

prayer formation

confirmation 1

SESSION I: PLANNING FOR PRAYER

Where to Focus First

Two common challenges when first starting to develop a consistent prayer life are developing the habit of praying every day and learning to focus on prayer for a significant period. Trying to tackle both hurdles at once can be difficult. Therefore, it is recommended to focus on mastering one before working on the other. Which makes the most sense to choose will depend on the individual. Below are some questions that can help to make that determination:

What do I think I will find hard/easy about praying every day?

What do I think I will find hard/easy about spending more than a few minutes praying?

Based on the above answers, which do I think will be more challenging for me at first, praying every day or spending more than a few minutes praying?

In general, do I find I do better in a project when I start with the harder or easier things first?

Based on the above answers, which do I think it makes the most sense for me to focus on first: developing the habit of praying every day or learning to focus on prayer for a significant period?

How to Choose Goals



SMART goals can help you to set goals that you can be successful at achieving and knowing when you have achieved them. Read about the 5 qualities of SMART goals and then set both a long-term goal (ideally with the end of Confirmation Preparation as your deadline) and a first short-term goal (to be tracked between now and next class).



Specific: What do I want to accomplish as my goal?

State exactly what it is that you want to achieve. Avoid vague language. The more specific the better. A large long-term goal will likely be broken up into smaller short-term goals.



Measurable: How will I know I have accomplished my goal?

Name particular quantifiable metrics that will be used for tracking progress. More than likely this will involve numbers, particularly for a long-term goal.



Attainable: Is this goal realistic for me?

Set an ambitious but realistic goal. It should be neither too easy nor too difficult to achieve. Something you both can and will do. Again, setting-up challenging but not impossible smaller goals alongside an overall big goal is recommended.



Relevant: Does this goal make sense for me?

A goal should serve a clear purpose and have a solid reason behind it. A goal should also relate well to the person making the goal.



Time-Bound: By when should I have achieved my goal?

By when should I have achieved my goal?

Include a deadline as part of your goal. This may include timelines for both long-term and short-term goals.

Examples of Long-term Prayer Goals:

- pray 15 minutes every day by the end of Confirmation Preparation.
 - If you are not already praying 15 minutes a day, this should be your long-term goal.
- in addition to daily prayer, pray a holy hour once a week each week, by the end of the year.
- pray the Rosary every day by Easter.
- etc.

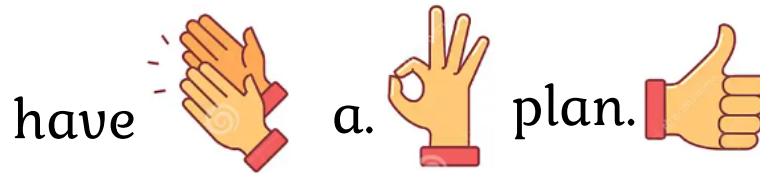
Examples of Short-Term Goals:

- pray for 1 minute every day for the next 2 weeks first thing in the morning.
- pray for 15 minutes before bed every Sunday for a month.
- pray by 8pm, seven days in a row, by the 1st of next month.
- etc.

My Long-Term Goal: _____

My Short-Term Prayer Goal: _____

How to set Yourself up for Success



When am I going to pray?

The more specific the better. This can either be a particular clock time (e.g. I will pray at 9 pm) or a particular time of day (e.g. I will pray right when I wake up). Be sure to pick a time that makes sense for your personality and schedule. The more consistent your prayer time the better, but plan for and make daily adjustments as needed.

Where am I going to pray?

It is best to choose a place for prayer where you can be both comfortable (but not so comfortable that you will fall asleep!) and undistracted. Also make sure that any resources (Bible, rosary, journal, etc.) you use for prayer are easily accessible. If you can have a consistent prayer place, you may consider setting up the space to help you enter into prayer, such as placing sacred images, lighting candles, etc.

What am I going to pray?

Know ahead of time how you are going to pray. If you have found a method of praying that helps you connect with the Lord, stick with that. If your prayer has been dry for a long time, maybe consider trying something new. You may need to adjust your prayer style based on how much time you have, where you will be praying, how you are feeling, etc.

Starting Points

If you are unsure of where to start, no need to worry! On the pages that follow, you will find several starting points for those new to consistent and planned prayer. Find the one that appeals the most to you, and never hesitate to go back to the list if you find that your chosen method of praying isn't quite working for you. These can also be a great resource for those looking to shake things up in their prayer life.

The Examen



The Examen is a way of praying that was given to us by St. Ignatius of Loyola that invites the person praying to reflect on their day. If only praying the Examen once a day, it is best prayed either at the end of the day or at the beginning of the day. The Examen can take a variety of different forms but will always involve the same basic movements of Placing, Reflecting, and Contemplating.

