

# Speaking of God

## Honest Christianity for a World Seeking Hope

### Do we pray to God or with God?



#### A Good Question

Most people, I suspect, pray *to* God who feels a bit distant from their daily lives. This is a more traditional understanding: we lift our prayers to a higher power—to God as the source of help, wisdom, mercy, or strength. Such a stance in prayer is rooted in reverence and a sense of God's otherness—that God is greater than us, and we seek guidance or intervention from

beyond ourselves. This form often includes the familiar forms of praise, petition, thanksgiving, and confession.

But others are learning to pray *with* God, as Jesus did. Such prayer reflects a more intimate, relational spirituality. It suggests a companionship with God. Instead of speaking to a distant deity, we're joining in what God is already doing—like co-laboring in the harvest. It emphasizes the indwelling presence of God as we have discussed it here. And it suggests the idea that God is already praying in us and with us, that our lives are a sort of on-going conversation with the Holy One.

#### A possible balance: both

A possible balance might be to pray *to* God in whom we trust—but also *with* God in familiar friendship. We believe God is already present in our silence, longings, and even in our words. As St. Paul wrote in Romans 8:26, "the Spirit helps us in our weakness for we don't know

how to pray as we should. But that very Spirit of the Holy One helps us with prayerful sighs too deep for words" (RMV). So, perhaps the deepest prayer happens with God—when we're not just speaking, but listening, being, and loving in union with God.