

How We Should Pray

Q. 266. How should we pray?

We should pray with (1) attention, (2) a spirit of humility, (3) a deep desire for the graces we need from God, (4) a loving trust in God's goodness, (5) resignation to God's will, and (6) perseverance.

1. *We should pray with attention* by forming in our minds the intentions of praying well and of fixing our minds on God. It is only when our distractions are voluntary, coming from a careless lack of interest in what we are doing, that our prayer ceases to be a prayer. God asks only that we do our best. He does not hold us accountable for what we cannot help.

2. *We should pray with a spirit of humility*, with a consciousness of our complete dependence on God and our helplessness without Him.

3. *We should pray with a deep desire for the graces we need from God*. We should also seek His help in removing whatever may be hindering His grace from working in our souls.

4. *We should pray with a loving trust in God's goodness*. This means to pray with childlike confidence that God does hear us and that He will answer us.

5. *We should pray with resignation to God's will* because He knows what is best for us and He loves us. Jesus taught us to say, "Thy will be done."

6. *We should pray with perseverance*. The man who never quits praying for grace and salvation is the one who is certain to go to heaven. "Pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18). We would not grow discouraged if we remembered that whatever God does, He does in His own way and in His own best time. Our confidence should endure. Only in heaven will we know how many blessings have come to us in response to prayer which, at the time, seemed to go unanswered.

Sacred Scripture

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will. *Mark 11:24*

Continue steadfastly in prayer; being watchful in it with thanksgiving. *Colossians 4:2*

And this is the confidence which we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained the requests made of him. *1 John 5:14-15*

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

Sacred Scripture

Q. 266. Lk 18:1-14; Jn 14:13-14; Rom 12:12; Jas 1:5-8; 1 Jn 3:22.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Q. 266. Paragraphs 2598-2622, 2729-2745.



Catechism of the Catholic Church

2650 Prayer cannot be reduced to the spontaneous outpouring of interior impulse: in order to pray, one must have the will to pray. Nor is it enough to know what the Scriptures reveal about prayer: one must also learn how to pray. Through a living transmission (Sacred Tradition) within “the believing and praying Church,”¹ the Holy Spirit teaches the children of God how to pray.

2698 The Tradition of the Church proposes to the faithful certain rhythms of praying intended to nourish continual prayer. Some are daily, such as morning and evening prayer, grace before and after meals, the Liturgy of the Hours. Sundays, centered on the Eucharist, are kept holy primarily by prayer. The cycle of the liturgical year and its great feasts are also basic rhythms of the Christian’s life of prayer.

2729 The habitual difficulty in prayer is *distraction*. It can affect words and their meaning in vocal prayer; it can concern, more profoundly, him to whom we are praying, in vocal prayer (liturgical or personal), meditation, and contemplative prayer. To set about hunting down distractions would be to fall into their trap, when all that is necessary is to turn back to our heart: for a distraction reveals to us what we are attached to, and this humble awareness before the Lord should awaken our preferential love for him and lead us resolutely to offer him our heart to be purified. Therein lies the battle, the choice of which master to serve.¹

2731 Another difficulty, especially for those who sincerely want to pray, is *dryness*. Dryness belongs to contemplative prayer when the heart is separated from God, with no taste for thoughts, memories, and feelings, even spiritual ones. This is the moment of sheer faith clinging faithfully to Jesus in his agony and in his tomb. “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”² If dryness is due to the lack of roots, because the word has fallen on rocky soil, the battle requires conversion.”²

Papal Document

The interior man is aware that times of silence are demanded by love of God. As a rule he needs a certain solitude so that he may hear God “speaking to his heart” (Hosea 2:16)... The search for intimacy with God involves the truly vital need of a silence embracing the whole being, both for those who must find God in the midst of noise and confusion and for contemplatives. *Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of Religious Life, 46*

Summary Prayer

Lord Jesus, give us perseverance in prayer. Help us to call, entreat, and continually ask You, the Father, and the Holy Spirit to grant our prayers. You always hear our prayers, even though You do not always answer them according to our will, since You know better than we what our real needs are.

