

Prayer

Everyone of us needs half an hour of prayer each day, except when we are busy – then we need an hour

– St. Francis de Sales

Definitions of Prayer

- a “vital and personal relationship with the living and true God “– CCC, #2558
- raising the mind & heart to God - John Damascene
- conversation and discussion with God – Gregory of Nyssa
- affectionate directing of the mind to God – St. Augustine
- intimate sharing between friends – Teresa of Avila
- loving attentiveness to God – John of the Cross
- the experience of being in the presence of God – Harold Kushner
- prayer is the giving of oneself in complete devotion to Christ, so as to be in a new way accepted and transformed by Him. The secret to prayer is being hungry for God. – Tadeusz Dajczer

- Prayer “is commonly held to be a conversation. In a conversation there are always an ‘I’ and a ‘thou’ or ‘you.’ In this case the ‘Thou’ is with a capital T. If at first the ‘I’ seems to be the most important element in prayer, prayer teaches that the situation is actually different. *The ‘Thou’ is more important, because our prayer begins with God.*” – John Paul II

Expressions of Prayer

- 1) **Vocal Prayer** – prayer where the body has priority, using words and/or bodily gestures. Making music, singing, dancing, reciting rote or conversational prayers are included in this form.
- 2) **Meditative Prayer** – prayer where the mind and imagination have priority, seeking to understand the how and why of Christian life, to live in Christ more faithfully
- 3) **Passive Prayer** – prayer of surrender where the Spirit has priority and we gaze on God in silent love, letting the fire of God transform us anew.

Sample Types of Prayer

Mass – This is the highest form of communal prayer because it is the prayer that Jesus commanded us to do: “*Do this in memory of me.*” It is where we truly become church by gathering together, listening to God’s Word, recalling and living Christ’s great sacrifice in the Eucharist, breaking bread together, and then being sent off to spread God’s love to the world.

Rosary – This is an ancient prayer that is both vocal and meditative. By reflecting upon the life of Jesus through the lens of His mother, Mary, we allow God’s Spirit to transform us more and more to be like Christ and to be faithful as Mary.

Eucharistic Adoration – A very powerful source of peace and grace is to be in the loving presence of our Lord in the Eucharist.

Stations of the Cross – This is another ancient meditative prayer that allows us to take a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, to follow the way of the cross.

Conversations with God – Prayer is as simple as talking to God or letting God talk to us, such as through the beauty of nature.

Intercessions – We grow in love when we care for others and ask God to intercede on their behalf. We grow in love for God when we realize our need for God and ask for help.

Lectio Divina – This is an ancient form of meditation that focuses on being present to God through Scripture and allowing God to speak to us with a word or a passage that touches our heart.

Ignatian Meditation – This is another Scriptural meditation where one imagines oneself as tangibly as possible in a Scriptural reading, thereby allowing the scenery, the action, and the people speak to us of Christ’s wisdom and will.

Centering prayer – This is a passive prayer that allows God to be the active agent. It involves being still and quiet, clearing the mind of all thought. This is often helped by focusing on one’s breathing or repeating a sacred word. By resting in the peace of God, we allow God’s love to embrace us into being.

Fasting & Almsgiving – These are classical spiritual exercises of trust that can open our hearts to God’s presence and love.

40 Ways to Foster Prayer in Your Home¹

1. Teach your children one of the classic prayers.
2. Pray before meals together, whether a standard prayer or a spontaneous one.
3. Substitute a short prayer for any “expletive deleted’s” you might use. Better your children hear “God bless it” than a close alternative.
4. Pray spontaneously with your children at bedtime.
5. Say an Our Father whenever you start a long car trip.
6. Create a May altar in your home with a statue of Mary surrounded by flowers.
7. Buy or make a beautifully scripted prayer or Bible verse and hang it on a wall in your home.
8. Commemorate the anniversary of a loved one’s death by praying for him or her.
9. Keep a prayer jar for special prayer intentions or requests.
10. Start your day with a time of quiet prayer or meditation; encourage your children to do also.
11. Visit the cemetery and pray for your dearly departed.
12. Have everyone in the family take turns praying for one of the other family members during the day for a whole week. Switch prayer partners every week.
13. Pray for the president, your congressional representatives, your mayor, and other civic officials.
14. Pray for church leaders and your parish clergy and ministers.
15. Imitate the great saint Dorothy Day, who spent time praying for those who were so forlorn that they were about to commit suicide at that moment.
16. Find out when a family member’s important meeting or test is and remember to pray at that time.
17. Turn every worry that drifts into your thoughts into a prayer.
18. Pray for every person who is a source of resentment for you.
19. Pray for the person who cuts you off in traffic.
20. Pray for the person who is the subject of a juicy rumor (instead of passing the gossip on).
21. Pray for the people who are homeless or down on their luck (Slipping them a buck or two also constitutes praying).
22. Sing your favorite hymn from church while driving in the car, showering, or doing housework.
23. Pray while you’re reading the newspaper
24. Pray for the person in need when you hear an ambulance’s siren.
25. Pray for a teacher you are grateful you had when you were in school.
26. Pray for a teacher you are grateful your child has now.
27. Give thanks at mealtimes for the farmer who grew the food, the workers (often grossly underpaid) who picked the crops, and the people who processed, handled, delivered, and sold the food. Thank God for the sun and soil and water that made it possible.
28. Pray at bedtime for someone who did a kindness to you today.
29. Visit family members in a nursing home and pray with them.
30. Send a letter to a distant relative, saying you remember him or her in your prayers.
31. Say a simple, short prayer like “Thank you, God, for all the fun that Robbie had today and for all his new friends when you pick up your child from a place where he had a wonderful time.
32. Say a short prayer of hope such as “god help me to use the gift of this day to its fullest” when you wake your child to a brand-new day.
33. Offer a prayer when you’re facing an unpleasant task.
34. Say a prayer of acceptance when your child exhibits a trait that gets under your skin.
35. Pray for your child when she is facing a difficult challenge (a test, a party where she doesn’t know anyone, a first visit to a new park or playground).
36. Bless your child’s forehead as he leaves the house. Bless his forehead when he returns home.
37. Say a prayer for the caller who drones on and on. Pray for patience too.
38. Say a prayer that God will be with you and that you will be with God when you feel the need to stand up for what you believe in.
39. Say a prayer when you feel tempted to do something you know is not right or in the best interest of your soul.
40. Say a prayer for guidance when you are at your wit’s end and don’t know what to do next.

Categories of Prayer

- 1) **Adoration**– to humbly glorify God, our Creator
- 2) **Thanksgiving** – for God’s blessings
- 3) **Intercessions** – for the needs of ourselves & others
- 4) **Repentance** – for offenses our sins have caused to God, others, and ourselves and the need for forgiveness
- 5) **Praise** – loving, joyful recognition that God is God

¹ Excerpted from “*Raising Faith-Filled Kids: Ordinary Opportunities to Nurture Spirituality at Home*” by Tom McGrath, published by Loyola Press