



EVANGELIUM INSTITUTE

TEACHING TRUTH - INSPIRING FAITH

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Session 4: The Life of Prayer

Objectives:

1. We will go over some guides to prayer
2. We will discuss different types of prayer
3. We will talk about prayer in our own lives

Key CCC Paragraphs: CCC 2697-2758

Key Scripture Verses: Gen 18:16-33, 32:10-13; Jer. 5:1; Ez 22:30; Esther 13:8-17; Matt 17:21

Definitions:

- **Vocal Prayer:** The form of prayer which is most readily accessible to all people, it is the use of words (audible and silent) as we praise, worship, petition or thank the Lord.
- **Mental Prayer:** The engagement of thought, imagination, emotion and desire as we meditate on the mysteries of the faith. It is a higher form of prayer than vocal prayer.
- **Contemplative Prayer:** The highest form of prayer, it is a gift, a receiving from the Lord that reveals to us the depth of our relationships with Him. However, though it is a receiving it is not exclusively passive. The soul must still say “yes” to God.
- **Spousal or Conjugal Prayer:** The prayer between spouses which helps to bring about the end of the sacrament of matrimony, which is the salvation of each spouse through and with the other spouse.

Suggested Reading List:

Ciszek, Fr. Walter J. *He Leadeth Me: An Extraordinary Testament of Faith* Image 1973
Escriva, St. Jose Maria *The Way* (available free online)
Howard Thomas *Hallowed Be This House: Finding Signs of Heaven in Your Home* Ignatius 1979
Keating, Dcn. James *Spousal Prayer: A Way to Marital Happiness* IPF 2013
De Sales, St. Francis *Introduction to the Devout Life*
Rossini, Connie *The Q & A Guide to Mental Prayer* Four Waters Press 2019
Stenson, James *Father, The Family Protector* Scepter Press 2004
Von Hildebrand, Dietrich *Humility: Wellspring of Virtue* 1948

Some Notes on Spousal Prayer

The Goals of Spousal Prayer:

- To behold the other
- To listen to the other
- To forgive the other and ask for forgiveness
- To be Christ for the other, i.e. to suffer for each other

Practical Tips:

- Pray to the Holy Spirit
- Set a time and place
- Keep it simple, start small
- Use a crucifix or an icon or some other object of meaning
- Limit the conversation to the heart
- Keep it honest
- Be patient

Things to pay attention to:

- If it's causing stress, take a break, try something different, but don't give up
- If it's bringing peace, that's a good sign, and stick to it.
- If it is dry, bland, ineffective, pray to the Father to help and be patient.

“Beholding, listening, and forgiving your spouse are essential prerequisites for praying with your spouse since prayer is *the most intimate experience* a couple can share, and, thus, *demand*s the deepest level of *trust*. Prayer is such an experience because, by its nature, it brings a couple to the very source of their love, the outpouring life and beauty of the Trinity itself.”

-Dcn. James Keating from *Spousal Prayer: A Way to Marital Happiness*

SOME HELPFUL PRAYERS

...for those we have lost or who are dying

For a “Happy Death”

O Blessed Joseph, who yielded up thy last breath in the arms of Jesus and Mary, obtain for me this grace, O holy Joseph, that I may breathe forth my soul in praise, saying in spirit, if I am unable to do so in words: “Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give Thee my heart and my soul.”

Amen.

Novena prayer for persons we know who may be in Purgatory

O most sweet Jesus, through the bloody sweat which Thou didst suffer in the Garden of Gethsemane, have mercy on these Blessed Souls. Have mercy on them.

R. Have mercy on them, O Lord.

O most sweet Jesus, through the pains which Thou didst suffer during Thy most cruel scourging, have mercy on them.

R. Have mercy on them, O Lord.

O most sweet Jesus, through the pains which Thou didst suffer in Thy most painful crowning with thorns, have mercy on them.

R. Have mercy on them, O Lord.

O most sweet Jesus, through the pains which Thou didst suffer in carrying Thy cross to Calvary, have mercy on them.

R. Have mercy on them, O Lord.

O most sweet Jesus, through the pains which Thou didst suffer during Thy most cruel Crucifixion, have mercy on them.

R. Have mercy on them, O Lord.

O most sweet Jesus, through the pains which Thou didst suffer in Thy most bitter agony on the Cross, have mercy on them.

R. Have mercy on them, O Lord.

O most sweet Jesus, through the immense pain which Thou didst suffer in breathing forth Thy Blessed Soul, have mercy on them.

R. Have mercy on them, O Lord.

(Recommend yourself to the Souls in Purgatory and mention your intentions here)

Blessed Souls, I have prayed for thee; I entreat thee, who are so dear to God, and who are secure of never losing Him, to pray for me a miserable sinner, who is in danger of being damned, and of losing God forever. Amen.

