and allow God to speak to us.

We're blessed to have a Church that guides us with centuries of interpretation, but our church fathers and our popes tell us we are called to enter into this dialogue.

Pope John Paul II - "It is especially necessary that listening to the Word of God should become a life-giving encounter, in the ancient and ever valid tradition of lectio divina, which draws from the biblical texts the living Word which questions, directs and shapes our lives.”

Pope Benedict XVI: "I would like in particular to recall and recommend the ancient tradition of lectio divina...If it is effectively promoted, this practice will bring to the Church - I am convinced of it - a new spiritual springtime." In a 2005 speech: “The diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to him with trusting openness of heart.”

In this practice, the pray-er follows these steps:

Lectio – sacred reading - read a Scripture passage slowly and attentively, tune in to hear a word or phrase that captures your attention.

Meditatio - think about it, ponder it, memorize it, gently repeat it and allow the words to interact with thoughts, hopes, memories and desires...through meditatio, God's Word becomes His Word for participants — a word that touches us at the deepest levels.

Oratio – dialogue with God - allow the Word you've taken in to touch your hearts.

Contemplatio - Practicing silence, enjoy the experience of simply being in the presence of God.

Practice this on your own and in groups. Read the upcoming Sunday readings with your children. You can find them here: <http://usccb.org/bible/>. Ask your children what they think it means. Discuss what word or phrase stands out to you. Tell your children what you think God is saying to you. Visit our curriculum partner's website http://www.osvcurriculum.com/lifelong_catechesis/families.jsp and use the questions of the week for meditation. Before long the Sunday Gospel will come alive for you and your family.

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Books:

For Adults

- ***Catholic Prayer Book.*** A book by Michael J. Buckley, released by Servant Publications, 1986.
- ***Contemplative Prayer.*** A book by Thomas Merton, released by Image, 1971.
- ***Dark Night of the Soul.*** A book by St. John of the Cross, re-released by Dover Publications, 2003.
- ***The Essential Guide to Catholic Prayer and the Mass.*** A book by Mary De Turris Poust, released by Alpha, 2011
- ***The Holy Longing: the Search for a Christian Spirituality.*** A book by Ronald Rolheiser, released by Doubleday, 1999.
- ***The Ignatian Workout: daily spiritual exercises for a healthy faith.*** A book by Timothy Muldoon, released by Loyola Press, 2004.
- ***The Interior Castle.*** A book by St. Theresa of Avila, re-released by Dover Publications, 20037
- ***The Lamb's Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth.*** A book by Scott Hahn, released by Doubleday Religion, 1999.
- ***Lectio-Divina: The Sacred Art - Transforming Words and Images into Heart-centered Prayer (Art of Spiritual Living).*** A book Christine Valters Paintner, released by Skylight Paths Pub, 2011.
- ***A Lever and a Place to Stand: The Contemplative Stance, Active Prayer.*** A book by Richard Rohr, released by Hidden Spring, 2011.
- ***The Mass, the Glory, the Mystery, the Tradition.*** A book by Cardinal Donald Wuerl and Mike Aquilina.
- ***The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See.*** A book by Richard Rohr, released by The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2009.
- ***The Practice of the Presence of God.*** A book by Brother Lawrence, released by Revell, 1967.
- ***The Shattered Lantern: Rediscovering a Felt Presence of God.*** A book by Ronald Rolheiser released by The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2005.
- ***Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith.*** A book by Henri J. M. Nouwen, released by Harper One, 2006.
- ***Things Hidden, Scripture as Spirituality.*** A book by Richard Rohr released by St. Anthony Messenger Publishers, 2008.
- ***Thoughts in Solitude.*** A book by Thomas Merton released by Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1999.
- ***The Way of the Heart: Connecting with God Through Prayer, Wisdom and Silence.*** A book by Henri J. M. Nouwen released by Ballantine Books in 2003.

