

PILLAR IV – CHRISTIAN PRAYER – THE LORD’S PRAYER

Theme 1: Prayer in the Christian Life

“Great is the mystery of the faith!” The Church professes this mystery in the Apostles’ Creed (*Part One of the Catechism*) and celebrates it in the sacramental liturgy (*Part Two*), so that the life of the faithful may be conformed to Christ in the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father (*Part Three*). This mystery, then, requires that the faithful believe in it, that they celebrate it, and that they live from it in a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God. This relationship is prayer.” (CCC 2558)

MESSAGE

1. What is Prayer?

- a) Prayer is God’s gift: God seeks us in prayer because he loves us. It is “a response of love” where “Christ comes to meet every human being” and allows us to respond to the “free promise of salvation”.
(CCC 2559-2561, 2590; Jn 7:37-39; 19:28; Isa 12:3; 51:1; Zech 12:10; 13:1)
- b) Prayer is a covenant: When we pray with our whole hearts, prayer is a covenant between God and us. In a covenant both parties respond, and so we can see prayer as a “covenant relationship” where both God and man are responding.
(CCC 2562-2564)
- c) Prayer is communion: Prayer is a “living relationship”. It brings us into communion with the Holy Trinity, and in a special way, it also brings us into communion with the Church. For when we are in “communion with Christ” we are also in communion with the Church “which is his Body.”
(CCC 2565; Eph 3:18-21)

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2. Why should we pray?

- a) Because we are all in search of God – whether we recognize it or not. “All religions bear witness to men’s essential search for God.” Prayer aids in our search and brings us to God.
(CCC 2559-2566; Acts 17:27)
- b) Because God calls us and we are all in search of God, or in other words, we are all thirsting for God. We must remember however that God is thirsting for us *first*. “God’s initiative of love always come first” no matter what sin we may have committed. And God never stops calling us, as we see in Salvation History (through both the Old Testament and New Testament).
(CCC 2567, 2591)

3. What should be our attitude in prayer?

- a) “In order to pray, one must have the *will* to pray.”
(CCC 2650)
- b) We should pray with a humble and contrite heart because “we do not know how to pray as we ought.”
(CCC 2559; Psalm 130:1; Rom 8:26; Num 12:3, 708)
- c) We should pray in faith, hope and love (the theological virtues).
(CCC 2656-2658)
- d) We should pray with our whole hearts: “According to Scripture, it is the *heart* that prays. For our hearts are our hidden center, the place of decision, the place where we live, the place of encounter.” “If our heart is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain.”
(CCC 2562, 2702)

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4. When should we pray?

- a) At all times: “We must remember God more often than we draw breath.” St. Paul tells us to “pray without ceasing.”
(CCC 2697; 1 Thess 5:17)

- b) In the events of each day and each moment. “It is right and good to pray so that the coming of the kingdom justice and peace may influence the march of history, but it is just as important to bring the help of prayer into humble, everyday situations.”
(CCC 2659, 2660; Lk 13:20-21)

- c) The Tradition of the Church gives us certain rhythms of prayer intended to help us continually pray.
(CCC 2698, 2720)
 - 1. During the day: morning and evening prayer, grace before and after meals, the Liturgy of the Hours

 - 2. During the week: Sunday Eucharist

 - 3. During the year: “The cycle of the liturgical year and its great feasts are also basic rhythms of the Christian’s life of prayer.”

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5. Where should we pray?

a) It is always possible to pray wherever we are at, however a favorable place can help us pray.
(CCC 2691, 2696, 2743)

1. In the Church: The Church is the “house of God” and “is the proper place for the liturgical prayer of the parish community. It is also the privilege place for adoration of the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.”
(CCC 2691)

2. In prayer corners: for personal prayer in homes.
(CCC 2691; Mt 6:6)

3. In solitude: “for more intense personal prayer.”
(CCC 2691, 1175)

4. During pilgrimages: which “are traditionally very special occasions for renewal in prayer.”
(CCC 2691, 1674)

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Theme 2: Learning to Pray

“Prayer cannot be reduced to the spontaneous outpouring of interior impulse: in order to pray, one must have the will to pray. Nor is it enough to know what the scriptures reveal about prayer: one must also learn how to pray. Through a living transmission (Sacred Tradition) within the “believing and praying Church,” The Holy Spirit teaches the children of God how to pray.” (CCC 2650)

MESSAGE

1. How can we learn how to pray?

- a) There are many facets of the Church that can assist us in learning how to pray.
 - 1. Look to saints: Saints “share in the living tradition of prayer by the example of their lives, the transmission of their writings, and their prayer today.”
(CCC 2683-2684; Mt 25:21)
 - 2. Look to your family: The family is the “domestic Church” and is the first place of education in prayer.
(CCC 2685)
 - 3. Look to ordained ministers: “Servants of the Good Shepherd, they are ordained to lead the People of God to the living waters of prayer.”
(CCC 2686)
 - 4. Look to religious: Religious “have consecrated their whole lives to prayer.”
(CCC 2687)