-St. Alphonsus Liguori

This can be prayed for nine consecutive days, especially for a particular individual or family member whom you wish to pray for.

SOME HELPFUL PRAYERS

...for those we have lost or who are dying

Litany for the Holy Souls in Purgatory (general)

Each request is answered with "My Jesus Mercy."

O Jesus, Thou suffered and died that all mankind might be saved and brought to eternal happiness. Hear our pleas for further mercy on the souls of:

My dear parents and grandparents,
My brothers and sisters and other near relatives,
My godparents and sponsors of Confirmation,

My spiritual and temporal benefactors,
My friends and neighbors,
All for whom love or duty bids me pray,

Those who have suffered disadvantage or harm through me,
Those who have offended me,

Those whose release is near at hand,
Those who desire most to be united to Thee,
Those who endure the greatest sufferings,
Those whose release is most remote,
Those who are least remembered,
Those who are most deserving on account of their services to the Church,

The rich, who are now the most destitute,
The mighty, who are now powerless,
The once spiritually blind, who now see their folly,
The frivolous, who spent their time in idleness,

The poor who did not seek the treasures of heaven,
The tepid who devoted little time to prayer,
The indolent who neglected to perform good works,
Those of little faith, who neglected the frequent reception of the Sacraments,
The habitual sinners, who owe their salvation to a miracle of grace,

Parents who failed to watch over their children,
Superiors who were not solicitous for the salvation of those entrusted to them,
Those who strove for worldly riches and pleasures,
The worldly minded, who failed to use their wealth and talent for the service of God,

Those who witnessed the death of others, but would not think of their own,
Those who did not provide for the life hereafter,
Those whose sentence is severe because of the great things entrusted to them,

The popes, kings, and rulers,
The bishops and their counselors,

SOME HELPFUL PRAYERS

...for those we have lost or who are dying

My teachers and spiritual advisors,
The priests and religious of the Catholic Church,
The defenders of the Holy Faith,

Those who died on the battlefield,
Those who fought for their country,
Those who were buried in the sea,

Those who died of stroke,
Those who died of heart attacks,
Those who suffered and died of cancer,
Those who died suddenly in accidents,
Those who died without the Last Rites of the Church,
Those who shall die within the next 24 hours,

My own poor soul when I shall have to appear before Thy judgment seat,

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them: For evermore with Thy Saints, because Thou art gracious.

May the prayer of Thy suppliant people, we beseech Thee, O Lord, benefit the souls of Thy departed servants and handmaids: that Thou mayest both deliver them from all their sins, and make them to be partakers of Thy redemption. Amen.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord. And let perpetual light shine on them. Amen.

May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

Prayer for someone suffering from cancer.

St. Anthony Mary Claret, during your life on earth you often comforted the afflicted and showed such tender love and compassion for the sick and sinful. Intercede for me now that you rejoice in the reward of your virtues in heavenly glory.

Look with pity on me [*or on the person for whom you are praying*] and grant my prayer, if such be the will of God.

Make my troubles your own.

Speak a word for me to the Immaculate Heart of Mary to obtain by her powerful intercession the grace I yearn for so ardently, and a blessing to strengthen me during life, assist me at the hour of death, and lead me to a happy eternity. Amen.

SOME HELPFUL PRAYERS

...for those we have lost or who are dying

Psalm 130 : Prayer for the dead

Commonly known as the *de profundis clamavi*

Out of the depths I call to you, Lord;
Lord, hear my cry!
May your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.

If you, Lord, keep account of sins,
Lord, who can stand?
But with you is forgiveness
and so you are revered.

I wait for the Lord,
my soul waits
and I hope for his word.

My soul looks for the Lord
more than sentinels for daybreak.
More than sentinels for daybreak,
let Israel hope in the Lord,

For with the Lord is mercy,
with him is plenteous redemption,
And he will redeem Israel
from all its sins.

V. Lord, hear my prayer. R. And let my cry come unto Thee.

Let us pray.

O God, the Creator and Redeemer of all the faithful; grant to the souls of Thy servants departed the remission of all their sins, that by our devout supplications they may obtain that pardon which they have always desired. Who livest and reignest world without end. Amen.

V. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

R. And let perpetual light shine upon them.

V. May they rest in peace.

R. Amen.

Prayer for those who have experienced a miscarriage:

Father, in the name of Jesus I come to you with a broken heart because of the loss of my baby. I know that your ears are open to my prayers. I am hurting and restless and feel overwhelmed. Please rescue me out of this pit of hopelessness and fear. You know the tears that I cry and my sleepless nights. Father, I give you all my hurts, worries, and cares. I thank you that you are not finished with me yet. I will chose not to be held down by a spirit of discouragement and grief. By your grace I will stand firm and trust you. Help me to remember that others are going through the same pain as me, help me to get strong, so that with the same comfort that you comfort me with, I will be able to comfort others.

