

How Do We Pray?

How conscious are you of the meaning of the words you say during Mass? When you say “Amen,” do you always think about what it means and what you are responding to? Do you ever remain silent at Mass, perhaps zoning out and thinking of other things rather than joining in the song during the Communion procession? The words that we speak and sing at Mass are important because we use them to express our belief and to communicate our prayers to God. In order to be strong in our conviction and sincere in our prayer, we need to have our minds and hearts closely tuned in to our ears and lips.

It is also important that we realize that our prayers aren’t limited to the words that we personally utter. The first document of Vatican II, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, tells us: “The prayers addressed to God by the priest, who presides over the assembly in the person of Christ, are said in the name of the entire holy people and of all present” (33). This does not mean that the priest says the prayers in our place so that we can feel free to mentally check out. Rather, he is voicing the prayer that we are all saying in our minds and hearts along with him. This challenges us to listen closely so that we can join our prayer with the priest and all who are gathered.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How well do you know what it is you are saying during Mass, and the meaning behind it?
- How could you improve your understanding of what we are doing and saying?

ACTIVITY

In order to deepen your connection with the words you say at Mass, find the Order of Mass online or in a Missal. (If you are having trouble finding a copy of the Order of Mass, ask a priest or teacher to help you.) Underline or highlight all of the words that the assembly speaks during Mass. If you don’t know what some of those words mean, look them up in a dictionary. Make sure that you understand what we are saying, and try to figure out why we are saying those words at that time. We might be saying them as part of a prayer, part of a dialogue with the priest, or in response to a reading or another prayer. Next Sunday at Mass, try to focus on being more fully aware of what you are saying, and say it with conviction.

