

Forms of Prayer

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

Prayer and Christian life are inseparable (CCC 2745). And, Prayer is a vital necessity (CCC 2744).

1) Blessing & Adoration- Blessing expresses the basic movement of Christian prayer: it is an encounter between God and man. In blessing, God's gift and man's acceptance of it are united in dialogue with each other. The prayer of blessings is a man's response to God's gifts: because God blesses, the human heart can in return bless the One who is the source of every blessing (CCC 2626). Adoration is the first attitude of man acknowledging that he is a creature before his Creator. It exalts the greatness of the Lord who made us and the almighty power of the Savior who sets us free from evil. Adoration is homage of the spirit to the "King of Glory," respectful silence in the presence of the "ever greater" God. Adoration of the thrice-holy and sovereign God of love blends with humility and gives assurance to our supplications (CCC 2628).

2) Prayer of Petition - The first movement of the prayer of petition is *asking forgiveness...* it is a prerequisite for righteous and pure prayer. A trusting humility brings us back into the light of communion between the Father and his Son Jesus Christ and with one another, so that "we receive from him whatever we ask." Asking forgiveness is the prerequisite for both the Eucharistic liturgy and personal prayer (CCC 2631). When we share in God's saving love, we understand that *every need* can become the object of petition. Christ, who assumed all things in order to redeem all things, is glorified by what we ask the Father in his name... (CCC 2633).

3) Prayer of Intercession - Intercession is a prayer of petition which leads us to pray as Jesus did. He is the one intercessor with the Father on behalf of all men, especially sinners. He is "able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. The Holy Spirit "himself intercedes for us...and intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (CCC 2634).

4) Prayer of Thanksgiving - Thanksgiving characterizes the prayer of the Church which, in celebrating the Eucharist, reveals and becomes more fully what she is. Indeed, in the work of salvation, Christ sets creation free from sin and death to consecrate it anew and make it return to the Father, for his glory. The thanksgiving of the members of the Body participates in that of their Head (CCC 2637).

5) Prayer of Praise - Praise is the form of prayer which recognizes most immediately that God is God. It lauds God for his own sake and gives him glory, quite beyond what he does, but simply because He IS. It shares in the blessed happiness of the pure of heart who love God in faith before seeing him in glory. By praise, the Spirit is joined to our spirits to bear witness that we are children of God, testifying to the only Son in whom we are adopted and by whom we glorify the Father. Praise embraces the other forms of prayer and carries them toward him who is its source and goal: the "one God, the Father, from whom all things are for whom we exist" (CCC 2639). The Eucharist contains and expresses all forms of prayer: it is "pure offering" of the whole Body of Christ to the glory of God's name...it is the "*sacrifice of praise*" (CCC 2643).

Expressions of Prayer

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

The Church invites the faithful to regular prayer: daily prayers, the Liturgy of the Hours, Sunday Eucharist, the feasts of the liturgical year (CCC 2720).

1) Vocal Prayer – Vocal prayer is an essential element of the Christian life; it is founded on the union of body and soul in human nature, associates the body with the interior prayer of the heart, following Christ’s example of praying to his Father and teaching the Our Father to his disciples (CCC 2722). Through his Word, God speaks to man. By words, mental or vocal, our prayer takes flesh. Yet it is most important that the heart should be present to him to whom we are speaking in prayer: “Whether or not our prayer is heard depends not on the number of words, but on the fervor of our souls (CCC 2700).

2) Meditation Prayer – Meditation is above all a quest. The mind seeks to understand the why and how of the Christian life, in order to adhere and respond to what the Lord is asking. The required attentiveness is difficult to sustain (CCC 2705). Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. This mobilization of faculties is necessary in order to deepen our convictions of faith, prompt the conversion of our heart, and strengthen our will to follow Christ. Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ, as in the rosary. This form of prayerful reflection is a great value, but Christian prayer should go further: to the knowledge of the love of the Lord Jesus, to union with him (CCC 2708).

3) Contemplative Prayer – Contemplative prayer is the simple expression of the mystery of prayer. It is a gaze of faith fixed on Jesus, an attentiveness to the Word of God, a silent love. It achieves real union with the prayer of Christ to the extent that it makes us share in his mystery (CCC 2724). Entering into contemplative prayer is like entering into the Eucharistic liturgy: we “gather up” the heart, recollect our whole being under the prompting of the Holy Spirit, abide in the dwelling place of the Lord which we are, awaken our faith in order to enter into the presence of who awaits us. We let our masks fall and turn our hearts back to the Lord who loves us, so as to hand ourselves over to him as an offering to be purified and transformed (CCC 2711).