

Praying for One Another

Scripture Reading — Ephesians 6:10-20

Pray in the Spirit on all occasions. . . . With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. — Ephesians 6:18

A great benefit of the Christian community is that believers in Christ pray for one another. Our reading today urges us to pray "on all occasions" and "for all the Lord's people" always. This is important because amid all the activities and busyness we may face each day, we're in a struggle against evil. The forces of evil do not want us to love one another.

Praying for others is a pattern seen throughout Scripture— from Moses' praying that God would be merciful to his people (Deuteronomy 9:26), to various psalms of David, to Daniel's prayer that God's people be freed from exile (Daniel 9), to the prayers of Jesus throughout his ministry, and to the prayers of his apostles for believers every-where. The apostle Paul, for example, begins his letter to the Philippian Christians by assuring them that he is praying for them (Philippians 1:3-6).

There are so many people and situations we can pray for. When someone comes to mind, it may be that the Spirit is nudging you to pray. Praying may come more naturally to some than to others. But all of us can pray for others. All we need is to be open to the leading of God's Spirit.

Do you pray for others? It's an important part of fulfilling Christ's command to love one another each day.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you taught us by example to pray for others. Help us to take time throughout our busy, complex days to pray for one another. Empower us with your Spirit. Amen.

Devotion topics: Christianity, Discipleship, Love, Prayer

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Too Busy to Pray?

Scripture Reading — James 5:13-20

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. — James 5:16

A sign on a friend's desk states, "If you're too busy to pray, you're too busy!" But let's admit that we're often so busy that we lose sight of the importance of prayer. I have a hand-written, stern reminder to myself in the form of a yellowed piece of paper: "Busyness does not equal spirituality." In my work as a pastor, busyness was often an excuse for not praying.

Like the friends who carried a man with paralysis to Jesus (Luke 5:18-19), we can carry our friends to Jesus in prayer.

Interceding for others helps us to keep our focus. We live life in community. It's our duty toward fellow followers, journeying together in an unfriendly world.

We can never underestimate the power and importance of praying for one another. It's necessary, beneficial, and entirely appropriate. Ephesians 6:18 teaches us to "pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests."

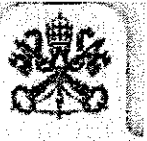
Sometimes our prayers may be a few words of confession or lament; at other times we may be asking for wisdom in how to deal with a delinquent child.

Praying isn't a separate segment of living in a complicated world. It's what a hymn declares: "While I breathe, I pray." Is that true for you?

Prayer

Father God, you heard the prayers of your Son, Jesus, and you hear my prayers. Lead and guide me as I follow you today and every day. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Devotion topics: [Christianity](#), [Discipleship](#), [Prayer](#), [Life](#), [Christian Life](#), [Community](#)



Catechism of the Catholic Church

PART FOUR CHRISTIAN PRAYER

SECTION ONE PRAYER IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

CHAPTER THREE THE LIFE OF PRAYER

ARTICLE 1 EXPRESSIONS OF PRAYER

I. VOCAL PRAYER

2700 Through his Word, God speaks to man. By words, mental or vocal, our prayer takes flesh. Yet it is most important that the heart should be present to him to whom we are speaking in prayer: "Whether or not our prayer is heard depends not on the number of words, but on the fervor of our souls."²

2701 Vocal prayer is an essential element of the Christian life. To his disciples, drawn by their Master's silent prayer, Jesus teaches a vocal prayer, the Our Father. He not only prayed aloud the liturgical prayers of the synagogue but, as the Gospels show, he raised his voice to express his personal prayer, from exultant blessing of the Father to the agony of Gethsemani.³

2702 The need to involve the senses in interior prayer corresponds to a requirement of our human nature. We are body and spirit, and we experience the need to translate our feelings externally. We must pray with our whole being to give all power possible to our supplication.

2703 This need also corresponds to a divine requirement. God seeks worshippers in Spirit and in Truth, and consequently living prayer that rises from the depths of the soul. He also wants the external expression that associates the body with interior prayer, for it renders him that perfect homage which is his due.

2704 Because it is external and so thoroughly human, vocal prayer is the form of prayer most readily accessible to groups. Even interior prayer, however, cannot neglect vocal prayer. Prayer is internalized to the extent that we become aware of him "to whom we speak,"⁴ Thus vocal prayer becomes an initial form of contemplative prayer.

II. MEDITATION

2705 Meditation is above all a quest. The mind seeks to understand the why and how of the Christian life, in order to adhere and respond to what the Lord is asking. The required attentiveness is difficult to sustain. We are usually helped by books, and Christians do not want for them: the Sacred Scriptures, particularly the Gospels, holy icons, liturgical texts of the day or season, writings of the spiritual fathers, works of spirituality, the great book of creation, and that of history the page on which the "today" of God is written.