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Books:

For Children and Youth

- ***The Big Book of Catholic Customs and Traditions.*** A book by Ann Neuberger and Sue Robinson, edited by Beth Branigan McNamara, released by Our Sunday Visitor, 2003.
- ***Catholic Prayer Book for Children.*** A book by Juliann M. Will released by Our Sunday Visitor, 2004.
- ***The Gift of St. Francis.*** A book by John Davis and Don McMonigle, released by Ave Maria Press, 2004.
- ***John Paul II's Biblical Way of the Cross.*** A book by Amy Welborn, released by Ave Maria Press 2009.
- ***Loyola Kids Book of Everyday Prayers.*** A book by Catherine Odell and Margaret Savitskas, released by Loyola Press, 2002.
- ***My Dear Young Friends, Pope John Paul II speaks to Teens about Life, Love and Courage.*** A book by Pope John Paul II and John Vitek released by St. Mary's Press, 2001.
- ***Prayers Before an Awesome God: The Psalms for Teenagers.*** A book by David Haas, released by St. Mary's Press, 2000.
- ***Stations for Teens: Meditations on the Death and Resurrection of Jesus.*** A book by Gary Egeberg, released by St. Mary's Press, 2000.
- ***The Way of the Cross for Teens: Walking With Jesus to Calvary.*** A book by Therese Johnson Borchard, released by Pflaum Publishing, 2006.



Websites

- <http://www.loyolapress.com/3-minute-retreats-daily-online-prayer.htm> - online 3 minute daily retreat.
- <http://www.loyolapress.com/childrens-prayers.htm> - children's prayers
- <http://www.loyolapress.com/praying-as-a-family.htm> - praying as a family
- <http://www.loyolapress.com/personal-prayer-life.htm> - personal prayer life
- <http://www.loyolapress.com/traditional-catholic-prayers.htm> - traditional prayers
- <http://www.osv.com/OSV4MeNav/TheRosaryPrayersRequests/tabid/404/Default.aspx> - Prayers, the Rosary and Requests
- <http://www.osv.com/MyDailyVisitor/tabid/7626/Default.aspx> - daily meditations
- <http://www.ewtn.com/expert/answers/breviary.htm> - Liturgy of the Hours
- <http://www.centeringprayer.com> - one prayer tradition
- http://www.centeringprayer.com/lectio_divina.html
- <http://www.sacredspace.ie/>
- <http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org> - one prayer tradition - Fr. Thomas Keating
- <http://www.mertoninstitute.org/> - contemplative prayer with Thomas Merton
- <http://www.dioceseofjoliet.org/reo/currProject/AppendixL-PrayerTraditions.pdf> - Prayer Traditions of our Catholic Church - an appendix of resources from the Diocese of Joliet.
- <http://charisministries.org/> - young adult ministry in Chicago - retreats, prayer, spiritual direction and more.
- <http://ignatianspirituality.com/> - a site dedicated to Ignatian spirituality.
- <http://www.cacradicalgrace.org/richard-rohr/dailymeditations> - daily meditations from Fr. Richard Rohr
- <http://www.valyermo.com/ld-art.html> - Lectio Divina
- <http://www.lectio-divina.org/>
- <http://www.osv.com/Portals/0/images/pdf/SecretFireMeditation.pdf> - Mother Teresa on prayer - guided meditation
- <http://www.thereligionteacher.com/visualizing-god-in-prayer-and-guided-meditations/> - how we pray.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church

What is the Catechism of the Catholic Church?

A catechism is a text which contains the fundamental Christian truths formulated in a way that facilitates their understanding. The Catechism of the Catholic Church conveys the essential and fundamental content of Catholic faith and morals in a complete and summary way. It is a positive, objective and declarative exposition of Catholic doctrine.

The content of the Catechism is faithful to Apostolic Tradition, Scripture and the Magisterium. It incorporates the heritage of the Doctors, Fathers, and Saints of the Church and illuminates with the light of faith, contemporary situations, problems and questions. Sources for teachings are listed in each section.

The entire text of the Catechism of the Catholic Church can be found online at the USCCB site: <http://old.usccb.org/catechism/text/entiretoc1.shtml>

For whom is the Catechism intended?

