

## Prayer Bytes - Other approaches to personal prayer

For many of us, prayer is usually just turning up to Mass on Sunday, the occasional prayer during the day - particularly if things are not going well - and, when we remember it, a final prayer at night.

The other thing that many of us may not consider is that we were taught to pray when we were children, and that may have been quite a few years ago. But consider this - we were taught to pray as a child - are we still praying in the exact same way, even though we have now grown and matured? Perhaps it may be time to grow and mature our prayer life as well.

There are many different approaches to prayer, and no single approach is the only approach that should be used. The Lord wants us to be close to him. He desires to love us, and He wants us to love and pray to Him. So, what is the best approach to personal prayer? Frankly, it's whatever works best for you. But the one thing to remember is that prayer does not rely on technique, or some other "magic formula". Prayer is a conversation, a relationship, with God. The only way to get a conversation going is to ... start talking!

But we will look at some of the different ways to pray that we can use effectively at home, at work, or in those all too rare quiet times during the day:

- **Daily Prayer**
  - Personal. Do we pray every day, or some days, or just occasionally? Does it seem like a chore – something that just has to be done, even if reluctantly? Perhaps a different approach can make prayer a joy and not a task.
    - Do you greet the Lord when you wake and thank Him in advance for another day?
    - Can you find a minute or two during the day, to sit quietly with the Lord, or to look at the beauty of the world around you and thank Him for the grace that He has given you to see it?
    - Perhaps you might pray the Examen at the end of the day and look back at the day to see where the Lord was with you?
    - Or, you might just spend a few minutes talking to the Lord about your day and your problems. You might want to ask Him for the grace to resolve, or accept them.
  - Family. Do we pray as a family? This is where prayer can really unite a family as you all bring your joys and challenges to the Lord. This can be a rewarding experience for all members of the family, even if they are a little reluctant at first.
    - You may want to involve the family in praying at the Sacred Space website (yes, websites can be used to guide you to pray!) as an alternative to the more normally used standard prayers.
- **Meditative or sacred reading (Lectio Divina)**
  - Lectio Divina is not just the reading of scripture, but reading it and praying over it as we read. The Word and Faith method of prayer is a form of Lectio Divina and allows us to let the words of the scripture resonate with us, and our own experiences, so that we can see what the Lord is calling us to do.
    - You start by reading the passage slowly, savouring the words and letting them wash over you. You might pause periodically to allow the words and phrases to settle inside you.

- When a thought or word resonates with you, stay with it and allow the fullness of it to penetrate your being. Relish the words received and respond to them. Be aware of the feelings that the passage awakens in you, and the sense of God's presence within you.
- **Contemplation**
  - Contemplation is also known as Imaginative Prayer and was developed by Ignatius of Loyola. St Ignatius tells us to:
    - Read the Gospel passage,
    - Now, close your eyes and imagine that you are now in that scene described in the Gospel. We can watch what happens; listen to what's being said, feel and smell the environment and become part of the story.
    - Listen to what the Lord says and how He says it.
- **Centring**
  - Centring is a really nice, peaceful way of being aware of, and relaxing in, God's presence.
  - You might want to use these approaches before you start a period of meditation or if you just need to have a quiet moment with the Lord.
    - Sit quietly and comfortably and rest within your longing for and desire for God. Move to the centre of yourself; maybe imagine going slowly down in an elevator, or a deep flight of stairs, or going into a deep pool of still water. In the stillness, become aware of God's presence "*Be still, and know that I am God!*" Peacefully absorb His love.
    - Use a Prayer Word - a word or phrase - that represents for you the fullness of God. It could be just "Jesus" or it could be something like "*Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner*", or "*Come Holy Spirit, open my heart!*" Repeat the word or phrase slowly to yourself in harmony with your breathing.
- **Journaling**
  - Write a letter to God and tell him about your life, your experiences, your problems and your deepest desire
  - Write an answer to a question from the Gospel, such as when the Lord asks "*What do you want Me to do for you?*"
- **Retreat in Daily Life**
  - We've probably all thought about doing a retreat from time to time. But we all probably think "*But how am I going to do that? Who's going to meet my commitments and do the essential things that I have to do while I'm away at a retreat?*"
  - But a Retreat in Daily Life lets us commit to putting about 15 minutes aside for the Lord each day. Each day you would read a piece of scripture and consider a question that the retreat may pose for you to think about.
  - There are a number of Retreats in Daily Life that are available, either as books or online.

What are some of the other ways of prayer that you use? Would you like to share your methods of prayer with others? If you'd like to give a short talk on how *YOU* pray, please contact Sr. Alice.

We'll look at some of these different ways that we can pray to God over the next few months. But next month, we'll look at some of the ways that we may want to prepare ourselves to pray to our God.