

Faith in Five – Adults
Expressions of Prayer
November 4, 2022



1. Prayer is how we relate and communicate with God.

The Catholic Church says of prayer (CCC, 2560, 2564, 2565):

- **It is a gift** - God meets us where we are at, "It is the encounter of God's thirst with ours"
- **It is a covenant** – a relationship between God and man
- **It is a communion** – it is a grace of being totally united with the Holy Trinity. The Church invites the faithful to regular prayer: daily prayers, the Liturgy of the Hours, Sunday Eucharist, the feasts of the liturgical year (CCC, 2720).

2. There are three expressions of prayer: vocal, meditative, contemplative

a. Vocal Prayer – Vocal prayer is prayer in words or action. The CCC (2722) says that vocal prayer is the "union of body and soul in nature" and follows Christ's example of praying to his Father. These prayers may be prepared, following an established standard form or one we utter on our own. Vocal prayer may be said aloud or in silence, taken from a book or from memory.

The Lord places great value on the spoken word:

- His Word created the world and brought forth life (Genesis 1);
- The spoken Name of the Lord is so important, a commandment handed down to Moses: "do not take the Lords' name in vain" (Exodus 20:7).
- So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:11)
- Death and life are in the power of the tongue. (Proverbs 18:21)
- Therefore, I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted to you. (Mark 11:24)
- Finally, it is the confession with your mouth along with the belief that Jesus is Lord that one is saved. (Romans 10:9-10)

b. Meditation – Meditation is the purposeful and methodical act of bringing your mind and your heart to God, so that you can think about Him. "Meditation is a prayerful quest engaging thought, imagination, emotion, and desire" (CCC, 2723). Meditation can lead to the gift of contemplation.

c. Contemplative – The time in contemplative prayer is purposeful and intentional. It is a communion with the Holy Trinity; a gaze of faith on Jesus, it is a communion that involves intensity, hearing and silence. It is an honest and humble vulnerability, an emptying of ourselves completely to all God is. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (2709) teaches: 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. Contemplative prayer seeks him "whom my soul loves".

One can become a contemplative by practicing meditation because spending intentional time with God deepens and strengthens the relationship.

His will requires a willingness to wait and hear and be still in the silence. "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10t).

Lectio Divina is a manner of monastic prayer using the Sacred Scriptures for personal devotion. The focus of Lectio Divina is not an analysis of biblical passages but viewing them with Christ as the key to their meaning. We seek inspiration and relationship with the Holy Spirit. God speaks to us through His Word, and we have the opportunity to respond using the three expressions of prayer.

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HOW DO YOU PRAY THE LECTIO DIVINA?

Lectio Divina is a practice of **scriptural reading**. It involves meditating on a passage of the Bible, preferably the **Gospel of the day**.

Steps to pray:

- 1. INVOKE**
Invite the Holy Spirit to guide the reading of the Scripture.
- 2. READ**
Ask yourself: What is this passage saying? If you can, use a Bible commentary.
- 3. MEDITATE**
In a moment of silence, try to listen to the voice of God.
- 4. PRAY**
Begin to dialogue with the Lord and open yourself to his will.
- 5. CONTEMPLATE**
Listen closely with your heart and put into practice what he has told you.

How to pray? 10 ways of praying CatholicLink

3. The Catholic Church believes that prayer and worship are different from each other. As Catholics, we follow the biblical understanding of worship - a general term that has three distinct actions or three degrees of honor and reverence: **latría, hyper dulia, and dulia**.

a. Latría is the honor given to God alone (1 Chronicles 29:11; 1 Timothy 1:17; 6:16; Revelation 4:11; 5:13). Only God is worthy of worship, adoration, praise (Nehemiah 9:6; Revelation 4:11; 15:4).

b. Hyper dulia is the honor given to Mary alone, as the greatest of the saints. God chose her for a glorious role and saved her from her sins through the death of Jesus Christ (Luke 1:47)

c. Dulia is the honor given to the saints. God saved them, transformed them, and then used them in mighty and amazing ways.

The term "worship" being a general term itself is perfectly demonstrated in the Old Testament in the book of Daniel: "Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell down and worshiped Daniel and ordered sacrifice and incense offered to him". Daniel 2:46

King Nebuchadnezzar "fell down and worshiped" him, yet Daniel understands that what the king is doing is not "Latria" or adoration due to God alone but demonstrating an act of respect.

4. The Lord taught his disciples and gives us an example of how to pray in the **Our Father**.
- Our Father who art in Heaven** – We address God’s rightful place as the Father
 - Hallowed be thy Name** We give worship and praise God for who He is and all that He has done
 - Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven** We ask for God’s will in our lives and acknowledge He is in control of everything
 - Give us this day our daily bread** We ask God for the things that we need in line with His will
 - And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.** We acknowledge our sinfulness, asking for repentance while we forgive those who hurt us
 - Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.** We request protection and help in overcoming sin and Satan’s attacks on us.



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5. Other ways are offered on how to structure prayer to God:
- PAL** – this acronym encourages us in prayer to **Praise, Ask, Listen**
 - ACT** – this acronym encourages us to **Adore, Confess** (sins), and (give) **Thanksgiving**
 - Pope Francis’ Five Finger Prayer** – this is a useful tool for teaching children to pray in a specific manner that encourages them to pray for others first.



- **Thumb**: pray for those closest to you
- **Pointer (index) finger**: pray for those who teach you; who point the way
- **Middle finger**: pray for those in authority who lead us (president, police, etc).
- **Ring finger**: pray for those who are weak, especially those who are sick
- **Pinky finger**: pray for ourselves

6. Many often seek a special feeling when they spend time with God. When those warm feelings are not experienced, some may believe falsely that something is wrong with them, that their relationship with God is not going well, the ‘formula for praying’ is not correct, or that God is just not there. The Bible says our feelings cannot be trusted. “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding (Prov. 3:5).

There are times when you will feel close to God and other times when you do not. Even St. Teresa of Calcutta experienced spiritual dryness and loneliness for most of her adult life. She developed a blind faith and trust in God in face of all the doubts she had. The point of prayer is not to get a feeling from God, it is to spend time with Him. The ultimate goal of prayer according to the CCC 2708, is ‘the knowledge of the love of the Lord Jesus, to union with Him’.

Psalm 116:2—Because he bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath!

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