2706 To meditate on what we read helps us to make it our own by confronting it with ourselves. Here, another book is opened: the book of life. We pass from thoughts to reality. To the extent that we are humble and faithful, we discover in meditation the movements that stir the heart and we are able to discern them. It is a question of acting truthfully in order to come into the light: "Lord, what do you want me to do?"

2707 There are as many and varied methods of meditation as there are spiritual masters. Christians owe it to themselves to develop the desire to meditate regularly, lest they come to resemble the three first kinds of soil in the

parable of the sower.⁵ But a method is only a guide; the important thing is to advance, with the Holy Spirit, along the one way of prayer: Christ Jesus.

2708 Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. This mobilization of faculties is necessary in order to deepen our convictions of faith, prompt the conversion of our heart, and strengthen our will to follow Christ. Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ, as in *lectio divina* or the rosary. This form of prayerful reflection is of great value, but Christian prayer should go further: to the knowledge of the love of the Lord Jesus, to union with him.

III. CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

2709 What is contemplative prayer? St. Teresa answers: "Contemplative prayer [*oracion mental*] in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us."⁶ Contemplative prayer seeks him "whom my soul loves."⁷ It is Jesus, and in him, the Father. We seek him, because to desire him is always the beginning of love, and we seek him in that pure faith which causes us to be born of him and to live in him. In this inner prayer we can still meditate, but our attention is fixed on the Lord himself.

2710 The choice of the *time and duration of the prayer* arises from a determined will, revealing the secrets of the heart. One does not undertake contemplative prayer only when one has the time: one makes time for the Lord, with the firm determination not to give up, no matter what trials and dryness one may encounter. One cannot always meditate, but one can always enter into inner prayer, independent of the conditions of health, work, or emotional state. The heart is the place of this quest and encounter, in poverty and in faith.

2711 *Entering into contemplative prayer* is like entering into the Eucharistic liturgy: we "gather up:" the heart, recollect our whole being under the prompting of the Holy Spirit, abide in the dwelling place of the Lord which we are, awaken our faith in order to enter into the presence of him who awaits us. We let our masks fall and turn our hearts back to the Lord who loves us, so as to hand ourselves over to him as an offering to be purified and transformed.

2712 Contemplative prayer is the prayer of the child of God, of the forgiven sinner who agrees to welcome the love by which he is loved and who wants to respond to it by loving even more.⁸ But he knows that the love he is returning is poured out by the Spirit in his heart, for everything is grace from God. Contemplative prayer is the poor and humble surrender to the loving will of the Father in ever deeper union with his beloved Son.

2713 Contemplative prayer is the simplest expression of the mystery of prayer. It is a gift, a grace; it can be accepted only in humility and poverty. Contemplative prayer is a covenant relationship established by God within our hearts.⁹ Contemplative prayer is a *communion* in which the Holy Trinity conforms man, the image of God, "to his likeness."

2714 Contemplative prayer is also the pre-eminently intense time of prayer. In it the Father strengthens our inner being with power through his Spirit "that Christ may dwell in [our] hearts through faith" and we may be "grounded in love."¹⁰

2715 Contemplation is a *gaze* of faith, fixed on Jesus. "I look at him and he looks at me": this is what a certain peasant of Ars in the time of his holy curé used to say while praying before the tabernacle. This focus on Jesus is a renunciation of self. His gaze purifies our heart; the light of the countenance of Jesus illumines the eyes of our heart and teaches us to see everything in the light of his truth and his compassion for all men. Contemplation also turns its gaze on the mysteries of the life of Christ. Thus it learns the "interior knowledge of our Lord," the more to love him and follow him.¹¹

2716 Contemplative prayer is *hearing* the Word of God. Far from being passive, such attentiveness is the obedience of faith, the unconditional acceptance of a servant, and the loving commitment of a child. It participates in the "Yes" of the Son become servant and the Fiat of God's lowly handmaid.

2717 Contemplative prayer is *silence*, the "symbol of the world to come"¹² or "silent love."¹³ Words in this kind of prayer are not speeches; they are like kindling that feeds the fire of love. In this silence, unbearable to the "outer" man, the Father speaks to us his incarnate Word, who suffered, died, and rose; in this silence the Spirit of adoption enables us to share in the prayer of Jesus.

2718 Contemplative prayer is a union with the prayer of Christ insofar as it makes us participate in his mystery. The mystery of Christ is celebrated by the Church in the Eucharist, and the Holy Spirit makes it come alive in contemplative prayer so that our charity will manifest it in our acts.