† Begin with the Sign of the Cross

† Place yourself in the Prescence of God

Remember that God is always with you. Recall that God loves you. Spend a few moments looking at yourself through God's eyes. Invite the Holy Spirit to be with you in this time of prayer and ask for the Spirit's help in hearing what God may be saying to you.

† Reflect on your Today & Tomorrow [if praying in the evening]
OR your Yesterday & Today [if praying in the morning]

- First, review the day you just had. Play it in your mind like a movie. Pause as needed.

Pause to thank God for good things that happened. Pause to apologize to God for sins you might have committed. Pause to pray for any intentions for people or things that may have come up over the course of the day. Pause to talk to God about anything you found exciting, interesting, etc. Pause to talk to God about anything you found worrying, troubling, etc.

- Next, review the day you are about to have. Play it in your mind like a movie. Pause as needed.

Pause to talk with God about any particularly anticipated moments throughout the day. Pause to pray for anything forthcoming that you are concerned about. Pause to ask God for guidance for any approaching situations that you are not sure how to handle and to ask Him to be with you. Pause to ask God for help making virtuous choices. Pause to pray for any intentions for people or things that may need prayers. Pause to thank God for any, as of yet, unexperienced blessings.

† Contemplate the Lord

Sit in quiet for a few moments or minutes with Jesus.
Allow Him to speak to your heart.

† Conclude your Prayer Time

With a simple prayer such as the Glory Be and the Sign of the Cross.

A.C.T.S.

A.C.T.S. is mnemonic device to help people remember four simple movements that together can make a beautiful, heartfelt prayer: Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. There is no specific format for praying each moment. The idea is simply to spend time with God, discussing each in turn, in whatever way helps the one praying best connect with the Lord.

† Begin with the Sign of the Cross

† Adoration

In Adoration, praise God for who He is and His greatness. You might reflect and speak to God about a time recently you have felt His presence. You might focus on something you have encountered recently that left you awed. You might recall God's great love for you.

† Contrition

In contrition, apologize to God for any sins committed. Speak to God about how these sins are not a true reflection of who He made you to be. You might also ask God for help to avoid such sins in the future and resolve to go to Confession soon.

† Thanksgiving

In thanksgiving, express gratitude for blessings. Spend time discussing with the Lord those things that bring you joy, relief, excitement, etc. These may be big or little things; they may be one-off or ongoing blessings. Speak to God about how they make you feel and why He has given them to you.

† Supplication

In supplication, we make requests of the Lord. Talk to God about things that you need or want. Talk to him about the needs or wants you have observed in others. Do not be afraid to ask for great things; do not be embarrassed to request small things. Trust that God hears and cares.

† Conclude by sitting in silence with the Lord

Allow Jesus to speak to your heart.

Conclude your prayer time with a simple prayer such as the Glory Be and the Sign of the Cross.

There's an App for That!

Do Neither the Examen nor A.C.T.S. feel Quite like your Style?

Not to worry- there are as many ways to pray as there are people in the world!

Our website has a great selection of resources to help you discover some of the many ways to pray.

<https://theholyrood.org/ways-of-praying>

Looking for a Tech Assist with your Prayer Life?

Below you will find information on two Catholic apps, *Hallow* and *Amen*. Both are great tools to help you get your prayer life jumpstarted if you are at a loss for where to begin. Both *Hallow* and *Amen*: have a substantial library of prayer resources; have resources for a wide range of types of prayers, lengths of prayers, etc.; allow for customized reminders and tracking; have a journaling feature.



Hallow is a Catholic prayer app that offers audio-guided meditation sessions to help us grow in our faith & spiritual lives and find peace in God. Explore over 1,000 different sessions on contemplative prayer, meditation, Catholic Bible readings, music, and more. ***Hallow* has several guides for both praying the Examen and using the A.C.T.S. method of prayer.** It also allows you to set-up prayer groups, where you can see what your friends are praying; ask for prayers; pray for others' intentions; etc.

Brought to you by the Augustine Institute, *Amen* is the free Catholic app that brings you beautiful prayers, faithful meditations, and nourishing Scripture to draw your mind, body, and soul to rest in God. Daily and topical reflections are provided based on your personal interests.



A.C.T.S. Prayer Together

Pray through the ACTS prayer together using the below outline:

- Begin with the Sign of the Cross
- **Leader:** We come together to offer our prayers to God, prayers of Adoration, of Contrition, of Thanksgiving, and of Supplication.