Jesus, help us to pray with confidence. You speak of God as a friend and a father; to Whom we may pray with childlike trust. “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?” (Luke 11:13)

People are normally kind to their children and friends, and certainly God is kinder than we can ever be. Your own words, Jesus, inspire confidence: “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” (Luke 11:9-10).

Jesus, we should not estimate the value of prayers by their length or by the number of prayers we say. It would be wrong to think that we must present our wants to God because He does not know them, or that we must or can influence Him by our prayers as people are influenced by reasoning. We do not dispose You in any way by our prayer, but we should dispose ourselves by removing the obstacles which may prevent You from granting our petitions.

This is what we do by prayer: we beautifully confess our poverty, helplessness, and unworthiness, and on the other hand, we gloriously acknowledge Your power, goodness, and fidelity. In prayer, let us give You the poor gift of our lives—our bodies, souls, works, joys and sufferings. We ask this through Your most Precious Blood. Amen.

Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise (see Appendix B for answer key)

1. For prayer to be fruitful, some basic dispositions (attitudes) are necessary. List three of them.
2. Recall some times when you were able to pray with the proper dispositions. Write down some specific ways in which you can develop these dispositions.
3. Make a concrete effort to develop the proper attitudes for prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to grow in your prayer life.

Q. 267. Why is Jesus the divine model of prayer?

Jesus is the divine model of prayer because, by becoming man while remaining divine, He showed us by His example that we could draw close to God by prayer, since prayer played such an important part in His life.

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

Sacred Scripture

Q. 267. Mt 14:19; Mk 6:41; Lk 6:12-16, 9:16, 22:39-46; Jn 6:11, 11:41-42; Heb 7:25.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Q. 267. Paragraphs **2598-2616, 2620.**

During the thirty years of His hidden life, Jesus lived an ordinary, quiet, and prayerful life. Subject to Mary and Joseph, He labored as a carpenter; He also prayed.

Forty days of prayer and penance were the prelude to His three years as a missionary. He not only spoke often of prayer and encouraged and taught people to pray, but He also practiced prayer Himself. Interiorly, He enjoyed the constant vision of God and, therefore, was always engaged in inward communion with His Father.

But Jesus also prayed outwardly. In His brief teaching career, He always found time for prayer, even prolonged prayer. He rose very early to pray before He began to teach, and He left the company of His followers in the evening to seek His Father in prayer.

“And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed” (Mark 1:35).

“In these days he went out into the hills to pray; and all night he continued in prayer to God” (Luke 6:12).

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Jesus prayed publicly and vocally. He taught His disciples how to pray, especially by giving them the most beautiful prayer ever composed, the “Our Father.” In imitation of Jesus, we, too, direct most of our prayers to God the Father. We pray to our Father in the name of Jesus. It is through the sacred humanity of Jesus that the Holy Spirit teaches us to pray to God the Father.

After the “Our Father,” the most sublime prayer of Jesus was the high-priestly prayer He uttered at the Last Supper. He prayed that His Father might glorify Him. There He prayed for His disciples and for those who, through the teachings of the disciples, were to believe in Him; that all might be one, even as He and the

Father are one. “That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou has sent me” (John 17:21).



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Jesus prayed at ordinary times in the synagogue, and elsewhere, on various occasions. He prayed before undertaking any important project. Before He chose His twelve Apostles, He prayed all night. Before the great miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, He prayed in thanksgiving. Before raising Lazarus to life, Jesus lifted His eyes and thanked His Father for the miracle He was about to perform.

Jesus closed His life with prayer. He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prayed on the Cross, asking not for justice, but for mercy and pardon to be granted those who were putting Him to death. When He yielded His soul up to God, He cried out, “Father into thy hands I commit my spirit!” (Luke 23:46). The supreme act of His life was completed by a prayer of trustful love to His heavenly Father.