2719 Contemplative prayer is a communion of love bearing Life for the multitude, to the extent that it consents to abide in the night of faith. The Paschal night of the Resurrection passes through the night of the agony and the tomb - the three intense moments of the Hour of Jesus which his Spirit (and not "the flesh [which] is weak") brings to life in prayer. We must be willing to "keep watch with [him] one hour."¹⁴

IN BRIEF

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

2721 The Christian tradition comprises three major expressions of the life of prayer: vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplative prayer. They have in common the recollection of the heart.

2722 Vocal prayer, founded on the union of body and soul in human nature, associates the body with the interior prayer of the heart, following Christ's example of praying to his Father and teaching the Our Father to his disciples.

2723 Meditation is a prayerful quest engaging thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. Its goal is to make our own in faith the subject considered, by confronting it with the reality of our own life.

2724 Contemplative prayer is the simple expression of the mystery of prayer. It is a gaze of faith fixed on Jesus, an attentiveness to the Word of God, a silent love. It achieves real union with the prayer of Christ to the extent that it makes us share in his mystery.

2 St. John Chrysostom, *Ecloga de oratione* 2:PG 63,585.

3 Cf. *Mt* 11:25-26; *Mk* 14:36.

4 St. Teresa of Jesus, *The Way of Perfection* 26,9 in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, tr. K. Kavanaugh, OCD, and O. Rodriguez, OCD (Washington DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1980),II,136.

5 Cf. *Mk* 4:4-7, 15-19.

6 St. Teresa of Jesus, *The Book of Her Life*, 8,5 in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, tr. K. Kavanaugh, OCD, and O. Rodriguez, OCD (Washington DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1976),I,67.

7 *Song* 1:7; cf. 3:14.

8 Cf. *Lk* 7:36-50; 19:1-10.

9 Cf. *Jer* 31:33.

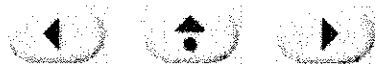
10 *Eph* 3:16-17.

11 Cf. St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, 104.

12 Cf. St. Isaac of Nineveh, *Tract. myst.* 66.

13 St. John of the Cross, *Maxims and Counsels*, 53 in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, tr. K. Kavanaugh, OCD, and O. Rodriguez, OCD (Washington DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1979), 678.

14 Cf. *Mt* 26:40.



The Mystery and Power of Personal Prayer

By **Dr. Jeff Mirus** ([bio](#) - [articles](#) - [email](#)) | Oct 12, 2007

I am continually amazed at how many Catholics forget the power of personal prayer. There are priestly, consecrated and lay apostles who make significant commitments to the active Christian life, including the Church's liturgical life, but fail to nourish that commitment through personal prayer. There are Catholic parents who take their Faith seriously but seldom remember to pray for their children. And of course there are many relatively casual Catholics who fail to cultivate a personal prayer life of any kind.

Personal and Private Prayer

There is certainly great power in public prayer, especially the Mass and the Sacraments, by which Christ makes His divine life available to us in a pre-eminent way. Christ also taught that wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, He will be in their midst (Mt 18:20). But the power of Christ's presence, offered to us in all the various forms of public prayer, cannot be absorbed and released into our own lives without personal prayer. For a deep combination of spiritual and psychological reasons, if we fail to pray personally, we not only miss many opportunities to do good, but we slowly smother our own relationship with Christ—no matter how many times we go through the motions of public or group prayer.

Although liturgical prayer can and should be intensely personal, we cannot learn to pray personally, or ever excel at it, unless we are willing to pray *privately*. Our Lord tells us this point blank when he warns us not to be hypocrites, who pray only in public, but to go to our rooms, close our doors and pray privately to our Father, who reads the secrets of our hearts (Mt 6). In fact, the New Testament speaks repeatedly about private prayer (and says comparatively little about any other kind). Jesus prayed at his baptism (Lk 3:21), He frequently went aside to pray alone (see Mt 14, Mk 1 & 6, Lk 5 & 6, etc.), He prayed at the time of his Transfiguration (Lk 9), He prayed that Peter would not fail in his faith (Lk 22), and He prayed mightily during his Passion (Mt 26, Mk 14). Even his great priestly prayer at the Last Supper (for all those the Father had given Him in the world) was an intensely personal prayer said in the presence of the Twelve (Jn 17).

Not surprisingly for one who prayed so frequently, Our Lord also taught often about personal and private prayer. He enjoined us to pray for our enemies and those who persecute, curse and calumniate us (Mt 5, Lk 6); He told us to pray for vocations (Mt 9, Lk 10); He urged us to pray against the temptations and trials of the end times (Mt 24, Mk 13); and He warned us to pray unceasingly (Mk 13, Lk 18, Lk 21). He also explained that we would receive whatever we asked in prayer (Mt 21, Mk 11), and He taught us the Our Father so we would know both how to pray and what kinds of things to pray for (Mt 6, Lk 11). The evidence abounds in the gospels, and this emphasis on personal prayer continues in both the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles.