Adoration

- **Leader:** "Adoration, here we praise You, Lord, for who You are."
- One by one, each person offers at least one praise to God.
"God, I praise you because You are _____."
... pause for reflection ...
- **Reader:** "Come let us sing joyfully to the LORD; cry out to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with a song of praise, joyfully sing out our psalms. For the LORD is the great God, the great king over all." [Ps 95:1-3]

Contrition

- **Leader:** "Contrition, here we admit to You, Lord, that we have sinned and ask for forgiveness."
- One by one, each person admits at least one thing for which he/she is sorry.
"God, I am sorry that I _____."
- **Reader:** "If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing." 1Jn 1:9

Thanksgiving

- **Leader:** "Thanksgiving, here we express gratitude to You, Lord for what You have given us."
- One by one, each person shares at least one thing for which he/she is grateful.
"God, I am thankful for _____."
- **Reader:** "Enter his gates with thanksgiving, his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name; good indeed is the LORD, His mercy endures forever, his faithfulness lasts through every generation." -Ps100:4-5

Supplication

- **Leader:** "Supplication, here we petition You, Lord for what we need and want."
- One by one, each person requests at least one thing from God.
"God, I ask _____."
- **Reader:** "Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." -Phil 4:6-7

- **Leader:** We gather all of these prayers together, as we say, Our Father...
- Conclude with the Sign of the Cross.

SESSION 2: PRAYER PERSONALITIES

Instructions

1. For each group of words in the rows ACROSS, choose the word that is most descriptive of you here and now—not what you'd like to be—and circle the number 5 in front of that word.
2. For the same row across, choose the word that is least descriptive of you here and now and circle number 1.
3. Circle number 3 next to the second most descriptive word and number 2 next to the third most descriptive.
4. Do this for each row across.
5. Total up the circled numbers for each vertical column, and write the total at the bottom of the column.
6. Below each column's totals, you will see a prayer type that your highest score indicates is your preferred prayer type.

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D
5 3 2 1 Independent	5 3 2 1 Compassionate	5 3 2 1 Spontaneous	5 3 2 1 Factual
5 3 2 1 Logical	5 3 2 1 Creative	5 3 2 1 Adventurous	5 3 2 1 Thorough
5 3 2 1 Straightforward	5 3 2 1 Empathetic	5 3 2 1 Adaptable	5 3 2 1 Systematic
5 3 2 1 Visionary	5 3 2 1 Idealistic	5 3 2 1 Self-determined	5 3 2 1 Dependable
5 3 2 1 Demanding	5 3 2 1 Committed	5 3 2 1 Observant	5 3 2 1 Organized
5 3 2 1 Speculative	5 3 2 1 Curious	5 3 2 1 Enthusiastic	5 3 2 1 Realistic
5 3 2 1 Original	5 3 2 1 Expressive	5 3 2 1 Playful	5 3 2 1 Loyal
5 3 2 1 Challenging	5 3 2 1 Perceptive	5 3 2 1 Vivacious	5 3 2 1 Responsible
5 3 2 1 Clever	5 3 2 1 Friendly	5 3 2 1 Excited	5 3 2 1 Traditional
5 3 2 1 Questioning	5 3 2 1 Imaginative	5 3 2 1 Tolerant	5 3 2 1 Detailed
5 3 2 1 Decisive	5 3 2 1 Personable	5 3 2 1 Fun-loving	5 3 2 1 Devoted
5 3 2 1 Tough	5 3 2 1 Verbal	5 3 2 1 Pragmatic	5 3 2 1 Conscientious
5 3 2 1 Strategic	5 3 2 1 Concerned	5 3 2 1 Risk-taker	5 3 2 1 Reliable
5 3 2 1 Change agent	5 3 2 1 Supportive	5 3 2 1 Troubleshooter	5 3 2 1 Consistent
_____ Total Column A	_____ Total Column B	_____ Total Column C	_____ Total Column D
Thomistic	Augustinian	Franciscan	Ignatian

On the following (4) pages, you will find detailed descriptions as to each of these prayer types.

Thomistic Prayer Style

The Thomistic (or sometimes called Dominican) prayer type is named for the Dominican St. Thomas Aquinas. St. Thomas was a renowned philosopher and theologian who remains influential in Catholic scholasticism to this day. Thomists are characterized by a strong desire and pursuit of understanding in their spiritual lives. They prefer prayer lives that are marked by order, intellect, and clear objectives. For a Thomist a good approach to prayer will involve questions such as *Who?*, *What?*, *Where?*, *When?*, *Why?*, *How?*, and *With what helps?*. Applying these questions to a virtue, mystery of the Faith, theological Truth, etc. can help lead Thomists to contemplation, deeper conversation with God, and personal growth. Some pitfalls Thomistic types should be aware of are: the temptation to replace relational prayer with impersonal study; a need for perfection and control that can hinder authenticity with God and others; a tendency towards self-doubt and fear of failure that can impede spiritual progress. Scripture that Thomists may be particularly drawn to are the books of: John, 1 John, Wisdom, Hebrews, Psalms, Ephesians, and Colossians. St. John the Evangelist and St. Theresa of Avila both give examples of a Thomistic spirituality.

