

## AT THE HEART OF PRAYER

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There is no other way to know and love Jesus Christ but through prayer. To be a disciple of Christ we must have a lived relationship with him through personal mental prayer. Prayer is not just a task to be accomplished. It is a call to respond to God from the heart: *The living and true God tirelessly calls each person to that mysterious encounter known as prayer. In prayer, the faithful God's initiative of love always comes first; our own first step is a response. As God gradually reveals himself and reveals man to himself, prayer appears as a reciprocal call, a covenant drama. Through words and actions, the drama engages the heart.* (CCC 2567)

As part of the Go Make Disciples initiative, Bishop Hying has challenged all of us to build or reinforce a habit of spending at least 15 minutes in prayer every day. What does that look like in practice? Fr. Mike Schmitz has a great video on Ascension Presents called [Tips for Praying](#), where he shares four practical tips for building and maintaining an intentional prayer life.

First, **WHEN** are you going to pray? This says a lot about the importance of prayer in our lives. Prayer should not be squeezed into the free spaces of our days; it should be the focal point that we build everything else around. Most of us cannot spend the entire day in prayer, but by ordering our other activities around prayer, we allow God to fill and transform all that we do. Consecrating the day to God by a morning offering as soon as you wake up invites God into everything else that happens that day.

Second, **WHERE** are you going to pray? Praying in a church may be ideal, but is not always possible. To pray well at home, we need to find a quiet place where we can be free of distraction for a designated period of time. Maybe it's a family altar, or a prayer room, or just a comfy chair with your Bible nearby. Giving God a sacred space in our homes shows how he takes precedence over all other spaces.

Third, **WHAT** are you going to pray? This can be overwhelming for Catholics because there are so many great options (Lectio divina, Rosary, Liturgy of the Hours, etc.). Fr. Mike's recommendation is to choose one thing and commit to it for a season (e.g. one month). That will give your routine some stability while also allowing you to evaluate and adapt over time. There are many great forms of prayer and God can speak to our hearts through all of them; we simply need to give him the opportunity.

Finally, **WHY** are you going to pray? This is essential in order to approach prayer from the right perspective. If your motivation to pray is focused exclusively on getting short-term "results" like passing a test, getting a raise, or even healing for a loved one, it becomes easy to lose heart, because God does not always answer that kind of prayer the way we want him to. But if your motivation to pray is primarily a desire to grow in relationship with Christ, then you will find the strength to persevere even through challenging times.

St. Louis de Montfort once said, "Pray with great confidence, with confidence based on the goodness and generosity of God and upon the promises of Jesus Christ. God is a spring of living water which flows unceasingly into the hearts of those who pray."