

Chapter 33: Introduction to Prayer

Definitions

prayer: the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God involves not only words, but also your mind and heart, insight and affection, just like a good friendship

humility: we are honest about who we are, we acknowledge our weakness and sins, as well as our gifts

Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector: the Pharisee is too full of himself to receive anything from God (Luke 18:9-14)

conversion: turning away from sin and toward God

Questions

Why is "talking to God" not a full definition of the word "prayer"?

Prayer is not just talking to God, but listening to God as well. There are many ways to listen to God, such as through nature, through meditation, through other people...

(Table from Wednesday on *Essential attitudes for prayer* → fill in the column "How I use it..." to relate how each of these attitudes can be shown in the way you, personally, pray.)

What is your "heart," Biblically speaking? (p. 364)

The heart is your hidden center, the place of decision and truth where, as a person made in God's image, you speak to God, live in his presence, and hear him speak to you. The heart is where your relationship with God unfolds.

Why can we say that the Psalms are a "prayer of the human heart for all ages"?

The Psalms are about God's work and they are about humankind's response. The Psalms express every emotion in the human heart: anger, certitude (being absolutely certain of something), temptation, submission to God's will, praise, abandonment (trusting so completely in God that nothing can bother you), desire, trust, confidence... There is a psalm that can give expression to whatever you might be feeling.

Do Catholics adore Mary? No

Do we think that Mary bestows special favors on us if we pray to her? No

When we pray to Mary, what are we doing? We are acknowledging her special role in God's plan

What do we learn about God when we follow Mary's example of prayer?

How worthy God is of our complete trust

What do we learn about ourselves when we follow Mary's example of prayer?

We are capable of the same deep faith that Mary showed when she said "yes" to God at the Annunciation

How do we describe Saint Francis de Sales' approach to prayer?

He taught that everyone is called to live a holy life, not just priests and members of religious communities. He had a "simple approach to prayer."

His book is called "Introduction to the Devout Life," and there are still translations and different versions of this book being written, to help the same ideas apply to modern-day life.

Other guides for prayer:

The Saints, spiritual traditions (particular ways of praying created by some Saints and their followers - Franciscan (St. Francis), Dominican (St. Dominic), Benedictine (St. Benedict), etc. - our families, priests, deacons, sisters, brothers, teachers, catechists, spiritual directors

Chapter 35: Personal Prayer

Definitions

vocal prayer: a prayer that is spoken aloud or silently

forty hours: usually at a parish church, the Blessed Sacrament is exposed so that people can pray before the Lord for 40 hours continuously (people take turns!)

First Friday: receiving Holy Communion on the First Friday of every month demonstrates devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

novena: practice of praying for a particular person or intention for nine days in a row

meditation: a form of prayer involving a variety of methods and techniques in which one engages the mind, imagination, and emotions to focus on a particular truth, biblical theme, or other spiritual matter

contemplation / contemplative prayer: a form of wordless prayer in which one is fully focused on the presence of God; sometimes defined as "resting in God," a deep sense of loving adoration of God

misconception: a view or opinion that is incorrect because it is based on faulty thinking or understanding

Questions

Does vocal prayer have to be out loud? Explain.

No, vocal prayer does not have to be out loud.

Vocal prayer focuses on: your conversation with God, which grows over time, so what vocal prayer looks like changes over the course of your life

If vocal prayer is to be effective you must...mean what you say.

What are some things that can help you get “into” a prayer of meditation?

Rosary, scripture, creation, liturgical texts (readings from Mass), icons

What are 3 misconceptions about prayer?

Prayer is only a psychological activity

Prayer is only the rattling of memorized words

Prayer requires expertise

What are 2 difficulties at prayer?

Distractions (other stuff comes to mind as soon as I try to pray)

Periods of dryness (the spark seems to have faded)

Prayer Postures and their meaning

Posture	Meaning
Standing straight, tall and free	asserts our dignity as children of God
Facing east	The direction from which the sun (the symbol of Christ) rises - ancient symbol of the divine
Kneeling	sign of adoration, penance, and supplication Not original prayer posture, but developed because people would kneel before a king or lord when they were begging for something in an especially intense way - translated to God as King, Lord, etc.
Prostration (lying on the floor with arms outstretched or tucked under your head)	Jesus did it in the garden at Gethsemane, priests do it at ordination and on Good Friday: shows complete dependence on God, and fact that can't do this on my own some religious do it at their perpetual vow ceremony: symbolizes "old self" is dying to the world and new person is rising up after the gift of the vows
Genuflection: bending the knee, with the right knee touching the ground, or 2-kneel genuflection as at Exposition	Sign of adoration and greeting directed to the divine presence in the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle
Bowing	Before the altar and before the Word of God, sign of humility that comes from the oriental court (nobles and kings in the East of the world)
Sitting	No religious significance - only came about in churches when seats were introduced in 16th century (1500's)

Reflection: People face a variety of challenges in developing and maintaining a personal prayer life. Which challenges have you experienced in your own prayer life? How are you overcoming these challenges?