Thomist Reflection for Class

- Read Matthew 11:29, Luke 14: 7-11 and Corinthians 4:7
- Consider the virtue of humility.
- Reflect upon it using some of the following questions:
 - What does it mean?
 - What is the connection between humility and authenticity?
 - What does Jesus mean when he says, "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart?"
 - Think of some examples of persons in the Bible who were humble?
 - Where have you been humble (or humbled) in the past?
 - What are some examples where you have failed to be humble?
 - What changes do you need to make in your life to be humbler?
 - What might help you grow in humility?
 - What could you do this week to practice humility?
- Talk to God about what He has to say to you regarding the virtue of humility.
- Finish your period of prayer with asking God, Mary and the saints to help you to be humbler.

Thomist Prayer Suggestions

- Read the same Bible verse in a few different translations.
What light do the differences shed on the text?
- Read the daily Mass readings each day.
Write down five things you learn.
- Spend half of your prayer time reading a spiritual reading.
Then spend the other half of your prayer time talking to God about what you read.
- Trace a character through the Bible (Absalom, Elijah, Peter).
Make an outline of his life.
What virtues or vices does he emulate?

Augustinian Prayer Style

The Augustinian prayer type is named for the patristic St. Augustine. A great convert to the Faith, St. Augustine had his conversion after reading Romans 13 as a personal message from God to him. Augustinians are characterized by optimism, creativity, and focus on a personal relationship with God in their spiritual lives. They enjoy prayer lives infused with symbols, parables, analogies, and journaling to help them “read between the lines.” For Augustinians, a good approach to prayer is reading Scripture with an eye to applying it practically in their own lives and viewing it’s message as personally directed to them from God. Some pitfalls Augustinians types should be aware of are: a preference for more spontaneous prayer can lead to putting off prayer entirely; being particularly sensitive to criticism; struggling with prayer that feels repetitive. Scripture that Augustinians may be particularly drawn to are the books of: Isaiah, the Psalms, the Song of Songs, Hosea, the Gospels, and Paul’s epistles. St. Luke and St. Paul both give examples of a Augustinian spirituality.

Augustinian Reflection for Class

- Read Isaiah 43:1-5.
- Change the words “Jacob” and “Israel” to your own first name.
Try to imagine the Lord speaking these words directly to you.
 - What meaning would they have for you in your present situation?
 - Try to transpose the message from God to yourself today.
 - What is the Lord talking about when he tells you, “Fear not”?
 - What fears do you have?
 - Water and fire were the two greatest dangers that aroused the fears of ancient people; what in the world today arouses fear in you?
 - What is the Lord telling you to do when encountering these things?Imagine Jesus saying to you now, “You are precious in my eyes, and I love you.” “Fear not, I am with you.”
 - How do you see this to be true in your own situation today?Talk to God about what you are afraid of and how He may help you in times of fear.
- Finish your period of prayer with asking God, Mary and the saints to help you to be courageous.

Augustinian Prayer Suggestions

- Pray the Our Father slowly.
Take ten minutes to pray it once.
- Take a word or phrase that speaks to you (“Jesus,” “Lord, have mercy,” “I am yours”) and pray it very slowly for 5 minutes, trying to let go of everything but that one anchor.
- Read John 8:1-11
Has no one condemned you?” “No one, Lord.” “Neither do I condemn you. Go now and sin no more.”
Think of the faults you still have; consider them one by one.
Imagine [people] bringing you to Jesus to have him condemn you. Instead, he says to you, “Neither do I condemn you. Go now and sin no more.” How would this make you feel?
- Pick a verse (possibly from the upcoming Sunday readings) to memorize. Keep this verse in mind throughout the day for a week. Each evening, reflect on how that verse informed your day.
What did you understand more about it?
How did it effect your day?

Franciscan Prayer Style

The Franciscan prayer type is named for St. Francis. St. Francis founded the Franciscans a religious order dedicated to radical poverty and service to the poor. Franciscans are characterized by action-oriented, free-wheeling, experiential, spiritual lives. They prefer prayer lives that are rooted in the present, flexible, and engage the senses. For a Franciscan a good approach to prayer will make use of tangible prayer aids such as: sacramentals, incense, movement, music, art, nature, acts of service, etc. Some pitfall Franciscan types should be aware of are: being too focused on the physical aids in prayer that they become an end themselves instead of means for communicating with God; using spontaneous prayer throughout the day as an excuse for skipping intentional dedicated prayer time. Scripture that Franciscans may be particularly drawn to are the: the Gospels, the Psalms, and various canticles of praise. St. Mark, St. Peter, and St. Thérèse of Lisieux all give examples of Franciscan spirituality.