Persistence in Prayer

In the many New Testament texts on prayer, we see Our Lord emphasizing again and again the need to pray persistently, without losing heart. He told two wonderful stories about the importance of persistence, one concerning a widow and an unjust judge (Lk 18), and the other about a man who needed to borrow bread from his neighbor in the middle of the night (Lk 11). Both the judge and the neighbor, neither of whom loved as God loves, succumbed to the onslaught of personal entreaty. Moreover, Jesus sometimes demanded that same persistence from others, as in the case of the Canaanite woman who actually had to argue with the Son of God that even dogs get the crumbs from under their master's table (Mt 15, Mk 7).

The result was that He healed her daughter.

After the story of the importunate neighbor, Our Lord so stressed persistence in prayer that it became a proverb: “I tell you, ask and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Lk 11:9-10). But his next point is even more dramatic. What father, Jesus asks, will give his son a serpent when he asks for a fish, or a scorpion when he asks for an egg? This question is the prelude to Our Lord’s final and greatest lesson about prayer: If we who are evil know how to give good gifts to our children, “how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Lk 11:13)

The Holy Spirit in Prayer

Here Our Lord teaches us that the Holy Spirit is always at work in prayer. By way of introduction, I’ll offer an exceedingly small proof, but of a kind that is commonly experienced. On one occasion when I went to Church for my hour of Eucharistic adoration, there was a man sleeping in the back pew of the small chapel where the Blessed Sacrament was exposed. He was stretched out, flat on his back, and snoring loudly enough to distract even the greatest of saints! This annoyed me, but I decided to wait to take action until I’d spent a little time attempting to pray. Paradoxically, as time went on, the louder he got, the less it bothered me. Occasionally he stirred and muttered something like “Oh my God”, so perhaps he was praying too. In any case, left to my own devices, I would have been driven to anger, yet his unseemly noise soon sounded more like the music of another soul. Clearly, I wasn’t being left to my own devices.

Thérèse of Lisieux often fell asleep at prayer, and it caused her to glory in her littleness. I don’t recommend the technique, which was also employed by the apostles in Gethsemane, yet I leave it to God to understand the effort at wakefulness and render it fruitful, even if it fails. In any case, our topic is not sleep, but the Holy Spirit, Who is actively involved in all prayer. The magnitude of Christ’s teaching is precisely this: Personal prayer is a continuous motion of the Holy Spirit between the one who prays and the Father (or, indeed, the Son). It is the Holy Spirit whom the Father continually gives in prayer, and the Holy Spirit whom the Father continually receives back. St. Paul explains it this way:

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.... Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Rm 8:22-27)

The challenge for us is that this astonishing and growing action of the Holy Spirit—this ever-deepening exchange of the Holy Spirit between ourselves and the Father—does not take place within us unless we pray *personally*, by which I really mean *interiorly*. There is nothing automatic about it, and the mere external use of rites, group prayers, or verbal formulas avails nothing. True prayer requires our personal, interior participation—that is, our determination to communicate with the Father, honestly lifting ourselves to God with whatever capacity we possess at the time. Even if all we can do is throw ourselves toward God in an occasional moment of fear or longing, we have made a beginning according to our capacity. The intention and the habit of personal prayer can be built on whatever beginning is within our power. It is up to us to practice, to exercise this initially limited ability to pray.

When we do this over time, the Holy Spirit becomes a fountain of life and power within us, uniting us to God Himself. Just as the theological virtues enable us to believe with God's conviction, hope with God's strength, and love with God's love, so too is our capacity for prayer uplifted, amplified and perfected by the power of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, there is nothing on this earth more powerful than a person at prayer. Nothing is better calculated to overcome any conceivable obstacle, and we can give or receive no greater gift than prayer. Indeed, the success of everything else depends on our interaction with the Holy Spirit in prayer. Are we not foolish, then, to so often overlook what should be first, last, and always in our lives?

PRAYERS

Catholics say many of the same prayers other religions do, with some variations. The key Catholic prayers are either part of the Mass, during which many prayers are sung, or part of praying the rosary.

