

GOD CALLS US TO PRAY

What is your idea of prayer? Is it the key in deepening your relationship with God?

Do you imagine kneeling in church at Mass, or perhaps saying a few words to God at the dinner table before a meal, or in the privacy of your room before you go to sleep?

Is prayer a **conversation** with God in which you ask him to grant you certain requests or thank him for specific blessings?

While these are ways to pray and reasons for doing so, this should be just the beginning of the place of prayer in our daily life as a Christian Catholic.

Thinking of prayer as a **conversation** with God is a good start. But, like any good conversation and relationship, prayer requires talking as well as listening. Prayer is defined as the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.

Prayer also requires a silent focus on God, allowing an opportunity for him to speak to our hearts and minds, and for us to grow in our understanding of who he is. God calls us to meet him and welcome him into our hearts in this way. Of course, when we pray we can also ask God to grant our needs or those of others, but we need to be open to accepting God's will in the way he responds [not relating God to a prayer vending machine: we pray and he gives instantaneously].

In addition to making requests of God when we pray, there are many other reasons to pray. Basic forms of Christian prayer, modeled on the Book of Psalms, include prayers of blessing, petition, intercession, thanksgiving and praise.

In the words of St. Paul, we are called to daily "*pray without ceasing*" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). This means that we are called to form a habit of praying regularly and in a deliberate manner—with our earnest intention. When we pray, we primarily address our prayers to God, the Father—on occasion, seeking the prayerful intercessions of the saints—such as the Virgin Mary.

A prayerful and personal **relationship** with God is important for each one of us and can be developed through various forms of prayer and does not necessarily require us to address God with words. This form of praying is called vocal prayer and is probably the most familiar to most of us. Vocal prayer can include the recitation of traditional prayers, such as the Lord's Prayer, the Rosary, or the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, as well as talking to God in our own words to tell him of our needs, hopes, thanks, and our love for him.

We can also pray through **meditation**. Meditation is a form of silent prayer that engages our minds, imagination, and emotions in reflecting on and coming to a deeper understanding of God's message to us, as revealed through Sacred Scripture or through His Church. One common way to engage in meditative prayer is through *lectio divina*, or holy reading. This method of prayer involves reading a Scripture passage and meditating on its meaning in our lives today.

Similar to meditation is **contemplation**; however, this form of prayer involves being fully focused on *being* in the presence of God—surrendering our thoughts and very self to Him.

Through the Holy Spirit, we can develop a deeper relationship with God through prayer.

(SR: FAITH FUSION: Knowing, Loving, and Serving Christ in the Catholic Church, p. 168)