Franciscan Reflection for Class

- Read Daniel 3: 51-90
- Consider the majesty of God's creation as you read. Picture each thing the three youths are celebrating in their canticle with your mind. Imagine them in their most wonderful form praising the Lord. Reflect on how these things give God glory in the world and what they tell you about God.
- Spend some time talking to God about the good He has done for you in your own life. Offer Him praise and gratitude for these things and ask Him how He wants you to respond to these gifts and signs of love from Him.
- Finish your period of prayer with asking God, Mary and the saints to help you to be aware and grateful for God.

Franciscan Prayer Suggestions

- Take a walk through the woods or fields or along the road.
Look for signs of God's love, beauty, power, wisdom, goodness, balance.
- Make a massive list of all the ways God has blessed you,
taking time after you write each item to be still in God's presence and thank him for his love.
- Pick a small but regular sacrifice (no sugar in your coffee, no condiments, no added salt).
Thank Jesus for his sacrifice every time you make yours.
- Do something mindlessly physical while you pray—run or crochet or paint a wall.
Engaging your body can make it easier to surrender your mind.

Ignatian Prayer Style

The Ignatian prayer type is named for St. Ignatius of Loyola. St. Ignatius was a soldier turned priest who founded the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). Ignatians are characterized by a love of tradition and salvation history and value hard-work, practicality, and duty in their spiritual lives. They prefer prayer lives that have a regular regimen, are based in orderly and traditional forms of prayer, and uses their imaginations. The Examen and Ignatian Contemplation will be particularly useful approaches to prayer for Ignatian types. Some pitfalls Ignatian types should be aware of are: over reliance on rote prayer and prayer regimen that causes prayer becoming merely “going through the motions” or “box checking” than connecting with God; a tendency towards pessimism and practicality that may hinder fully experiencing the joy of the Lord. Scripture that Ignatians may be particularly drawn to are the books of: Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, the Psalms, Isaiah, the Gospels, Acts, and James. St. Matthew and St. James both give examples of a Ignatian spirituality.

Ignatian Reflection for Class

- Read Luke 15: 11-32
- Read the story of the Prodigal Son; try to place yourself in turn as the younger son, as the elder brother, and then as the father. Use your imagination to experience the story as they would have. What would they have been experiencing with their 5 physical senses? What would they have been experiencing emotionally? What would they have been thinking? Try to recall times in your life when you have acted as each of the three characters. What qualities of each do you think you might be called to in your life?
- Talk to God about which of the three you most relate to today and why.
- Finish your period of prayer with asking God, Mary, and the saints to help you become more contrite and more forgiving.

Ignatian Prayer Suggestions

- Read the Sunday readings ahead of time and where possible prayer through them with Ignatian Contemplation.
- Finish each day with the Examen Prayer [see page 5].
- See if you can read the same character different ways.
For example, read John 11 with Mary as trusting and Martha nagging, as we usually do.
Then read Martha as resigned and Mary dramatic.
How does this shed light on the events and on your own walk with Jesus?
- Offer each day—all prayers and sacrifices and blessings—for a specific person.

SESSION 3: WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?'



When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples, **“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”** They replied, “Some say *John the Baptist*, others *Elijah*, still others *Jeremiah* or *one of the prophets*.” He said to them, **“But who do you say that I am?”** Simon Peter said in reply, “You are the *Messiah, the Son of the living God*.” Jesus said to him in reply, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build

my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. – Matthew 16:13-18

Who other people say Jesus is may or may not be helpful to us. Even if we know what those titles mean, they may not hold any meaning for us personally. Just as he did 2000 years ago, Jesus asks the same questions of his followers now that he did then: “Who do **you** say that I am?” This is a question we all need to answer for ourselves. It will reflect something of who we are, and what are our relationship with Jesus is.

Reflecting on how we choose to address God can reveal a lot about us. It can show what we know about him and what our expectations are for him while we are praying. Are we just praying to him as someone who will give us stuff? Do we only focus on what God demands of us, and then lose sight of the love he has for us?

- In my prayer, how do I usually address God?
- What mental images do I have of God?
- Do these titles and images help me or limit me in my prayer?

How we address someone reveals something about our relationship with them. It also shows our comfort level with them. Finding the right way to address God in prayer will help to make it feel personal and natural, the same way you feel comfortable with nicknames you have for your friends as school.

- What titles or images for God do I want to use going forward in my prayer life?
- Why do I think these titles or images will help me in my prayer?

Finding New Ways to Address God

How you address God will change throughout your life, and that is a good thing. The way we talk to and address someone should change throughout our lives, especially as we get older. So, how do we find new ways to address God in prayer?