Traditionally, Catholic prayers fall into four types:

- **Adoration:** Praising God
- **Contrition:** Asking for God's forgiveness
- **Petition:** Asking God for a favor
- **Thanksgiving:** Showing God gratitude

Catholics begin and end every prayer and sacrament with the sign of the cross. It's one of the trademarks of Catholicism.

blessing

we are asking for God's power and protection upon a person, a place, an object, or a special activity.

praise

a prayer in which we give glory to God because he is God.

thanksgiving

a prayer in which we thank God for all of the blessings he has given us.

petition

a prayer in which we ask God for something for ourselves.

intercession

we are asking God for something on behalf of others.

An Apologetical Explanation of
Expressions of Prayer

What are the three expressions of Christian prayer?

Let the words of my mouth and the mediation of my heart / be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. (Ps 19:15)

My mouth shall speak wisdom; / the mediation of my heart shall be understanding. (Ps 49:4)

After [Jesus] had dismissed the crowds, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone. (Mt 14:23)

The Church speaks of three modes, or “expressions,” of prayer. Our exemplar of prayer, Christ himself, taught *vocal prayer* to his disciples and also practiced *meditative prayer* and *contemplative prayer*. All three forms are of great value in the life of a Christian. (Cf. CCC 2701,2721)

Vocal prayer is well suited in communal or liturgical prayer such as the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours, or a blessing before a family meal. It is essential for us because of our human need to integrate the activities of both body and soul, and vocal prayer allows us to express through our physical senses what we feel and believe internally, in the depths of our hearts; this is how we pray “with our whole being.” Liturgical prayer, which is primarily based on Sacred Scripture, also forms us as a Christian community in the Word of God. (Cf. CCC 2701-2704)

Meditative prayer is ordinarily grounded in spiritual reading. It is a search for understanding and discernment of what God is calling us to do. By engaging our mind and spirit, we draw closer to Christ. Two popular forms of meditation are the Holy Rosary and *lectio divina*. The Holy Rosary, which also utilizes vocal prayer, is a meditation on the events of the lives of Christ and his Mother. *Lectio divina* is a meditative reading of Sacred Scripture or other edifying texts such as the spiritual writings of holy men and women. (Cf. CCC 2705-2708)

In the silence of contemplative prayer, we experience intimacy with God as we share in his mystery and make ourselves attentive to his voice. We approach God with great humility and seek complete union with him; it is sometimes described as a “gaze of faith” fixed upon Christ. By gazing upon his mysteries, we open ourselves up to hearing the Word of God, illuminating our hearts, hearing the Father’s voice, and infusing all that we do with his love. (Cf. CCC 2709-2719)

Mental prayer [edit]

Main article: Mental prayer

Mental prayer was defined by Fr. John Hardon in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* as a form of prayer in which the sentiments expressed are one's own and not those of another person. Mental prayer is a form of prayer whereby one loves God through dialogue with him, meditating on his words, and contemplating him.^[6] It is a time of silence focused on God and one's relationship with him. It is distinguished from vocal prayers which use set prayers, although mental prayer can proceed by using vocal prayers in order to improve dialogue with God.^[7] Mental prayer can be divided into meditation, or active mental prayer; and contemplation, passive mental prayer.^[8]

Meditation [edit]

Main article:Christian meditation

Meditation is a form of reflective prayer which engages thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. There are as many methods of meditation as there are spiritual masters.^[9] Ordinary or active mental prayer consists of two operations; one belongs to the thinking faculty which applies the imagination, memory, and understanding to consider some truth or mystery. The other operation is dependent on the will and compels one to love, desire, and ask for the good proposed by the mind, and make resolutions to arrive at it. According to St. Teresa, the soul in this stage is like gardener, who, with much labour, draws the water up from the depths of the well to water his plants and flowers.^[10]



St. Teresa of Avila

Contemplation [edit]

Main article: Contemplative prayer

Contemplative prayer is a silent attentiveness which looks at God by contemplating and adoring his attributes. St. Teresa describes Contemplative prayer [oración mental] as "...nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us." In this inner prayer we can still meditate, but our attention is fixed on the Lord himself.^[11] Contemplation, like all prayer, is pure gift, and not anything one can achieve.^[12]

Forms of prayer [edit]

The tradition of the Roman Catholic Church highlights four basic elements of prayer: Prayer of Blessing and Adoration, Prayer of Petition, Prayer of Intercession, and Prayer of Thanksgiving.

Blessing and adoration [edit]

In its widest applications the word "blessing" has a variety of meanings in sacred writings. It can be taken in a sense that is synonymous with praise; thus the Psalmist, "I will bless the Lord at all times; praise shall be

always in my mouth."^[13]^[14] The prayer of blessing expresses praise and honor to God and is man's response to God's gifts.