-Patty Larson

MEDITATION

One of the most beautiful expressions in the Bible of confident abandonment into the hands of God is Psalm 23:

¹A psalm of David.

I The LORD is my shepherd;
there is nothing I lack.

²In green pastures he makes me lie
down;

to still waters he leads me;

³he restores my soul.

He guides me along right paths
for the sake of his name.

⁴Even though I walk through the valley of
the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff comfort me.

II ⁵You set a table before me
in front of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

⁶Indeed, goodness and mercy will pursue
me

all the days of my life;

I will dwell in the house of the LORD
for endless days.

We would like to come back for a few moments to this affirmation of the Bible, which is ultimately surprising, that God leaves us wanting for nothing. This will serve to unmask a temptation, sometimes subtle, which is very common in the Christian life, one into which many fall and which greatly impedes spiritual progress.

It concerns precisely the temptation to believe that, in the situation which is ours (personal, family, etc.), we lack something essential and that because of this, our progress, and the possibility of blossoming spiritually, is denied us.

For example, I lack good health, therefore I am unable to pray as I believe it is indispensable to do. Or my immediate family prevents me from organizing my spiritual activities as I wish. Or, again, I don't have the qualities, the strength, the virtue, the gifts that I believe necessary in order to accomplish something beautiful for God, according to the plan of a Christian life. I am not satisfied with my life, with my person, with my circumstances, and I live constantly with the feeling that as long as things are such, it will be impossible for me to live truly and intensely. I feel underprivileged compared to others and I carry in me the constant nostalgia of another life, more privileged, where, finally, I could do things that are worthwhile.

I have the feeling, according to Rimbaud's expression, that "the real life is elsewhere," elsewhere than in the life that is mine. And that the latter is not a real life, that it doesn't offer me the conditions for real spiritual growth because of certain sufferances or limitations. I am concentrated on the negatives of my situation, on that which I lack in order to be happy. This renders me unhappy, envious and discouraged, and I am unable to go forward. The real life is elsewhere, I tell myself, and I simply forget to live. Oftentimes it would take so little for everything to be different and for me to progress with giant steps: a different outlook, a view of my situation which is one of confidence and hope (based on the certitude that I will lack nothing). And then doors would open to me of unhoped-for possibilities for spiritual growth.

MEDITATION

We often live with this illusion. With the impression that all would go better, we would like the things around us to change, that the circumstances would change. But this is often an error. It is not the exterior circumstances that must change; it is above all our hearts that must change. They must be purified of their withdrawal into themselves, of their sadness, of their lack of hope: *Happy are the pure in heart; they shall see God* (Mt. 5:8) Happy are those whose hearts are purified by faith and hope, who bring to their lives a view animated by the certitude that, beyond appearances to the contrary, God is present, providing for their essential needs and that they lack nothing. If they have that faith, they will indeed see God: they will experience that presence of God which will accompany them and guide them. They will see that many of the circumstances that they thought negative and damaging to their spiritual life are, in fact, in God's pedagogy, powerful means for helping them to progress and grow. Saint John of the Cross says that "it is very often the case that just when the soul believes itself lost that it gains and profits most." This is very true.

Our minds are sometimes so clouded over by that which is not going well, by that which (according to our own particular criteria!) should be different in our situations, that we forget the positive. Moreover, we are unable to profit from any aspect of our situations, even the aspects that only appear to be negative, in order for us to draw closer to God, to grow in faith, love and humility. That which we lack is, above all, the conviction that "the love of God turns to profit all that he finds in me, the good as well as the bad" (Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, inspired by the John of the Cross). However many imperfections we may have, rather than lament them and try to rid ourselves of them at any price, they could be splendid opportunities to make progress – in humility as well as in confidence in God and His mercy – thus in saintliness.

The fundamental problem is that we employ too much of our own criteria as to what is and what is not good and we don't have enough confidence in the Wisdom and Power of God. We don't believe that He is capable of utilizing everything for our good and that never, under any circumstance, would He leave us lacking in the essentials – that is to say, lacking anything that would permit us to love more. **Because to grow or to enrich one's spiritual life is to learn to love.** Many of the circumstances that I consider damaging could, in fact be, for me, if I had more faith, precious opportunities to love more: to be more patient, more humble, more gentle, more merciful and to abandon myself more into the hands of God.

Let us then be convinced of this and it will be for us a source of immense strength: God may allow me to occasionally lack money, health, ability and virtues, but He will never leave me in want of Himself, of His assistance and His mercy or of anything that would allow me to grow unceasingly ever closer to Him, to love Him more intensely, to better love my neighbor and to achieve holiness.

-Rev. Fr. Jacques Philippe *Searching For and Maintaining Peace* pgs. 41-45

What do you believe are obstacles to your growing in the spiritual life?

And how might they be seen not as obstacles but as opportunities for spiritual growth?