1. We can learn from other people. Yes, there are times when how someone else address God may not be helpful to us. However, there are also times when we might pick up a new way to address or think about God from someone else. Listen to how other people talk about God or ask someone like a priest or a grandparent for advice.
2. There are so many different titles for God throughout the Bible. The most common title, Father, comes from Jesus in the Gospels. When at Mass, listen to the readings and the Psalm to see if you can find a title or image for God that is helpful to you.
3. Litanies are unique prayers that typically petition the same person repeatedly using different titles each time. The Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus and the Litany of the Holy Spirit can be helpful for finding new titles for God. Both prayers can be found easily online.

Who am I Praying to?

One God, Three Persons

- We believe in a Triune God, so some answers to the question “Who are you praying to” are God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
- God the Father naturally comes with fatherhood imagery and is also closely associated with creation. Consider praying to him specifically when you need the love of a parent, or when you want to offer praise for something beautiful you have seen.
- God the Son is of course Jesus. Consider praying to him specifically when you need a teacher, a healer, or a role model.
- God the Holy Spirit is often referred to as the Sanctifier. Pray to him specifically when you need the strength to get through the difficult and turbulent parts of life. You are also currently preparing to receive the Holy Spirit fully and completely in Confirmation, so you can pray to him in preparation for Confirmation.

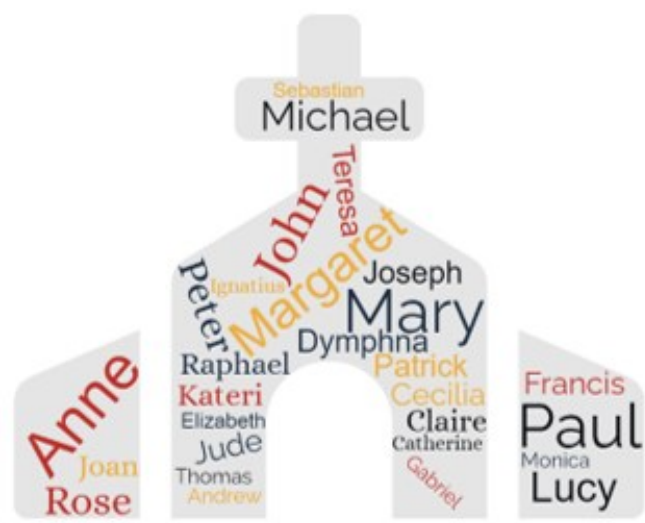
Other Heavenly Helpers

Another answer to the question “Who are you praying to” is other people in heaven, including Mary and the saints.

- On the cross, Jesus gave Mary to “the disciple whom he loved” as a mother. This means that, as his beloved followers, Jesus has given Mary to all of us as a mother. Sometimes we do not need a father, sometimes we need a mother. Consider praying to Mary in those moments when you need the love only a mother can give.
- The saints are people who know how hard it is to live as Catholics. They struggled with the demands of faith and everyday life, while not always prioritizing the faith. The saints are given to us as relatable people who chose God despite their shortcomings. Many saints are also associated with specific causes (for example musicians, athletes, mental illness, etc.), so a particular saint may appeal to you due to your interests and life circumstances.

Questions to consider:

- If you just pray to “God” in general, do you think praying to a particular person of the Trinity would be helpful to you? What about this person of the Trinity appeals to you?
- Is there anyone else in heaven whose help you might want to seek in prayer?



SESSION 4: GOING DEEPER WITH ROTE

The Lord's Prayer



**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;**

- What are the implications of God being “Our Father?”
- What is heaven?

thy kingdom come;

- What do we mean when we talk about God’s kingdom?
- Do we live our lives in a way that shows we want God to rule?

thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

- Do we take this petition seriously, especially in times where God’s will might be contrary to what we want?
- When we say this, do we truly believe that God only wants what is best for us, so that His will is ultimately for our good?

Give us this day our daily bread;

- One interpretation is that we are asking God for what we need today.
What is it that you need from God today?
- Another interpretation is that “daily bread” refers to the Eucharist.
Why do we ask God to give us the Eucharist?

and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;

- How often do we reflect on what we need forgiveness from God for?
- How often do we forgive others, or do we more often hold onto grudges?

and lead us not into temptation,

- How often do we pay attention to those things in our lives that tempt us to do what we know is wrong?
- Are we truly open to avoiding temptation, and allowing God to lead us away from them, or do we enjoy doing what we know is wrong?

but deliver us from evil.

- How often do we think about good and evil?
- Another translation of this is “deliver us from the evil one.” Do we believe in the “forces of evil” such as the devil, or do we just believe them to be scary stories to force us into doing things?

Amen.