Adoration is the first attitude of man acknowledging that he is a creature before his Creator. 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.^[15]

Petition [edit]

A prayer of petition is a request to God that asks him to fulfill a need.^[16]By prayer of petition, Catholics acknowledge their dependence on God. This expression is not intended to instruct or direct God what to do, but to appeal to his goodness for the things we need; and the appeal is necessary, not because He is ignorant of our needs or sentiments, but to give definite form to our desires, to concentrate our whole attention on what we have to recommend to him, to help us appreciate our close personal relation with him. The expression need not be external or vocal; internal or mental is sufficient.^[9] The prayer of petition is at its heart an Act of Faith in that the one praying must believe first, in the existence of God; and second, that God is both willing and able to grant the petition. The *Catechism* states that asking forgiveness, coupled with trusting humility, should be the first movement of a prayer of petition. Jesus said to bring our every need to God in his name and assures that "whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you." (John 16:23) Through petition one can ask for God's help with every need no matter how great or small. According to the *Catechism*, Christ is glorified by what we ask the Father in his name.^[17]



Catholics reciting the Lord's Prayer in Mexico

Intercession [edit]

Intercession is a prayer of petition which leads us to pray as Jesus did. He is the one intercessor with the Father on behalf of all men, especially sinners. Intercession is also a prayer to Mary and the saints on behalf of another person asking God to assist other people with the things they need.

Thankfulness [edit]

Thankfulness is thanking God for what he has given and done.^[18]

Psalms [edit]

The Psalms have always been an important part of Catholic liturgy. From earliest times until today, Christians view the Old Testament as prefiguring Christ. The evangelists put the words of the psalms on the lips of Jesus during his passion. Along these lines, ancient monks and nuns in the Egyptian desert heard Jesus' voice in all the psalms. They believed the psalms were written by King David, but they also believed that the pre-existent Christ inspired David to do the writing (Ps 110:1). For this reason, they prayed the whole Psalter daily. This tradition has grown and changed, but it still continues, faithful to the ancient practice. In Christian monasteries

and many religious houses throughout the world, vowed men and women gather three to seven times daily to pray the psalms.^[19]

The Liturgy of the Hours is centered on chanting or recitation of the Psalms. Early Catholics employed the Psalms widely in their individual prayers also. Until the end of the Middle Ages it was not unknown for the laity to join in the singing of the Little Office of Our Lady, which was a shortened version of the Liturgy of the Hours providing a fixed daily cycle of twenty-five psalms to be recited.

Devotions [edit]

Main article: Roman Catholic devotions

Devotions are prayers or pious exercises used to demonstrate reverence for a particular aspect of God or the person of Jesus, or for a particular saint.^[20] Catholic devotions have various forms, ranging from formalized prayers such as novenas to activities which do not involve any prayers, such as Eucharistic adoration, the veneration of the saints, and even horticultural practices such as maintaining a Mary garden. Common examples of Catholic devotions include the Rosary, the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Holy Face of Jesus, the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and the veneration of various saints, etc. The Congregation for Divine Worship at the Vatican publishes a *Directory of devotions and pious practices*.^[21] The Rosary is a devotion for the meditation of the mysteries of joy, of sorrow and the glory of Jesus and Mary. Sister Lucia dos Santos said: "The Most Holy Virgin in these last times in which we live has given a new efficacy to the recitation of the Rosary to such an extent that there is no problem, no matter how difficult it is, whether temporal or above all spiritual, in the personal life of each one of us, of our families...that cannot be solved by the Rosary. There is no problem, I tell you, no matter how difficult it is, that we cannot resolve by the prayer of the Holy Rosary."^[22] In his 2002 encyclical *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, Pope John Paul II emphasized that the final goal of Christian life is to be transformed, or "transfigured", into Christ, and the rosary helps believers come closer to Christ by contemplating Christ.^[23]



Our Lady of Lourdes with Rosary beads

Learning to pray [edit]

Although many promises are associated with prayer, in his book "The Way to Christ" Pope John Paul II warned against "mechanical prayer" and pointed out the need for self-reflection before prayer.^[24] And in his message for the 42nd "World Day of Prayer" he said:

"We have to learn to pray: as it were learning this art ever anew from the lips of the Divine Master himself, like the first disciples: 'Lord, teach us to pray!' (Lk 11:1)."^[25]

In Catholic tradition, there are many legends about the power of persistent prayer. In the fourth century, Saint Monica of Hippo is said to have prayed for the conversion of her son Augustine for fourteen years^[26] and he eventually became an influential figure in Christian thought.

- **The Gloria is a prayer of adoration.** It's sung when the Mass is held on Sunday or a holy day of obligation and recalls the singing angels who sang at Christ's birth:

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

- **The Confiteor and Penitential Rite are prayers of contrition.** The Confiteor, which is Latin for *I confess*, goes like this:

I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-virgin, all the angels and saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

- **The Prayer of the Faithful, also known as the General Intercessions, is a prayer of petition.** Here, the congregation asks for care for the Church's people, leaders, and the larger community, is a prayer of petition.
- **A prayer of thanksgiving comes after Holy Communion.** Gratitude is shown for all the graces given at Mass.