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5. Look to catechists/teachers: Religious education is a time to learn how “to meditate on the Word of God in personal prayer,” to practice liturgical prayer, and to memorize and understand the meaning of basic prayers. (CCC 2688)
6. Look to prayer groups: “One of the driving forces of renewal of prayer in the Church.” (CCC 2689)
7. Look to spiritual directors: Men and women endowed with the “gifts of wisdom, faith, and discernment” are “true servants of the living tradition of prayer.” (CCC 2690)
8. Look to the scriptures, Christ himself, and the Church to help us pray. (See the following questions.)

2. How can scripture help us to pray?

- a) The Old Testament gives us many great witnesses and examples of prayer.
 1. Abraham and the prayer of Faith: “Abraham’s heart is entirely submissive to the Word and so he obeys.” (CCC 2570-2573, 2592; Genesis 12:4; 15:6, 17:1; 22:8; Heb 11:17; 11:19)
 2. Moses and the prayer of mediator: “In the dialogue in which God confides in him, Moses also learns how to pray: he balks, makes excuses, above all questions.” “The Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.” (CCC 2574-2577, 2593; Ex 3:1-10; 33:11)

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3. David and the prayer of the king: “David is the shepherd who prays for his people and prays in their name. His submission to the will of God, his praise, and his repentance, will be a model for the prayer of the people.” (CCC 2578-2580, 2594; 2 Sam 7:18-29; 1 Kings 8:10-61)

4. Elijah, the prophets and conversion of heart: Elijah and the prophets were righteous in their prayer because they were attentive to The Word of God and they awaited and prepared “for the intervention of the Savior God.” (CCC 2582-2584, 2595; Ps 24:6, 1 Kings 18:39, James 5:16b-18; 1 Kings 17:7-24; Am 7:2, 5; Isa 6:5, 8, 11; Jer 1:6; 15:15-18; 20:7-18)

5. The Psalms, the prayer of the assembly. The Psalms “teach us how to pray” as they are “the masterwork of prayer in the Old Testament.” They are both personal and communal, they take many forms, and they possess “such direct simplicity” that they can be prayed by all people “of all times and conditions.” “Prayed by Christ and fulfilled in him, the Psalms remain essential to the prayer of the Church.” (CCC 2585-2589, 2596-2597)

- b) The Church tells us to remember, “that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture.” Prayer allows the space for dialogue “between God and man” and allows us to *listen* to what God is telling us in the scriptures. (CCC 2653-2654)

3. How can Jesus help us pray?

- a) Look to Him in his own prayer. “In seeing the Master at prayer the disciple of Christ also wants to pray. By *contemplating* and hearing the Son, the master of prayer, the children learn to pray to the Father.” (CCC 2601, 2620)

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1. Jesus learned how to pray according to his *human* heart meaning that he learned to pray from his mother, from his people, in the synagogue and the Temple.
(CCC 2599; Lk 2:49)
 2. He prayed “before the decisive moments of his mission” and the “mission of his apostles.”
(CCC 2600; Lk 3:21; 9:28; 22:41-44; 6:12; 9:18-20; 22:32)
 3. He prayed in solitude.
(CCC 2602; Mk 1:35; 6:45; Lk 5:16)
 4. He included all of humanity in his prayer.
(CCC 2602; Heb 2:12, 15; 4:15)
 5. He begins with thanksgiving.
(CCC 2604; Mt 11:25-27; Lk 10:21-23; Jn 11:41-42)
 6. He offers his whole heart to the will of the Father.

(CCC 2603, 2605; Mt 7:21; Lk 22:42; Eph 1:9)
 7. Jesus shows us that the Father always hears our petitions.
(CCC 2604; Mt 6:21, 33)
- b) Hear how he teaches us to pray. “When Jesus prays he is already teaching us how to pray. But the Gospel also give us Jesus’ explicit teaching on prayer.”
(CCC 2607, 2621):
1. Jesus insists on conversion of heart.
(CCC 2608; Mt 5:23-23, 44-45; 6:7, 14-15, 21, 25, 33)

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2. Jesus tells us to pray in faith. He asks us to “seek” and to “knock,” and he will answer.
(CCC 2609; Mt 7:7-11, 13-14)
3. Jesus teaches us to be bold and to not doubt in prayer.
(CCC 2610; Mk 11:24; Mk 9:23; Mt 21:22; Mk 6:6; Mt 8:26; 8:10; 15:28)
4. Jesus tells us to dispose our hearts to do “the will of the Father.”