Hail Mary

**Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.**

**Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death**

The first two lines of the prayer are praises for Mary that come straight from the Bible. The first is the angel's greeting to Mary during the Annunciation, when she is informed, and accepts, that she will be the Mother of God. The second is her cousin Elizabeth's greeting during the Visitation, and is the praise stated by the first person to recognize Mary as the Mother of God. Does knowing or thinking about the context of these lines in the prayer change how you pray it? The final line is a petition for Mary's prayers and intercession. We call upon her as a mother, the same way we might ask our earthly mothers to tell our siblings to do something. Is it comforting to know that we have a heavenly mother who we can ask for help?



Glory Be

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.**

In the Glory Be, we give praise to the Holy Trinity, our One God in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. How often in your prayer do you specifically think about all three, or do you just think of "God" in general? The prayer focuses on how God is eternal; he always was, always is, and always will be. It also emphasizes that God has always and will always be praised. Do we live our lives to always give him praise?

Prayer Before Meals

**Bless us, O Lord, and these Thy gifts,
which we are about to receive from Thy bounty,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

More than any other prayer, this is the one that can be said quickly and without thinking. If you are familiar with this prayer, do you ever stop to think about the words you are saying while saying it, or is it just the last step in the pre-dinner routine? Do we ever stop to think about food truly being a gift from God?

Prayer to St. Michael

**Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle.
Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil;
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray;
And do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God,
cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits
who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls.**



This prayer should be very familiar as we pray it at the end of each Mass in the Collaborative. When we say “defend us in battle” what battle are we in that we are asking for help with? Do we acknowledge the existence of angels? Do we acknowledge the existence of evil spirits like the devil? Do we live lives cautious of them and their desire to ruin us? In what way do you think they are trying to ruin souls?



Act of Contrition

**My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.
In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good,
I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things.
I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid
whatever leads me to sin.
Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us.
In his name, my God, have mercy.**

Yes, you can say the Act of Contrition outside of Confession! Do we really think of God as someone we should love above all things? Do we intend to make up for our wrongs? Do we intend to avoid sin, and whatever might tempt us into sin? Do I believe that Jesus died for me, as an individual, and not just as someone in a group?

SESSION 5: PHYSICAL AIDS FOR PRAYER

Rosary

The rhythm of the rosary allows for a simple, beautiful, meditation on the life of Christ and His Mother. While it can take some time to learn, after practice much of the praying of the rosary becomes second nature and one is able to enter into peaceful prayer. A faithful prayer of the rosary was once asked why she loved this simple repetitive prayer, she replied, “When I pray the rosary, I look at God and God looks at me.”

St. Teresa’s Flying Novena

The Flying Novena is a prayer attributed to St. Teresa of Calcutta, also known as Mother Teresa. A novena is a prayer that is prayed everyday for nine days. However, when faced with a particularly great and immediate need, Mother Teresa famously would pray her “Flying Novena” and taught those in her community, the Missionaries of Charity to do the same. The Flying novena consists of 10 Memorares prayed one after the other. In the Flying Novena, the first nine Memorares are said for the traditional Novena and the tenth Mother Teresa added as prayer of thanksgiving in advance, so confident was she that God would answer her prayers.

Visio Divina

While, the more familiar Lectio Divina is a way of praying with Scripture, Visio Divina is a similar method of praying but with images. In Visio Divina a person engages in thoughtful contemplation of an image. This image could be a painting, a photograph, a Biblical Illumination, a stained-glass window, a textile, etc. In Visio Divina those praying are invited to reflect deeply on an image and see what God may be trying to say to them through it and their experience of it.

Prayerful Coloring

Oftentimes, focusing while praying can be a struggle. This is particularly true when trying to pray contemplatively. Coloring while praying can be a great tool to help with this struggle and many prayer and scripture themed coloring pages are available today. Coloring while praying can help with focus by giving the hands something to do and the mind something to focus on and keep it from wandering. It is important when doing prayerful coloring not to let the coloring become the focus of the activity. Instead, the coloring should be kind of like white background noise that helps the quiet the body and mind, making it easier to converse with God.

Scriptural Illumination

For much of Christian history, scribes and artists have added embellishments such as color, calligraphy, illustrations, etc. to Scripture as a way to adorn and expound on the sacred texts. This practice is known as illuminating and has resulted in many famous works such as the Book of Kells. Whether a great artist or not, engaging in illuminating can help one to reflect on a particular Scripture passage, exploring its meaning, and discover what God is communicating through it.

Holy Cards

Holy cards typically feature images of saints, religious icons, or biblical scenes, and are often used as aids in personal prayer or meditation. Some people find that holding and focusing on a holy card helps them to connect with the spiritual figure depicted and to deepen their sense of devotion and faith. Holy cards may also be used as a reminder of a particular prayer or intention.

