

Quite simply, prayer is conversation with God—it is coming into his presence, speaking to him, and listening. It is the place where we develop a relationship with him. We can know his call for our life, his plan for us. We can come to know his agenda and learn to sense what he wants us to do as we work with him.

And it doesn't matter how you pray!

Some of us prefer formal prayers, like the rosary; others read the psalms as prayer; still others talk to God in their own words. Some of us even pray in different ways on different occasions.

The only part of prayer that does matter is the state of your heart. The Catechism tells us that “according to Scripture it is the heart that prays. If our heart is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain” (2562).

Every day, make it a point to spend time with and talk to God.

This is a practical guide you can use to pray. Don't get overwhelmed as you go through these steps. You don't have to do all of them every time to have productive prayer.

Prayer Intentions for those in Prison
and in the Military

That all will be able to find a time for daily prayer.

That all will know and experience God's presence, love, and peace.

That all those in harm's way will be protected.



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Prayer is the place where
we come to know Christ
personally.



Choose a Time and Place:

- Make it a definite time dedicated only to prayer.
- Try to find a place that is free from distraction.

Enter into God's Presence—Make yourself present and open to God by:

- Turn your heart to God, yearning for his presence and his voice (“Be still and know that I am God” Psalm 46:11).
- Examine your conscience, repenting of sin and accepting forgiveness (Psalm 51).
- Set aside anxieties, problems, or conflicts in your mind. Don't let them dominate your time with God; trust that he will take care of you. (“Let us be rid of every encumbrance” Hebrews 12:1-2.)

Praise and Thank God—Spend a few minutes expressing your love and gratitude to God for his plan of salvation (read Ephesians 1):

- The Father destines us in love to be his children (verse 5).
- In Jesus we have redemption through his blood and forgiveness of our sin (verse 7).
- The Holy Spirit who is present in each one of us guarantees our inheritance (verse 14).

Talk to God—Imagine him listening to you intently, his heart filled with love and compassion:

- Tell him how much you love him.
- Tell him all about your plans, your hopes, and your dreams.
- Tell him about your wants and needs, your sufferings and failures, your problems and weaknesses, and those you want him to bless.
- Ask him to share with you his love, and his desires and plans for your life and loved ones.

Read the Scriptures—Join with the whole Catholic Church by reading the daily Mass readings. Then read the meditation in *The Word Among Us*. Ask yourself,

- What is God showing me about himself?
- What is God saying to me today about myself, my family, my relationships, my responsibilities, my future, etc.?
- What Scripture verse can I memorize today?

Listen to God—You may hear the Holy Spirit

- Within your heart during your daily prayer time, or as you receive the Eucharist, or as you read the Bible;
- Leading you in dramatic ways, or more often, through the everyday rhythms of your life;
- Speaking to you through a friend, or something you are reading, or a homily, or even his creation.

(Even if you don't think you're hearing anything, keep trying. Remember: trial-and-error is one of the best ways to learn how to hear from God. Each of us has to find the best way for us to pray and hear from Jesus.)

Put Your Prayer into Action—Before leaving prayer, write in a journal

- What you have prayed for;
- What God has said to you or revealed to you;
- What you want to take with you through the day so that your prayer will bear fruit.