

1. Read (Seek) — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate (Find) — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

3. Pray (Ask) — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate (Taste) — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence. **How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

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[1]¹ 2 Thes 5:17 [2]² CCC 2559
[3]³ CCC 2559 [4]⁴ Matthew 7:7
[5]⁵ Sirach 35:13-14
[6]⁶ CCC 2696

Quick Connect

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Gospel Reading – Luke 18:1-8 – Roman Missal

Then he told them a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary. He said, “There was a judge in a certain town who neither feared God nor respected any human being. And a widow in that town used to come to him and say, ‘Render a just decision for me against my adversary.’ For a long time the judge was unwilling, but eventually he thought, ‘While it is true that I neither fear God nor respect any human being, because this widow keeps bothering me I shall deliver a just decision for her lest she finally come and strike me.’” The Lord said, “Pay attention to what the dishonest judge says. Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night? Will he be slow to answer them? I tell you, he will see to it that justice is done for them speedily. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

Spiritual Reading

From St. Catherine of Siena (The Dialogue, 65):

"You must never turn back for anything at all. You must not break away from holy prayer for any reason except obedience or charity. For often during the time scheduled for prayer the devil comes with all sorts of struggles and annoyances - even more than when you are not at prayer. He does this to make you weary of holy prayer. Often he will say, 'This sort of prayer is worthless to you. You should not think about or pay attention to anything except vocal prayer.' He makes it seem this way so that you will become weary and confused, and abandon the exercise of prayer. But prayer is a weapon with which you can defend yourself against every enemy. If you hold it with love's hand and the arm of free choice, this weapon, with the light of most holy faith, will be your defense"

Pray without Ceasing – Lesson and Discussion

“The necessity for them to pray always”

This parable can be summed up using the words of St. Paul, “Pray without ceasing.”[1]¹ The parable of the widow can only be found in Luke’s gospel. In the parable, the judge has everything, while the woman has nothing except for prayer. It is because of this widow’s faith, expressed through her life of prayer that the judge gave justice to her. Prayer is one of the most important ways to strengthen their faith.

What is prayer? Prayer is “raising one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from Him.”[2]² Simply put, it’s direct commu-

nication with God. Prayer enables us to have a stronger faith life. The more you pray, the stronger your faith will be.

During Pope John Paul the Great's last trip to America, in St. Louis in 1999, he spoke of the importance of prayer. He talked about the age of "instant communication" and how easy it is for us to get in touch with each other. **What are some ways we are able to connect with each other in an instant?** But no matter how instant we can get with one another, it will never beat the instantaneous nature of prayer. At any point in time, we can speak to God, and He will hear us. More importantly, prayer allows us to listen to God. John Paul the Great said, "What is needed is that you talk to him, and listen to him." (Address of John Paul II to the Young People at the Kiel Center St. Louis, January 26, 1999) Remember, that it is a two way street. It is not fun to have friends who only talk and never listen to you. God wants to speak to our hearts. He is happy that we come to him, but we must be willing to listen to Him so we can grow in our faith. We have two ears and one mouth; we should listen twice as much as we speak to God. Listening instead of speaking is a sign of humility. "Humility is the foundation of prayer. It [prayer] connects us directly to God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in a constant exchange of love. When we come to God our Father with love and sincerity, He hears our prayers." [3]³

But how does God hear and answer everyone's prayers? God is omnipotent and omnipresent. That means He is everywhere and all powerful. He is not constrained to time or space. In fact, God calls each of us to a stronger faith with Him. God can answer any and all prayers at any moment in time.

I've prayed and prayed, and He hasn't granted my prayer! Why?

God is not a genie in a bottle. He doesn't just grant wishes for us whenever we need them. If we are praying for a request, think about if it would fulfill the will of God or not. We can and should pray for things like our health, as well as the health of others, for an upcoming test and the ability to remember what we studied. But by praying, "God just give me an A", and not studying, we are not following the proper will. If we are in proper prayer mode, we will know the difference between what we want and what God wants for us. There's a country song about thanking God for unanswered prayers. The problem with this song is that God *does* answer every prayer; it just may not be when we want it or what we want. God hears every prayer, and His answer is sometimes no. He does this because He knows what is best for us. When a child pleads to his/her parents to stay up past their bed time, the parents know if they allow it then the child won't get enough sleep, and will be cranky all the next day, or may be too sleepy for school and not learn.

Think of a time where you may have wanted something really bad, didn't get it, but then something even better came along. God knows what is best for all of us. Jesus promised us if you "seek, you will find, knock and it shall be opened for you..." [4]⁴, but in God's time not ours. One of the reasons we pray is to unite our will with the holy will of God. We pray the Sign of the Cross at both the beginning and at the end of our prayers. When we pray the Sign of the Cross before and after our prayer we are saying that we pray in the name of the Father,

and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. In other words we are saying only let this request occur if it is in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and if it is not of their name do not allow this request. We should ask whatever is on our hear and we should ask very directly, but we must always imitate our Lord as in the garden He said, "not my will but Thine be done." (Luke 22:42) Many people say, "*But I still don't feel like God hears me when I pray.*" Over and over again through the Scriptures, Jesus tells us that our Father hears our prayers. In the book of Sirach it says, "Though not unduly partial toward the weak, yet he hears the cry of the oppressed. He is not deaf to the wail of the orphan, not to the widow when she pours out her complaint..." [5]⁵. God has never and will never abandon us; we abandon Him.

What if I'm doing good things with my time and don't have time for prayer (I'm too busy to pray)? We are never too busy to pray.

Praying is like eating or drinking; after a while without it we begin to starve. If we are not praying, we are starving ourselves from God. There's a story of Blessed Mother Theresa; Her sisters came to her and requested they cut just an hour of prayer in the morning so they can attend to the sick and dying. They told her than they needed more time with the sick and the poor. Blessed Mother Theresa said, "You're right. We do need more time so that we can help them!" Mother Theresa then said, "Let's pray two hours instead of one". This extra hour of prayer gave the sister the grace and strength necessary to serve more efficiently, and instead of keeping them from helping the people, it actually helped improve the quality of care for the sick and dying. They were able to treat everyone. We are never too busy for prayer. Even if we are doing God's work, He asks us to pray to Him. Saint Louis, the King of France, was the father of eleven children, a crusader and the leader of one of the most powerful countries in the world. His biographer, who served in his court for many years, wrote that Saint Louis went to Mass daily and prayed morning and evening prayer (Liturgy of the Hours) daily. This would have been about a two-hour commitment to prayer. A person once asked Saint Louis how he managed to run his kingdom and still find time to pray. He responded by saying that he would not be able to run his kingdom if he did not make time to pray.

How do I pray? What sort of prayers should I do or say? The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that when Jesus prays, He is teaching us how to pray. Every thought, word, and deed Jesus does is a way for us to pray because He is God. When the disciples asked how to pray, he taught them the Our Father. This prayer is so important to the Church, that we pray it at every Mass. The Church, which is guided by the Holy Spirit, gives us an enormous wealth of prayers to use. We can pray together or individually by ourselves. The Church teaches us that the most appropriate places for prayer are personal or family spaces, monasteries, places of pilgrimage, and above all the church, where we can worship our lord in Eucharistic adoration. [6]⁶ It is good to give praise and thanksgiving to God everyday. We can pray before and after meals, pray when we see an ambulance go by for the people they are helping and their lives, pray for safe travels when we are traveling, or in-between class periods we can pray a Hail Mary or a decade of the rosary. There is never a time we can't connect ourselves with God.