Scripture Verse

Praying with one verse of Scripture can be a powerful way to deepen one's relationship with God and gain insights into His Word. By selecting a verse that resonates with us, we can focus our minds and hearts on a specific message or theme and allow God's Spirit to speak to us through the words. Through prayer and reflection, we can gain a deeper understanding of the verse's meaning and how it applies to our lives, and we can be transformed by the truth and grace of God's Word.

Praying with Creation

Psalms 95 begins by saying, "Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord; cry out to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with a song of praise, joyfully sing out our psalms. For the Lord is the great God, the great king over all gods, whose hand holds the depth of the earth; who owns the tops of the mountains. The sea and the dry land belong to God, who made them formed them by hand" (cf. Psalm 95:1-5). Praying with Creation is a wonderful way to appreciate with awe and wonder the beauty and variety in the world God made and through this appreciation connect with our Creator.

Devotionals

Devotionals typically include a collection of prayers, meditations, or reflections that are designed to inspire and encourage spiritual growth. Engaging with a devotional on a regular basis can provide a sense of structure and guidance. Devotionals also can challenge those praying to reflect and grow in areas that they might not have thought to on their own.

Spiritual Reading

Spiritual reading can include a wide range of materials, such as Scripture, devotional texts, biographies of saints, or works of spiritual literature. By reading and reflecting on these materials, we can open ourselves up to the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit, and allow God to speak to us through the words on the page. This approach to prayer can be especially helpful for those who are seeking to deepen their understanding of God's will, as it allows us to learn from the insights and experiences of others who have walked the path of faith before us.

Journaling

Praying via journaling is a unique and personal way to connect with God and deepen one's spiritual practice. By recording our thoughts, emotions, and prayers in a journal, we create a space for reflection and self-discovery that can help us to better understand ourselves and our relationship with God. Journaling can also provide a sense of structure and accountability for our prayer life, as we commit to writing down our prayers and reflecting on them regularly. Through this practice, we can gain a deeper awareness of God's presence in our lives, and receive insights and guidance from the Holy Spirit that might otherwise go unnoticed.

SESSION 6: CHALLENGES IN PRAYER

Step One: Review

In which areas have you grown the most this year?

In which of these areas do you most want to improve?

Step Two: Identifying Other Challenges

Below are two additional challenges that frequently come up in prayer. These are especially important as they are challenges that may come up more frequently in the future than they are now. Prepare yourself to face these challenges in the future, especially post-Confirmation.

- **Accountability/Motivation**

Prayer does not come naturally to us, and so, we might not see prayer as something we want to do. In those moments when we don't feel like praying, we need something, or someone, to keep us praying. Who or what is that in your life? Is it an authority figure like a parent? Your friends? A reminder on your phone? Your pride requiring you to carry out a commitment you made? Find people and things in your life that are going to hold you accountable in prayer for those days where you just don't want to pray.

- **Lack of Success**

What happens when we pray for something and God does not give us what we want? What happens when we do not see him changing things in the world around us or in our own lives? What happens when we pray and feel nothing but discouragement? Unfortunately, we are not always going to feel something when we pray, nor will our prayers be magically answered in an instant. Sometimes God makes us wait for an answer, and sometimes it is not the answer we wanted. It is in those moments that we must persevere. Continue praying not just to get stuff from God, but to spend time with the one who created us and loves us.

Who or what is going to hold you accountable going forward?

Think especially of what motivation/encouragement you will need when you get discouraged about praying.

Step Three: Overcoming Challenges

How do we overcome challenges in prayer? Below are two tips that may help. They are meant to encapsulate everything we have done this year, and also to prepare you for future challenges in prayer.

- **Pray as We Live, Live as We Pray**

If we only pray to God when we want something from him, doesn't that feel disingenuous? This can be a common problem in prayer, when our prayer life feels disconnected from the rest of our life. If we otherwise live our lives pretending God does not exist, or acting as though he is unimportant to us, it will feel strange when we do turn to him in prayer. Many of the struggles we face in prayer, especially our motivation and struggles with lack of success, can be overcome if our everyday life matches up with our prayer life. How we live effects our prayer life, and how we pray reflects how we live.

- **Practice Makes Perfect**

Athletes, musicians, and actors all know that practice does matter. We build up muscle memory and stamina, and over time, we feel more and more comfortable performing. Likewise, we need practice in prayer. It's why we've spent so much time on it this year. Practice allows you to pray more consistently and pray for longer. You will also never stop needing practice. Even the greatest stars need to continue to practice, and the same is true of those devoted to prayer. Everyone has ways to grow and to enter more deeply into prayer.

For you, what is the most challenging part of prayer?
Name one practical step you can take to overcome this challenge.

A Summer of Prayer

