

September 11, 2020

Good morning all,

Friday, September 11th. A day for prayer indeed. Please stop for a few moments and pray for those souls who were living their daily life years ago and became part of a permanent moment in time where time seemed to stop as we watched the hijacking of everyday airplanes used as weapons. I still remember very clearly that day and all my movements and conversations. I hear stories today that I have heard before and they still bring tears. The souls and the families left behind still need your prayers today.

Please also remember a prayer for Dottie Stafford today at 11:00 during her funeral Mass.

1. Today's Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/091120.cfm>

2. ***The RE Corner with Jan Heithaus***: The Catechism of the Catholic Church is divided into four major sections. The fourth section is titled Christian Prayer. That one fourth of the Catechism is dedicated to discussing prayer indicates how important prayer is to our lives as Christians. In this month of September when our virtue of the month is prayer, we will begin to touch upon different aspects of prayer.

"This mystery (the Faith), then, requires that the faithful believe in it, that they celebrate it, and that they live from it in a vital and personal relationship with a living and true God. This relationship is prayer." CCC 2558

3. Quote of the Day: Try to disengage yourself from so many cares, and take a little time to think of God and to rest in Him. Enter into the secret chamber of your heart, and banish from it everything save your Creator alone and what can help you to find Him; then having closed the door, say to Him, with all your soul: "Lord, I seek Thy divine countenance - teach me to find it." *St. Augustine*

What a wonderful message from St. Augustine..."take a little time to think of God and to rest in Him." Find your rest today with God.

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Prayer and Virtue



Virgin Praying. Anonymous (Wikimedia Commons).

Before we learn how to pray, or learn how to pray *better*, we should understand what prayer is.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church gives several definitions of prayer. For example:

“Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God” (no. 2559, quoting St. John Damascene).

We are familiar with requesting things from God. But prayer encompasses much more than that. Making requests is often wordy prayer. “The raising of one’s mind and heart to God” may not include any words at all.

The Catechism tells us (nos. [2626-2643](#)) that Christians have practiced many *forms* of prayer throughout the centuries, including:

- Blessing and Adoration
- Petition
- Intercession
- Thanksgiving
- Praise

These forms speak about the content of prayer, *what* we pray.

The Catechism also notes three *expressions* of prayer (nos. [2700-2719](#)).

They explain *how* we pray:

- Vocal Prayer
- Meditation
- Contemplation

These expressions of prayer are the particular focus of this column, especially meditation. We will begin, however, with vocal prayer, the expression of prayer that even young children are familiar with. Vocal prayer, prayed well, blends into meditation. And meditation prayed well prepares a soul for the gift of infused contemplation. Infused contemplation is a mysterious communion with God that is difficult to talk about concretely. It is the prayer of saints. But it is also what God desires for each of us. The Catechism says about meditation:

“This form of prayerful reflection is of great value, but Christian prayer should go further: to the knowledge of the love of the Lord Jesus, to union with him.” Christian prayer “should go ... to union with him.” We should seek this union with Jesus through prayer.

When a runner competes, he needs to know where the finish line lies. Otherwise, no matter how fast he runs, he will lose the race. He might even run *away from* his goal rather than toward it. If we want to understand prayer and pray well, we need to know where a life of prayer should lead us. That place, that finish line, is union with Christ.

Even beginners in prayer should know something about contemplation. We need to remember the goal as we practice vocal prayer and meditation, so that we don't run the wrong direction. True prayer leads toward fuller union with Jesus.

This brings us back to our question: What is prayer?

St. Teresa of Avila called prayer “friendly converse with God. When we are just learning to pray, we recite prayers written by others. We talk to God using the prayers of the Church, the saints or our parents and teachers. This is vocal prayer. After embracing vocal prayer, we desire to converse with God in our own words. The Catechism calls this prayer meditation to emphasize that it is not mere chatting with Jesus, but listening to him in the Scriptures, pondering his words, and speaking to him about them. Contemplation is a conversation with God that goes beyond words, images, and concepts. It is a loving gaze between God and the soul.

Without friendly converse between God and the soul there is no true prayer. And every loving conversation with God is prayer, whether we use many words, few, or none.

How do we make sure we are conversing with God when we attempt to pray? We will consider that question in the next article, by looking at a simple (and familiar) vocal prayer.

(Connie Rossini; This article was originally published in The Catholic Voice, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of Omaha.)