

# Prayer

“Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.” *St. John Damascene*

For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy. *St. Thérèse of Lisieux*

## What are the names of the five main types of prayer?

### Blessing & Adoration

A prayer of blessing is a prayer that calls down God's blessing upon us. From God alone all blessings flow. His goodness, his closeness, his mercy—that is blessing. “May the Lord bless you” is the shortest prayer of blessing. [CCC 2626-2627]

Every Christian should call down God's blessing upon himself and upon other people. Parents can trace the Sign of the Cross on their child's forehead. People who love each other can bless one another. Furthermore a priest, by virtue of his office, blesses explicitly in the name of Jesus and on behalf of the Church. His request for blessings is made especially effective through Holy Orders and the prayer power of the whole Church.

Every person who understands that he is God's creature will humbly recognize the Almighty and adore him. Christian adoration, however, sees not only the greatness, omnipotence, and holiness of God. It also kneels before the divine Love that became man in Jesus Christ.

Someone who really adores God kneels down before him or prostrates himself on the ground. This gives expression to the truth about the relation between man and God: He is great and we are little. At the same time, man is never greater than when he freely and devoutly kneels down before God. The unbeliever who is seeking God and is beginning to pray can find God in this way.

### Petition

God, who knows us through and through, knows what we need. Nevertheless, God wants us to ask, to turn to him in times of need, to cry out, implore, lament, call upon him, indeed, even to struggle with him in prayer. [CCC 2629-2933]

Certainly God does not need our petitions in order to help us. It is for our own sake that we are supposed to offer prayers of petition. Someone who does not ask and does not want to ask shuts himself up in himself. Only a person who asks opens himself and turns to the Author of all good. Someone who asks goes back home to God. Thus the prayer of petition brings man into the right relationship to God, who respects our freedom.

### Intercession

As Abraham intervened by his prayer for the inhabitants of Sodom, as Jesus prayed for his disciples, and as the early Christian community looked “not only to [their] own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil 2:4), so too Christians always pray for everyone—for people who are dear to their hearts, for people who are not close to them, and even for their enemies. [CCC 2634-2636, 2647]

The more a person learns to pray, the more profoundly he realizes that he has ties to a spiritual family through which the power of prayer is made effective. With all my concern for the people whom I love, I stand in the midst of the family of mankind and may receive strength from the prayers of others and may call down divine assistance for others.

### Thanksgiving

Everything that we are and have comes from God. Paul says, “What have you that you did not receive?” (1 Cor 4:7). Being grateful to God, the giver of all good things, makes you happy. [CCC 2637-2638, 2648]

The greatest prayer of thanks is the “Eucharist” (“thanksgiving” in Greek) of Jesus, in which he takes bread and wine so as to offer in them to God all of creation, transformed. Whenever Christians give thanks, they are joining in Jesus' great prayer of thanksgiving. For we, too, are transformed and redeemed by Jesus, and so from the depths of our hearts we can be grateful and tell God this in a variety of ways.

### Praise

God needs no applause. But we need to express spontaneously our delight in God and the rejoicing in our hearts. We praise God because he exists and because he is good. We thereby join even now in the eternal praise of the angels and saints in heaven. [CCC 2639-2642]

# Prayer Corner

Why a prayer corner? A prayer corner marks the room a sacred space where we encounter Christ in all we do and learn. Religious images can leave an indelible mark on students' minds and perhaps touch their hearts in a way that our words do not. The prayer corner can be used to teach rituals and reverence for the holy. It will remind the students (and you!) that prayer is a necessary part of our day and of learning.

- Make it attractive
  - Simple, not overcrowded (focus and not distraction);
  - Beautiful, not cheap looking, nor hastily thrown together;
  - Aid a sense of mystery and transcendence (set apart from everyday material);
- Choose the best place (as possible): focal point, away from traffic;
- Follow the Liturgical year (colours, symbols);
- Material:
  - Table/shelf/bench;
  - Cloth (not paper) of the liturgical season (purple, white, green (red if possible)), no distracting bold patterns (subtle is fine);
  - Candle (with matches and candle snuff);
  - Bible (on stand if possible);
  - Crucifix;
  - Any image/symbol to aid prayer, for example:
    - Picture/icon or statue of Christ;
    - Picture/icon or statue of Mary;
    - Fresh flowers (plants);
    - Seasonal symbol, e.g. Advent Wreath, palm branches;
  - Other: prayer book, rosary, images/statues of saints, holy water, etc.
- Think of creating a sacred space to aid prayer and worship;
- Most important: use it!

## Leading Prayer in the Classroom

Daily Prayer:

- 5-10 minutes at the beginning of the day
- establish a routine for creating sacred space for prayer
- model, then involve students
- connect prayer to your lesson
- incorporate a variety of elements and prayer forms

Preparation for Sunday:

- purpose: to connect school to Sunday liturgy
- sometimes done with whole school
- prepare to hear the Sunday gospel (and readings)

Special Celebrations:

- at end of units to celebrate the learning that has taken place
- special liturgical seasonal celebrations e.g. Advent
- may be longer than regular daily prayer
- a key time to incorporate symbols, sacramentals, processions, etc.
- important to involve students in the preparation

Other Times for Prayer:

- before lunch - grace before meals
- at the end of the day
- can be short and simple

Most important:

- Simple & authentic (speak to God and be honest and open, share your thanks, joy, awe, and ask for what we need);