(CCC 2611; Mt 7:21; Lk 22:42; Eph 1:9)
5. Jesus tells us to be watchful in prayer attentive to Him and temptation.

(CCC 2612; Mk 13; Lk 21:34-36; 22:40, 46)
6. Jesus tells us to be patient.
(CCC 2613; Lk 18:1-8)
7. Jesus tells us to be humble.
(CCC 2613; Lk 18:9-14)
8. Jesus tells us to “ask in his name.”
(CCC 2614; Jn 14:13)
 - Jesus tells us that when we pray through him we will be in “a communion of love” with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
(CCC 2615; Jn 14:16-17; Mk 1:40-41; 5:36; 7:29; Lk 23:39-43)
9. Know that he hears our prayer: We know Jesus hears our prayers because he answered prayers throughout his ministry. He “always responds to a prayer offered in faith.”
(CCC 2616; Mk 1:40-41; 5:36; 7:29; Lk 23:39-43; Mk 2:5; 5:28; Lk 7:37-38)

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Theme 3: The Lord’s Prayer

Jesus was “praying at a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.’” (CCC 2759)

MESSAGE

1. Why is the Lord’s Prayer so important?

- a) It “is truly the summary of the whole gospel.”
(CCC 2761)

- b) It is the “perfect prayer” because it is taught and given to us by the Lord Jesus. In it he does not only give words, but also give the Spirit by whom these words come to life in us.
(CCC 2765)

- c) It is unique because it comes from the Lord and from the human heart of Christ who knows the needs of humanity.
(CCC 2765)

- d) It is at the center of the scriptures. All the scripture are fulfilled in Christ who proclaims the “Good News.” The Our Father is the center of this proclamation.
(CCC 2763, 2774)

- e) It is *the* prayer of the Church.
(CCC 2767-2772, 2776)

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2. What are we praying for in the Lord’s Prayer?

- a) First, we place “ourselves in the presence of God our Father to adore and to love and to bless him.”
(CCC 2803)

- b) The Spirit then “stirs up in our hearts seven petitions.” The object of the first three petitions is the glory of the Father: the sanctification of his name, the coming of the kingdom, and the fulfillment of his will. The four others present our wants to him: they ask that our lives be nourished, healed of sin, and made victorious in the struggle of good over evil.
(CCC 2857)

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Theme 4: Forms of Prayer

The Holy Spirit who teaches the Church also instructs her in the life of prayer. The Holy Spirit has revealed many forms of prayer to us through apostolic and canonical scriptures and continues to new expressions of prayer that are “developed in the great liturgical and spiritual traditions.” (CCC 2623-2626, 2644)

MESSAGE

1. What forms of prayers have been revealed through the Church by the Holy Spirit?

- a) Blessing
(CCC 2626, 2645; Eph 1:3-14; 2 Cor 1:3-7; 1 Pet 1:3-9; 2 Cor 13:14; Rom 15:5-6, 13; Eph 6:23-24)
- b) Adoration
(CCC 2626; Ps 95:1-6; Ps 24:9-10)
- c) Petition
(CCC 2629-2633, 2646; Jn 14:13)
- d) Intercession
(CCC 2634-2636; 2648; Rom 8:34; 1 Jn 2:1; 1 Tim 2:5-8; Phil 2:4; Acts 7:60; Lk 23:28, 34)
- e) Thanksgiving
(CCC 2637, 2648; 1 Thess 5:18)

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- f) Praise
(CCC 2639, 2649; Rom 8:16; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16; Rev 18:24; 19:1-8)
- g) The Liturgy of the Church: “Prayer internalized and assimilates the liturgy during and after its celebration.”
(CCC 2655)
- h) The Eucharist: The Eucharist “contains and expresses all forms of prayer. It is *the* ‘sacrifice of praise.’”
(CCC 2643)

2. What are the different expressions in prayer?

- a) Each believer has his or her own personal expressions of prayer because each responds according to his heart’s resolve. However, Christian tradition has retained three major expressions of prayer. These three expressions that have one basic trait in common: composure of heart.
(CCC 2699)
 - 1. Vocal Prayer: Jesus himself prayed aloud in the synagogue and in his personal prayer, and he also teaches us a vocal pray. In vocal prayer it is important to remember that “Whether or not our prayer is heard depends not on the number of words, but on the fervor of our souls.”
(CCC 2700-2704, 2722)
 - 2. Meditation: We can meditate on Sacred Scriptures, liturgical texts of the day or season, writings of the spiritual fathers, works of spirituality. Above all, we should try to meditate “on the mysteries of Christ, as in *lectio divina* or the rosary.” Christians owe it to themselves to develop the desire to meditate regularly but should know that Christian prayer does not *stop* at meditation; it should take us further “to union with Christ.”
(CCC 2705-2708, 2723)