The glorified life of Jesus is entirely engulfed in prayer. In the Holy Eucharist, He always lovingly adores His heavenly Father, taking delight in contemplation of the infinite perfections of the Triune God and in glorification of Him by His prayer life in the tabernacle. In the Eucharist, Jesus also occupies Himself with the interests of mankind. He thanks God for us, continually prays for us, asks pardon for our sins, and makes constant reparation for those sins. He continually offers Himself to God and pours out His graces upon all mankind as our Eucharistic Mediator.

In heaven, Jesus is the Representative and High Priest of all humanity. He honors His Father and implores heavenly help for us. The whole Church and all individuals are sustained by His prayer of mediation, as they are by His doctrine, labors, and sufferings.

Jesus prays in the Mass. Even now, though He has ascended into heaven, Jesus renews, throughout time, the perfect offering of Himself to God the Father by the Sacrifice of the Mass. Each Mass shows us His death, which was a sacrifice in blood upon the Cross. In each Mass, the same High Priest offers Himself to the Father, by the hands of His priests, in an unbloody manner; He perpetuates the Sacrifice of the Cross and applies the fruits of His Redemption to our souls.

Since the price that was paid is infinite, there is no grace for which we may not hope, if we beg for it through the Divine Mediator.



Sacred Scripture

He was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray.” *Luke 11:1*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

2603 The evangelists have preserved two more explicit prayers offered by Christ during his public ministry. Each begins with thanksgiving. In the first, Jesus confesses the Father, acknowledges, and blesses him because he has hidden the mysteries of the Kingdom from those who think themselves learned and has revealed them to infants, the poor of the Beatitudes.¹ His exclamation, “Yes, Father!” expresses the depth of his heart, his adherence to the Father’s “good pleasure,” echoing his mother’s *Fiat* at the time of his conception and pre-figuring what he will say to the Father in his agony. The whole prayer of Jesus is contained in this loving adherence of his human heart to the mystery of the will of the Father.²

Vatican Council II

Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the Sacrifice of the Mass not only in the person of his minister...but especially in the eucharistic species... every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the Priest and of his Body, which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others.” *Sacred Liturgy*, 7

Summary Prayer

Jesus, Your public life was spent not only in activity, but also in seclusion and prayer. Prayer played an important part in Your life, because God has willed that the salvation of mankind be accomplished not only by toil and suffering, but also by prayer—even prolonged prayer. Help us to understand that nothing is more important and necessary than being in close union with God, for all holiness consists in this union. Give us the grace that we need to imitate Your example of living with God through prayer, through Your most holy Name. Amen.

