



HIGHLIGHTS FOR TALK 11

HOW AND WHY CATHOLICS PRAY

- ❖ From the Gospels, we know that Our Lord prayed constantly and insisted that His followers should do so, too. He taught them that they “ought always to pray and not lose heart” (Lk 18:1). He actually exhorted them to “pester” God with their prayers!
- ❖ *Prayer is all-important* because *God wants it of us*. Why? Because it is the best way for us *to show our love for Him* -- the only thing we can give Him *that He can get nowhere else!*
- ❖ How does one show love for another? *By spending time with Him and opening up one’s heart to Him*. That’s what prayer is -- spending time with God and having a heart-to-heart conversation with Him. God wants to have an intimate relationship with each one of us -- and He invites us to shape this relationship through prayer. We have to set aside time to talk to God, or our relationship with Him won’t grow -- and we will have missed an opportunity to grow in holiness.
- ❖ Perhaps the most important thing to understand in embarking on a life of prayer is that *God initiates the conversation and He alone makes it fruitful*. We must resolve to let Him act in our soul in complete reliance on His limitless love and mercy. If instead we rely on our own strength, our prayer life will wither up when our strength inevitably fails.
- ❖ We need to be firmly convinced that the main thing we bring to our prayer is our *neediness as little children* before the One who is our Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, and Sanctifier -- *One who loves us to distraction!*
- ❖ We must strive to bring these essential dispositions to our conversations with God:
 - Faith that God is present and that He will give us the grace we need to pray fruitfully;
 - Fidelity and determination to persevere in prayer, no matter what our feelings or degree of enthusiasm;
 - Purity of intention: that we pray to please God, not to satisfy ourselves; and
 - Humility and poverty of heart: “Humble people, for whom God is everything, are happy to accept the fact that they are nothing. They don’t carry on about their wretchedness: they consider it a stroke of luck, since it gives God the chance to show how merciful He is” (Philippe 14-23).
- ❖ Prayer can take a number of forms:
 - Perhaps the most familiar is **vocal prayer**, which is recited either by oneself or in a group. Examples are the *Our Father*, the *Hail Mary*, the *Angelus*, and the *Holy Rosary*.
 - Then there is **liturgical prayer**, the Church’s public acts of love and worship that are accomplished through the celebration of the Sacraments, and especially in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.



Moms Transmit the Faith

- **Mental prayer** is a quiet, heart-to-heart conversation with God whereby we share with Him our joys, sorrows, anxieties, successes, and failures -- and make ourselves available to listen and to receive His inspirations, strength, and grace.
- Finally, **contemplative prayer** is a gift God may give to those who are advanced along the pathway of prayer; it consists of the mind and heart fixing themselves on God and gazing at Him in an act of love.
- ❖ Whatever form prayer takes, it will always have at least one of the following purposes:
 - *Praise*: acknowledging God's infinite goodness;
 - *Thanksgiving*: expressing our profound gratitude for the innumerable favors and benefits God has bestowed on us;
 - *Contrition*: acknowledging our sinfulness, asking pardon for our offenses against God, and making atonement for past sins;
 - *Petition*: asking God for the graces and favors we hope to receive for ourselves and for others.
- ❖ Mental prayer *often involves a struggle*. Here are some suggestions for successfully engaging in this struggle:
 - *Establish a set time and place for your prayer*. We should do our utmost to stick to the time and place we have chosen, so that we don't stand God up. This is where we need to put perseverance into practice!
 - *Begin each time of prayer with a sincere act of humility*, telling Our Lord that you are there to do His Will and to count on His mercy.
 - *Reflect on the Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ, which helps in getting to know God better*. He became man to redeem us; but in doing so, He also drew closer to us. We can read a brief scene from the Gospels, and then use our imaginations to put ourselves into that scene and live through it. God will use this effort to make Himself -- and the way He does things -- better known to us.
 - *How should we react if the chaos of family life, and its unexpected but inevitable interruptions keeps us from our prayer?* First, we should try to remain calm and not lose our peace. God knows well what we're dealing with -- it's His Will that we are wives and mothers of families, isn't it? Second, we should *never* give up our efforts to pray, but instead do what we can, no matter how little that might be, considering the obstacles we're facing.
 - *Don't abandon your prayer or shorten it if you experience tiredness, dryness, or distractions*. These obstacles are inevitable. No one would ever persevere in prayer if adversities took away from its effectiveness. In truth, they do not. As a matter of fact, continuing with prayer in the face of these hurdles can be much more pleasing to God than the prayer that flows effortlessly and moves the spirit. Remember, the main thing is to struggle to pray *because God wants it*; He will be moved to respond to faithful prayer that is made with difficulty, because that prayer is like to be made with greater love.