The Mass may also include a profession of faith, or creed. The text of these creeds succinctly summarize all that Catholicism regards as divinely revealed truth:

- **The Apostles' Creed:** I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He arose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the

communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

- **The Nicene Creed:** I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the Prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins, and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE ROSARY

Praying the rosary means repeating three prayers several times, although you start by saying the Apostles' Creed just once. You repeat the following prayers in each decade of the rosary:

- **The Our Father:** 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.
- The Our Father is also prayed during Mass.
- **The Hail Mary:** Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.
- **The Glory Be:** Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was, is now,

and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Prayer Process

1. Thank God
Recognize your blessings
Show Gratitude
2. Think about yesterday.
What did you do good?
What could you do better?
3. Listen
What does God want you to hear today
4. Ask God for to forgive you
Ask him to fill your heart with peace
5. Ask God if he wants you to change.
Does he want you to grow?
6. Pray for others and their well-being
7. Pray the 'Our Father'

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Pope Benedict XVI

The meaning of the Our Father goes much further than the mere provision of a prayer text. It aims to form our being, to train us in the inner attitude of Jesus.

Our Father, Who art in heaven

We start this prayer by professing our core religious belief that God is our heavenly Father—the one who is all knowing and all powerful. Notice that Jesus didn't instruct us to say, "My Father" but stressed "Our Father." Scripture scholar John Meier explains that in God's kingdom, we don't live as isolated individuals but "we experience God's fatherhood as members of the church, the family of Jesus the Son." This reminds us that we recognize all those around us as children of God and treat them accordingly.

Hallowed be Thy Name

Hallowed is another word for holy or sanctified. When we say "hallowed be Thy name," we are not only telling God "I recognize that you are holy," but more importantly, we're asking that His name be recognized by everyone throughout the world as being the ultimate holy power—that one day (sooner rather than later) all will know Him to be righteous, powerful, and everyone's one true God.

Thy Kingdom come

This petition has a two-fold meaning. First, we are asking that God's kingdom (where there's only goodness, honesty, and love for one another) surround us in our everyday life. Secondly, we are praying for the fulfillment of the Lord's promise that He will return at the end of time and grant us eternal life.

Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven

We pray these words asking for God's grace to move us to do His will throughout our life. That means doing all the things that will please our Father—even the difficult things, whether it's something big such as moving an elderly parent into our home or volunteering our time once a week at the soup kitchen, to something as small as giving up a parking space or not calling a best friend to spread some juicy gossip. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops says, "In committing ourselves to [Christ], we can become one spirit with him, and thereby accomplish his will..."

Give us this day our daily bread

Here we're recognizing that all things we need come to us from God. We're asking that God continue to give us not only the food we need for nourishment, but also the Bread of Life, the Eucharist.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those
who trespass against us

This is a tough one. It may be easy for us to ask God to forgive us our “trespasses” or sins, but God in his infinite wisdom teaches us that in order for Him to forgive our wrongdoings, we must first forgive those who’ve hurt us. God isn’t being difficult, rather He’s teaching us that when there is bitterness and anger in our hearts, there’s no room for His love to fill our hearts. How can we ask God to be merciful and forgive our sins, if we’re holding a grudge or refuse to forgive someone who’s wronged us? Forgiving someone is often easier said than done. Only God can give us the strength to do it through prayer.

