



What should I know about prayer?



GOSPEL



ANSWERS

they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening." So he went in to stay with them. And he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?"

– Luke 24:13-35

Saints & inspirational stories

St Alphonse Rodriguez

St Alphonse had a great impact on many people's lives by simply being an example of prayer and hard work. People saw that he was a man who spoke with God often and would turn to him for advice. He was not a great scholar, just a handy man. He shows us that everyone can speak to God.



Mother Teresa's life of prayer

Mother Teresa is known as an incredible saint who worked hard in service of the poorest of the poor. She had no fear of speaking to the most influential leaders about the truths of her faith and what was right and wrong. This strength and courage came from her faith in God, found in prayer.



Team discussion

After reading over the YOUCAT numbers on the following pages, how do you think the Youth Catechism answers the question of the week? Were there any words or ideas that you did not fully understand that you would like to understand better?

Answer in your own words:



YouCat numbers for this week



#469 What is prayer? Prayer is turning the heart toward God. When a person prays, he enters into a living relationship with God. Prayer is the great gate leading into faith. Someone who prays no longer lives on his own, for himself, and by his own strength. He knows there is a God to whom he can talk. People who pray entrust themselves more and more to God. Even now they seek union with the one whom they will encounter one day face to face. Therefore, the effort to pray daily is part of Christian life. Of course, one cannot learn to pray in the same way one learns a technique. As strange as it sounds, prayer is a gift one obtains through prayer..

#471

Why is Abraham a model of prayer?

Abraham listened to God. He was willing to set out for wherever God commanded and to do what God willed. By his listening and his readiness to make a new start, he is a model for our prayer. Not many prayers of Abraham have been handed down. But wherever he went, he set up altars, places of prayer, to God. And so along the journey of his life he had many sorts of experiences with God, including some that tried and unsettled him. When Abraham saw that God was going to destroy the sinful city of Sodom, he pleaded for it. He even wrestled stubbornly with God. His plea for Sodom is the first great intercessory prayer in the history of the People of God.

#468 What should a person yearn for most? The ultimate and greatest longing of a person can only be for God. To see him, our Creator, Lord, and Redeemer, is unending blessedness.

#470 What prompts a person to pray? We pray because we are full of an infinite longing and God has created us men for himself: "Our hearts are restless until they rest in you" (St. Augustine). But we pray also because we need to; Mother Teresa says, "Because I cannot rely on myself, I rely on him, twenty-four hours a day." Often we forget God, run away from him and hide. Whether we avoid thinking about God or deny him—he is always there for us. He seeks us before we seek him; he yearns for us, he calls us. You speak with your conscience and suddenly notice that you are speaking with God. You feel lonely, have no one to talk with, and then sense that God is always available to talk. You are in danger and experience that a cry for help is answered by God. Praying is as human as breathing, eating, and loving. Praying purifies. Praying makes it possible to resist temptations. Praying strengthens us in our weakness. Praying removes fear, increases energy, and gives a second wind. Praying makes one happy.



CONQUEST WEEKLY ACTIVITY GUIDE



#472 How did Moses pray? From Moses we learn that “praying” means “speaking with God”. At the burning bush God entered into a real conversation with Moses and gave him an assignment. Moses raised objections and asked questions. Finally God revealed to him his holy name. Just as Moses then came to trust God and enlisted wholeheartedly in his service, so we too should pray and thus go to God’s school. The Bible mentions Moses’ name 767 times—so central is he as the liberator and lawgiver of the people of Israel. At the same time Moses was also a great intercessor for his people. In prayer he received his commission; from prayer he drew his strength. Moses had an intimate, personal relationship with God: “The Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (Ex 33:11a). Before Moses acted or instructed the people, he withdrew to the mountain to pray. Thus he is the original example of contemplative prayer.

#478 Why can we be confident that our prayer is heard by God? Many people called on Jesus during his earthly life for healing, and their prayers were answered. Jesus, who rose from the dead, listens to our petitions and brings them to the Father. Even today we know the name of the synagogue official: Jairus was the name of the man who begged Jesus for help, and his prayer was answered. His little daughter was deathly ill. No one could help her. Jesus not only healed his little girl, he even raised her from the dead (Mk 5:21-43). Jesus worked a whole series of well-attested cures. He performed signs and miracles. The lame, the lepers, and the blind did not ask Jesus in vain. There are testimonies also of prayers answered by all the saints of the Church. Many Christians can tell stories of how they called to God and God heard their prayer. God, however, is not an automat. We must leave it up to him how he will answer our petitions.

