

Homily Summary – 29th Sunday of Ordinary Time – What is Prayer? How do I Pray?

Overview: This homily reflected on the gift and necessity of prayer - our vital and personal relationship with the living God. Drawing from Scripture, the Catechism, and real-life examples, we explored what prayer is, why it matters, and how we can grow in it. He also reminded us that prayer - whether personal, communal, or liturgical - is the heartbeat of a joyful Christian life.

Main Points

1. What Is Prayer?

- Prayer is not just saying words; it's communion with God.
- St. John Damascene defines it as "the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God" (CCC 2559).
- The Catechism adds that it is a "vital and personal relationship with the living and true God" (CCC 2558).
- Religion itself exists to serve this relationship - one restored by Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross.

Bible:

- *Exodus 17:8–13* — As long as Moses prayed, Israel prevailed.
 - *Psalms 121:1–2* — "My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."
 - *2 Timothy 3:16–17* — All Scripture is inspired by God for our growth in holiness.
 - *Luke 18:1–8* — Jesus teaches us to persevere in prayer.
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2. Different Ways to Pray: Prayer takes many forms, each helping us lift our hearts to God in different ways:

- **Vocal Prayer** - Using traditional prayers like the *Our Father* or *Hail Mary*.
- **Mental Prayer** - Speaking to God from the heart or meditating on His Word.
- **Ignatian Contemplation** - Using imagination to enter the Gospel scenes and encounter Jesus personally.

"We want prayer to become like breathing - something natural and constant, as we live aware of God's presence."

3. Posture and Disposition in Prayer

- The best posture is the one that helps you pray best - kneeling, standing, sitting, or even walking.
 - What matters most is not *how* we position our bodies, but how we position our hearts.
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4. Prayer Alone and Prayer Together

- **Personal prayer** deepens our private relationship with God.
- **Family prayer** builds unity and faith in the home.
- **Conjugal prayer** strengthens marriage with God's grace.
- **Communal prayer**, especially at Mass, unites us as the Body of Christ.

Both private and communal prayer are essential. Each nourishes the other—personal prayer makes our communal prayer deeper, and communal prayer strengthens our personal devotion.

5. The Mass: The Highest Form of Prayer

- The Mass is the Church's **supreme act of worship**—the perfect prayer of Jesus offered through His Body, the Church.
- "Liturgy" means "the work of the people," and the Mass involves all our prayers—praise, thanksgiving, sorrow, and petition.
- Like the Passover for the Jews, the Eucharist makes **present** the saving power of Christ's sacrifice here and now.
- "We want to pray the Mass, not just say the Mass."

Bible: *Luke 22:19* — "Do this in memory of me."

Catechism: CCC 1362–1368 — The Eucharist is a memorial that makes Christ's sacrifice present.

6. The Role of Reconciliation

- Sin strains our relationship with God, but in **Confession**, we pray most powerfully: humbly, honestly, and heart-to-heart with Jesus. Confession restores friendship with God and renews our prayer life.

Other Key Takeaways

- Prayer is a relationship, not a ritual.
- Persevere in prayer - God is always listening with love.
- Follow Mary's example of constant awareness of God's presence.

Reflection Questions

1. Do I believe that God delights in hearing me pray?
2. How often do I take time for personal prayer each day?
3. What is one way I can pray more deeply at Mass this week?
4. How can my family or friends grow stronger through praying together?
5. How can I imitate Mary's prayerful heart in my daily life?

Rhyme summary: When prayer feels tough or faith seems small, just lift your heart to God – He hears it all. At Mass we join the saints above, re-living Christ's redeeming love. Whether in silence deep or spoken word ... each prayer is precious, each prayer heard. So live your life the Jesus way, and talk to God both night and day.

Reasons to come to Mass each weekend

Exodus 20:8 - "Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy."

Acts 2:42 - "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

Hebrews 10:24-25 - "And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Luke 22:19 - "Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'"

John 6:53-54 - "So Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day.'"

Matthew 18:20 - "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

Psalms 122:1 - "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'"

Colossians 3:16 - "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God."

Additional resources to learn more about God and the Catholic faith

- Check out the resource list available on www.frmerkley.com
- Catholic Answers: <https://www.catholic.com/>
- Word on Fire: <https://www.wordonfire.org/>
- Formed: <https://formed.org/>
- The Coming Home Network: <https://chnetwork.org/>
- Catholic Exchange: <https://catholicexchange.com/>
- Dynamic Catholic: <https://dynamiccatholic.com/>
- The Augustine Institute: <https://augustineinstitute.org/>
- Ascension Press: <https://ascensionpress.com/>
- EWTN: <https://www.ewtn.com/>
- The Catholic Company: <https://www.catholiccompany.com/>
- Busted Halo: <https://bustedhalo.com/>
- CatholicCulture.org: <https://www.catholicculture.org/>
- The Thomistic Institute: <https://thomisticinstitute.org/>
- Ignatius Press: <https://www.ignatius.com/>
- Catholic Education Resource Center (CERC): <https://www.catholiceducation.org/>