



A Note on Prayer

Prayer is a universal *human activity*. It can be found in every country, in every period of human history, at every age of life. It expresses the awareness of a relationship with a Being greater than oneself, distinct from oneself, present within oneself.

Christian prayer is clearly marked by *faith in God who has made himself known*, not only as the Creator of the universe, but as *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*. The faithful pray to the Father through the Son in the Spirit.

We learn to pray, just as we learn to speak, walk or sing. The Gospel offers a profound insight into this. Impressed by Jesus' prayer, the disciples ask him to teach them how to pray: he teaches them the "Our Father," with its two poles: God and humanity. Several other Gospel passages show Jesus at prayer, in close contact with his Father (*abba* = dad), jubilant under the action of the Holy Spirit (Mt 11:25-27), in anguish before death

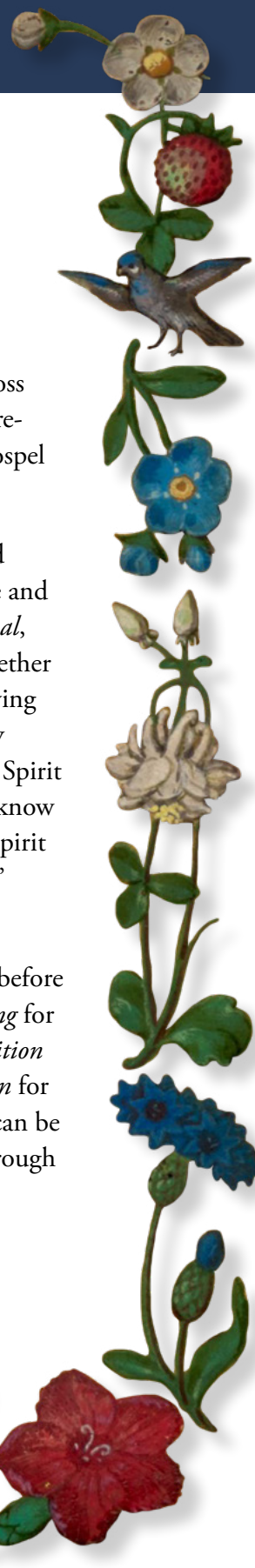
(Lk 22:39-46), and confident on the Cross (Mt 27:46; Lk 23:46). The great prayer recounted in chapter 17 of Saint John's Gospel reveals the heart of Christ.

Prayer is *personal*, that is, it expresses and enriches the faith of each person, unique and precious in God's eyes. It is also *communal*, since it is lived in union with others, whether physically or spiritually present, those living in this world and those who have already entered into eternity. It is *spiritual*: "The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words" (Rom 8:26).

Prayer takes on different *hues*: *adoration* before God's unfathomable mystery, *thanksgiving* for his countless and unceasing benefits, *petition* in the face of daily difficulties, *intercession* for our sisters and brothers in humanity. It can be *vocal* (out loud), *mental* (in the mind through

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meditation); the body participates (seated to listen; kneeling to adore and implore), eyes closed and recollected. It has a daily rhythm: morning or evening prayer, the Lord's Day....

Prayer is *nourished* by the *word of God*, the Old and New Testaments, in particular the book of Psalms that Jesus himself used; it is also nourished by the liturgy, the privileged place of God's presence; by the teaching of the Church's *Magisterium*: for example, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which devotes its entire fourth part to prayer (n. 2558-2865); in the life and experience of *the saints*, who are inspiring models and privileged intercessors, especially the *Blessed Virgin Mary*.

Prayer is connected to daily life, with its ups and downs. Jesus himself showed this when he rejoiced at the Holy Spirit's action in the humble (Lk 10:21) and when he trusted in his Father after the death of his friend Lazarus (Jn 11:41-42).

We can pray in different places: in nature, in the bedroom, in a church; alone, as a couple, as a family, as a Church.

The *cycle of the liturgical year* colours Christian prayer, from Advent to Christmas, from Lent to Easter and Ordinary Time, with the great mysteries of the faith (Creation, Incarnation, Redemption, Eternal Life) and the figures of the saints. The sacraments, lived out in prayer, are all essential places for this, with the celebration of the Eucharist and its extension, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, at the forefront.

The official prayer of the Church (the liturgy of the hours), the recitation of the rosary, the stations of the Cross or other devotions remain important sources for the life of prayer. Gazing at the Cross of Christ, statues of the Blessed Virgin or other saints is a great help in fixing the mind. Sacred music can also inspire us.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (n. 2650) states: "in order to pray, one must have the will to pray."

"Looking to Jesus" (Heb 12:2), the faithful can have their faces radiant and be transformed in him, as the experience of the Transfiguration (Lk 9:29) reminds us.

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(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2650)



The resources on prayer that have been compiled by the CCCB Ad hoc Committee for the Preparation of the Jubilee can be a great help to all of us as we seek to grow in the life of prayer. These consist of:

- [“Teach us to Pray”: Living the Year of Prayer in Preparation for Jubilee 2025](#), from the Dicastery for Evangelization
- [38 Catecheses on Prayer](#), by Pope Francis
- [44 Catecheses on Prayer](#), by Pope Benedict XVI
- [Webinar Series: A Great Symphony of Prayer: The Our Father as a Programme of Life](#), by Dr. Josephine Lombardi
- [Webinar Series: A Great Symphony of Prayer: Mary, the Saints and Scripture](#), by Dr. Josephine Lombardi



Episcopal Commission for Doctrine

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Elements of pages 7, 15 and 21 of the *Rosarium Psalter*. Illuminator, Simon Bening, 1483 or 1484-1561. Boston Public Library, MA.

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