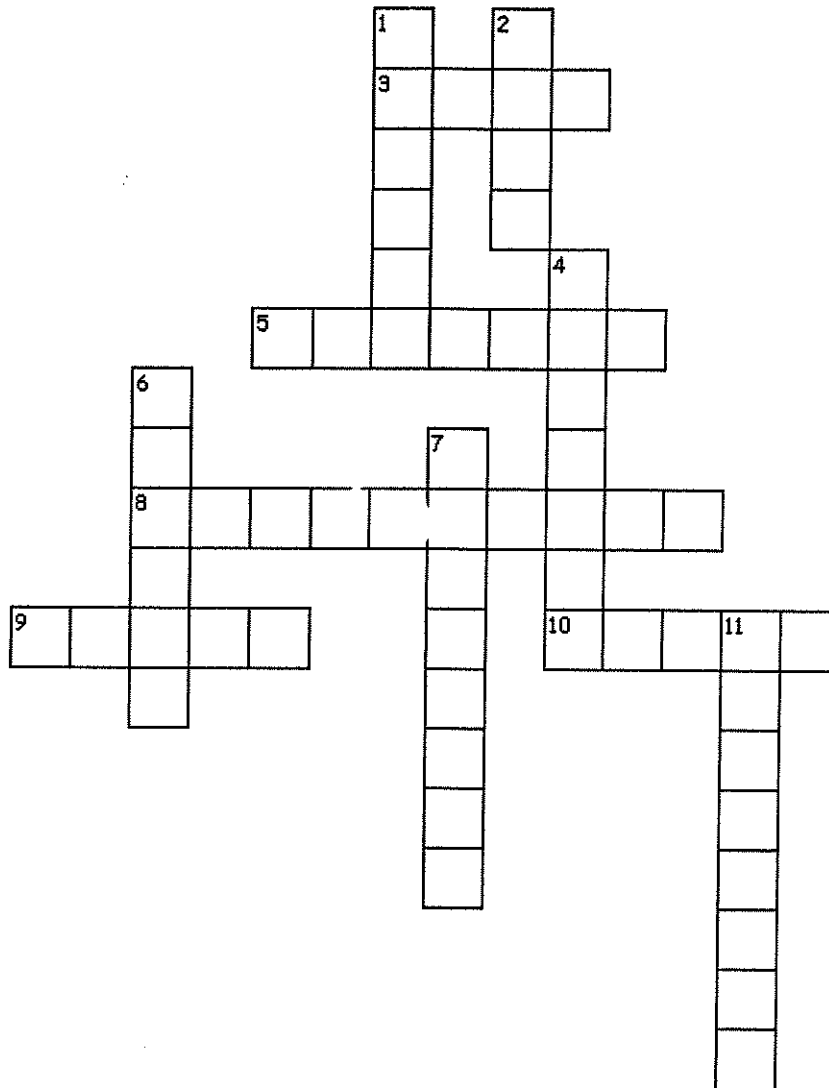
And lead us not into temptation,

Temptation and sin go hand in hand. When we come face to face with temptation, it can sometimes be difficult to resist. That’s why we need our Father to set up the road blocks and lead us far from the path of temptation.

But deliver us from evil.

Evil is an unfortunate reality in our world. The devil is always trying to tempt us and makes it his full-time job to look for ways to steer us from the right path and onto the wrong one. The devil has no power over God and when we pray to God for protection against all that is evil, He will shield us— always.

The Lord's Prayer



Our _____, (6 down)
 who art in _____, (1 down)
 _____ be thy name; (7 down)
 thy _____ come, (5 across)
 thy _____ be done (2 down)
 on _____ as it is in heaven. (10 across)
 Give us this day our daily _____ (9 across)
 and _____ us our trespasses, (4 down)
 as we forgive those who _____ against us; (11 down)
 and lead us not into _____, (8 across)
 but deliver us from _____. (3 across)

Charity is the traditional Christian word for love, and an Act of Charity is an expression of our unselfish love for God. While such a prayer can be as simple as "O God, I love You," the following longer prayer is a traditional version of an Act of Charity.

In Catholic morning prayer, an Act of Charity is traditionally preceded by an Act of Faith and an Act of Hope.

An Act of Charity

O my God, I love Thee above all things, with my whole heart and soul, because Thou art all good and worthy of all love. I love my neighbor as myself for the love of Thee. I forgive all who have injured me, and ask pardon of all whom I have injured. Amen.

Acts of Hope are prayers that express our trust in God's mercy and in His promises to us. They acknowledge that our salvation comes through Jesus Christ alone, and they are important prayers to say when we find ourselves discouraged. An Act of Hope can be as simple as "Jesus, I hope in you," or it can be longer, like this traditional version.

In morning prayer, an Act of Hope is traditionally preceded by an Act of Faith and followed by an Act of Charity.

An Act of Hope

O my God, relying on Thy almighty power and infinite mercy and promises, I hope to obtain pardon of my sins, the help of Thy grace, and life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer. Amen.

An Act of Faith

O my God, I firmly believe that Thou art one God in three Divine Person, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; I believe that Thy Divine Son became man, and died for our sins, and that He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches, because Thou hast revealed them, who canst neither deceive nor be deceived. Amen.

Quizlet

NAME _____

2 Written questions

1. we are asking God for something on behalf of others.

2. a prayer in which we thank God for all of the blessings he has given us.

1 Multiple choice question

1. a prayer in which we ask God for something for ourselves.

- A. praise
- B. petition
- C. blessing
- D. thanksgiving

2 True/False questions

1. a prayer in which we give glory to God because he is God. → praise

- True
- False

2. we are asking for God's power and protection upon a person, a place, an object, or a special activity. → intercession

- True
- False