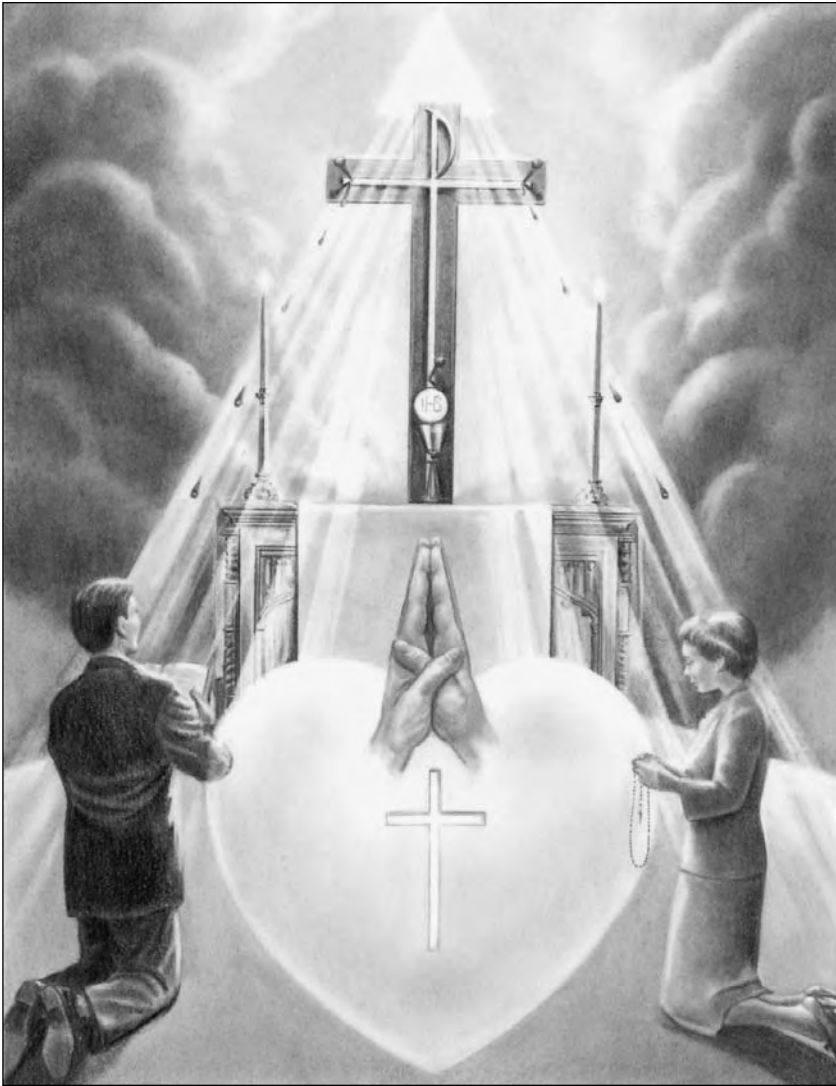
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**Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise** (see Appendix B for answer key)

1. List passages from the Gospels in which Jesus shows us a perfect example of union with God through prayer.
2. What have you learned from Jesus' life of prayer? How can you imitate Him in the ordinary circumstances of your life?
3. Ask the Holy Spirit for the grace to pray at all times and in all circumstances, that you may be able to live a life of prayer in imitation of Jesus. One of the best ways to form the habit of praying always is to talk to God throughout the day instead of to yourself.

Catechism by Diagram

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Praying through Christ. Christ (monogram) is our Mediator with the Father (triangle). All our prayers (folded hands) should go to the Father through Him (rays from God to us and from us through Christ to Father). In the Sacrifice of the Mass (altar), Jesus has given a gift which is really the highest gift of all, the gift of Himself. Jesus made that offering of Himself as Victim (cross) once and for all on Calvary, where He was slain by the executioners (three nails). Jesus has given us the Mass, in which, through the change of the bread and wine (host, chalice) into His Body and Blood that were separated at His death on Calvary, He renews the offering of Himself.

Chapter Summary Prayer

Jesus, Your work on earth was the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Souls are saved by prayer and sacrifice. The destruction of the kingdom of Satan in this world can only be brought about by the power of God, Who

is stronger than he. We join our prayers and sacrifices to Yours for this intention.

Jesus, You taught the disciples to present their petitions to the Eternal Father in Your Name. “If you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my Name” (John 16:23). “Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:24).

You assured them that, by reason of the merits of Your Redemption, the power of such prayer would be irresistible.

The greatness of our prayer’s power will depend largely on our loyalty to and love for You. Since those who love You remain in You, prayer offered in Your Name is, as it were, Your own.

Jesus, faith in You and the power of Your Name is the greatest spiritual force in the world today. It is a source of joy and inspiration in our youth and a source of strength in our adulthood, when only Your holy Name and Your grace can enable us to overcome temptation. It is a source of hope, consolation, and confidence at the hour of our death, when more than ever before, we realize that the meaning of Jesus is “Lord, the Savior.”

Lord Jesus, our Savior and our God, give us always the water of life to drink, the free gift of the Spirit which flows from Your Sacred Heart, for You are good and You love mankind. May we imitate Your example of prayer and glorify You, Your eternal Father, and Your life-giving Spirit, now and forever. Amen.



Thought Provokers

Please see Appendix C for the answers.

Q. 266: Can we pray to the angels?

Q. 267: Can we pray to the saints in Heaven?