

September 13, 2020

Happy Grandparent's Day!

1. Today's Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/091320.cfm>

2. **The RE Corner with Jan Heithaus:** Prayer....the beginning. What is a vocal prayer that we do daily? One that we may not even think about as we do it? Read the attached article and see.

3. Quote of the Day: *St. Teresa of Avila* - a Doctor of the Church for her teachings on prayer. "Though you have recourse to many saints as your intercessors, go especially to St. Joseph, for he has great power with God." **St. Joseph, Pray for Us!**

4. Catholicism for Dummies classes are resuming ~ in progress from last spring. We are midway through the book, but all are welcome to join in. Classes are Thursday afternoon from 3:00-4:30 and 6:30-7:30 pm. Contact Jan Heithaus in the office if you are interested.

Cool, cloudy, and showers today.



Enjoy your day of rest.



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Reverent and Loving Vocal Prayer



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In my last post, we defined prayer as a loving conversation with God. We saw that vocal prayer uses words composed by others. Today we will examine how to say a familiar vocal prayer in a manner that ensures we are truly praying. We will use one of the simplest prayers imaginable, so simple that you may not even think of it as a prayer: the sign of the cross.

The sign of the cross was one of the first prayers we learned, likely when we were small children. If you are like me, you never spent much time thinking about this prayer itself, or how to pray it lovingly and reverently. You probably thought of it as more of an introduction to prayer than a prayer itself.

Most of us developed bad habits in making the sign of the cross, and unless someone has pointed this out to us, still practice those bad habits today. We mutter “Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Amen,” instead of the complete prayer. We make the gesture quickly, unthinkingly, and if in public might refrain from making it at all.

Correcting Bad Habits

Why begin practicing prayer with something so simple? Please do not dismiss this subject as beneath you. Praying even these simple words with the right disposition can prepare us for an intimate relationship with God through contemplation. On

the other hand, if we do not pay attention when we make the sign of the cross, we will likely practice bad habits with more complex prayers as well. Bad habits are difficult to break and good habits are difficult to establish. We need to begin simply.

Let's return to the analogy of prayer as running a race. No one gets up one morning and decides to run a marathon before he has run shorter distances. He builds up to it slowly. Pushing himself too hard at the beginning can backfire. If he starts with running one mile and slowly adds to it, he builds muscle and endurance until he is ready for the race.

Making the sign of the cross with loving reverence helps us form the habit of thinking about God when we pray. St. Teresa of Avila, who was named a Doctor of the Church for her teaching on prayer, says, "If a person neither considers to Whom he is addressing himself, what he asks, nor what he is who ventures to speak to God, although his lips may utter many words, I do not call it prayer" (*Interior Castle*, 1.1.9).

A conversation requires attention. If another person speaks to us but we do not listen, we are not conversing. Likewise, if we answer him absent-mindedly, we make no connection with him.

A Powerful Prayer

Early Christians considered the sign of the cross to be one of the most powerful prayers. It is the sign of our salvation, the sign with which we were marked at Baptism, the sign by which we are blessed at the end of each Mass. It invokes all three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

Over the next couple of weeks, I challenge you to correct any sloppiness you have allowed to creep into this practice. Say all the words, slowly and clearly: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." Make the full gesture. Imagine the Crucifixion as you pray it. Thank the Lord for saving you from sin. Or reflect on the doctrine of the Trinity. It only takes a few seconds of loving attention to start down the way of true prayer.

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