The Catechism is intended, first of all, for bishops as teachers of the faith and pastors of the Church. They have the first responsibility in catechesis. Through the bishops, the Catechism is addressed to editors of catechisms, priests, catechists and all others responsible for catechesis, including parents. It is useful for all the faithful. The Holy Father has said that the Catechism "is offered to all the faithful who want to understand better the inexhaustible riches of salvation."

The USCCB published **The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults** in 2006 to give the faithful (parents and lay people) a guide to understanding the catechism better. It is published in a study format (independent of group study).

Where can we find information about Prayer in the Catechism of the Catholic Church?

The Catechism is arranged in four parts. Content regarding Prayer can be found in Part Four. The Catechism is divided into the following parts:

The Profession of Faith (Creed)

The Celebration of the Christian Mystery (Sacraments/Mass)

Life in Christ (Christian Living)

Christian Prayer

What does it mean when I see CCC and a number next to some teaching of the catechism in my child's books, or in the home lessons?

CCC stands for Catechism of the Catholic Church. The number is the number of the paragraph of the teaching in the catechism. For example:

CCC 1133

The Holy Spirit prepares the faithful for the sacraments by the Word of God and the faith which welcomes that word in well-disposed hearts. Thus the sacraments strengthen faith and express it.

This is paragraph number 1133 in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. All paragraphs are numbered, and easily distinguishable in the text.

Some Catechism Connections

2590 *"Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God" (St. John Damascene, Defide orth. 3, 24: PG 94, 1089C).*

2591 *God tirelessly calls each person to this mysterious encounter with Himself. Prayer unfolds throughout the whole history of salvation as a reciprocal call between God and man.*

2596 *The Psalms constitute the masterwork of prayer in the Old Testament. They present two inseparable qualities: the personal, and the communal. They extend to all dimensions of history, recalling God's promises already fulfilled and looking for the coming of the Messiah.*

2597 *Prayed and fulfilled in Christ, the Psalms are an essential and permanent element of the prayer of the Church. They are suitable for men of every condition and time.*

2621 *In his teaching, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray with a purified heart, with lively and persevering faith, with filial boldness. He calls them to vigilance and invites them to present their petitions to God in his name. Jesus Christ himself answers prayers addressed to him.*

2644 *The Holy Spirit who teaches the Church and recalls to her all that Jesus said also instructs her in the life of prayer, inspiring new expressions of the same basic forms of prayer: blessing, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise*

2647 *Prayer of intercession consists in asking on behalf of another. It knows no boundaries and extends to one's enemies.*

2648 *Every joy and suffering, every event and need can become the matter for thanksgiving which, sharing in that of Christ, should fill one's whole life: "Give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thess 5:18).*

2661 *By a living transmission - Tradition - the Holy Spirit in the Church teaches the children of God to pray.*

2662 *The Word of God, the liturgy of the Church, and the virtues of faith, hope, and charity are sources of prayer.*

2694 *The Christian family is the first place for education in prayer.*

2720 *The Church invites the faithful to regular prayer: daily prayers, the Liturgy of the Hours, Sunday Eucharist, the feasts of the liturgical year.*

St. Jude Explore Four

& Life of the Parish Events and Opportunities that assist
in our learning about Christian Prayer and Spirituality:

- Liturgy of the Hours
- Rosary for Life
- Thursday - Holy Hour of Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament
- First Friday - Holy Hour of Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament
- Life in the Spirit Prayer Group
- Gospel Small Groups - Lectio Divina
- Gospel Small Groups - Bible Studies (scripture as prayer)
- Jr. Women's Club Retreat
- Catholic Skills 101 - Scripture
- Catholic Skills 101 - Mass
- Catholic Skills 101: Christian Prayer
- Christ Renews His Parish Weekend for Women
- Christ Renews His Parish Weekend for Men
- Men's Ministry Prayer Group
- Parish Advent Reconciliation Service
- Catechist/Adult Formation Sessions on Prayer
- Stations of the Cross
- Cross Walk
- Parish Lenten Reconciliation Service
- Worship Music Ministries
- Christmas Cantata