#486 Why should we petition God? God, who knows us through and through, knows what we need. Nevertheless, God wants us to ask, to turn to him in times of need, to cry out, implore, lament, call upon him, indeed, even to struggle with him in prayer. Certainly God does not need our petitions in order to help us. It is for our own sake that we are supposed to offer prayers of petition. Someone who does not ask and does not want to ask shuts himself up in himself. Only a person who asks opens himself and turns to the Author of all good. Someone who asks goes back home to God. Thus the prayer of petition brings man into the right relationship to God, who respects our freedom.



#483: What are the names of the five main types of prayer? The five main types of prayer are blessing and adoration, prayer of petition, prayer of intercession, prayer of thanksgiving, and prayer of praise.

#482: What role did prayer play among the first Christians? The first Christians prayed intensively. The early Church was moved by the Holy Spirit, who had come down upon the disciples and to whom they owed all their influence. "They held steadfastly to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

#484: What is a prayer of blessing? A prayer of blessing is a prayer that calls down God's blessing upon us. From God alone all blessings flow. His goodness, his closeness, his mercy—that is blessing. "May the Lord bless you" is the shortest prayer of blessing. Every Christian should call down God's blessing upon himself and upon other people. Parents can trace the Sign of the Cross on their child's forehead. People who love each other can bless one another. Furthermore a priest, by virtue of his office, blesses explicitly in the name of Jesus and on behalf of the Church. His request for blessings is made especially effective through Holy Orders and the prayer power of the whole Church.

#485: Why should we adore God? Every person who understands that he is God's creature will humbly recognize the Almighty and adore him. Christian adoration, however, sees not only the greatness, omnipotence, and holiness of God. It also kneels before the divine Love that became man in Jesus Christ. Someone who really adores God kneels down before him or prostrates himself on the ground. This gives expression to the truth about the relation between man and God: He is great and we are little. At the same time, man is never greater than when he freely and devoutly kneels down before God. The unbeliever who is seeking God and is beginning to pray can find God in this way.

#488: Why should we thank God? Everything that we are and have comes from God. Paul says, "What have you that you did not receive?" (1 Cor 4:7). Being grateful to God, the giver of all good things, makes you happy. The greatest prayer of thanks is the "Eucharist" ("thanksgiving" in Greek) of Jesus, in which he takes bread and wine so as to offer in them to God all of creation, transformed. Whenever Christians give thanks, they are joining in Jesus' great prayer of thanksgiving. For we, too, are transformed and redeemed by Jesus, and so from the depths of our hearts we can be grateful and tell God this in a variety of ways.



#487: Why should we petition God for other people? As Abraham intervened by his prayer for the inhabitants of Sodom, as Jesus prayed for his disciples, and as the early Christian community looked “not only to their own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil 2:4), so too Christians always pray for everyone—for people who are dear to their hearts, for people who are not close to them, and even for their enemies. The more a person learns to pray, the more profoundly he realizes that he has ties to a spiritual family through which the power of prayer is made effective. With all my concern for the people whom I love, I stand in the midst of the family of mankind and may receive strength from the prayers of others and may call down divine assistance for others.

#489: What does it mean to praise God? God needs no applause. But we need to express spontaneously our delight in God and the rejoicing in our hearts. We praise God because he exists and because he is good. We thereby join even now in the eternal praise of the angels and saints in heaven.

#490 Is it enough to pray when you feel like praying? No. Someone who prays only when he feels like it does not take God seriously and will leave off praying. Prayer thrives on faithfulness.

#495 Can we be sure our prayers are heard? Our prayers, which we offer in Jesus’ name, go to the place where Jesus’ prayers also went: to the heart of our heavenly Father. We can be sure of this if we trust Jesus. For Jesus has opened again for us the way to heaven, which had been barred by sin. Since Jesus is the way to God, Christians conclude their prayers with the phrase, “we ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord.”

#498 Can you pray anywhere? Yes, you can pray anywhere. Nevertheless a Catholic will always look also for those places where God “dwells” in a special way. Above all these are Catholic churches, where our Lord is present in the Tabernacle under the appearance of bread. It is very important for us to pray everywhere: in school, on the subway, during a party, in the midst of our friends. The whole world has to be drenched with blessings. But it is also important for us to visit sacred places, where God waits for us, so to speak, so that we can rest in his presence, be strengthened, replenished, and sent forth by him. A genuine Christian is never just sightseeing when he visits a church. He lingers a moment in silence, adores God, and renews his friendship and love for him