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3. Contemplative Prayer: “is the simple expression of the mystery of prayer. It is a gaze of faith fixed on Jesus, attentiveness to the Word of God, a silent love.”
(CCC 2709-2719, 2724)

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Theme 5: The Battle of Prayer

“Prayer is both a gift of grace and a determined response of our part. It always presupposes effort. The great figures of prayer of the Old Covenant before Christ, as well as the Mother of God, the saints, and he himself, all teach us this: prayer is a battle. Against whom? Against ourselves and against the wiles of the tempter who does all he can to turn man away from prayer, away from union with God. The ‘spiritual battle’ of the Christian’s new life is inseparable from the battle of prayer.” (CCC 2725)

MESSAGE

1. What if I just don’t have time to pray?

- a) First of all, recognize that prayer does not just come from you. It also comes from the Holy Spirit. God is calling you and wants to be with you. (CCC 2567, 2591, 2726)
- b) It might help you to recognize that the “great figures of prayer” of the Bible, our Holy Mother Mary, the saints, and Jesus himself all teach us that prayer is a battle. (CCC 2725)
- c) The battle of prayer is inseparable from our “spiritual battle” in life. Prayer is a “vital necessity” in fighting the “spiritual battle”, without it we fall back into sin. (CCC 2725, 2744)

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2. What if I’m distracted during prayer?

- a) Do not set about hunting down your distractions – this would be to fall into their trap.
(CCC 2729)

- b) When you are distracted, turn back to your heart and realize that a distraction reveals to us what we are attached to. Being aware of this before the Lord should help us offer him our heart to be purified.
(CCC 2729)

- c) Christ asks us to be vigilant in prayer. Do not give up.
(CCC 2730)

3. What if I feel like my prayer isn’t being heard?

- a) Everyone confronts what they perceive as “failure in prayer”: discouragement, dryness, sadness over our weakness, disappointment over not being heard according to what we want, pride, etc.
(CCC 2728)
 - 1. Painful as these discouragements are, they can lead us to trust more, to become more humble, and to persevere in our prayer. We must battle to gain these three things: trust, humility and perseverance.
(CCC 2728, 2731-2733)

 - 2. Some questions you should ask yourself: Why do you think your petition has not been heard? How is prayer heard? What is the image of God that motivates your prayer: an instrument to be used? Or the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? (CCC 2743, 2735)

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3. “Are we convinced that ‘we do not know how to pray as we ought’? Our Father knows what we need before we ask him. We must pray, then, to be able truly to know what he wants.”
(CCC 2736, 2738; Mt 6:8; Rom 8:27)
4. Remember that Christ shows us that God hears all of our petitions. And remember that Jesus has never ceased to intercede for us. (CCC 2606, 2614, 2741; Heb 5:7; 7:25; 9:24)

APOLOGETICS

1. Why do Catholics pray to Mary and honor her with prayers, like the Rosary?

- a) First, it is important to note that Catholics believe that “Jesus, the only mediator, is the way of our prayer.” (1 Timothy 2:5)
 1. As members of Christ’s body, we can *intercede* for one another. Just as you would ask your friend to pray for you during a difficult time, you can also ask Mary and other saints to pray for us as well!
(CCC 947)
 2. We do not pray *to* Mary (even though we often use that language as Catholics), we ask Mary to pray *for* us because just as she did in Cana, Mary prays and intercedes for the needs of people. We ask Mary to *intercede* for us and why wouldn’t we? She is in heaven with Christ and therefore has powerful intercession!
(CCC 956, 2618; Jn 2:1-12; Timothy 2:5; James 5:16)

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b) Second, we look to Mary in prayer because as Christ's mother she *shows the way* to Jesus.

- We must be very careful never to separate Mary from Christ. We do not honor Mary just because she was a holy woman; we honor her because she was the Mother of God. As Christ's mother she followed all the events of his life, and therefore can help lead us through the life of Christ. If one would really look at prayers to Mary they will find that they focus on Christ.
(CCC 2673-2675; Luke 1:43)

c) Third, Mary's own example can teach us how to pray:

- She shows us how to offer our *whole being* to God in prayer: "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be (done) to me according to your word." She freely and fully cooperates with the Father's plan.
(CCC 2617, 2622; Luke 1:38)

d) Fourth, Mary herself is the perfect prayer:

- "When we pray to her, we are adhering with her to the plan of the Father, who sends his Son to save all men. The prayer of the Church is sustained by the prayer of Mary and united with it in hope."
(CCC 2679)

2. Is the Hail Mary scriptural?

a) Yes! The first part of the prayer is taken *directly* (verbatim) from scripture:

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1. “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!”
(Luke 1:28)
2. “Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb-
Jesus”
(Luke 1:42)

b) The second part is *based* on scripture:

1. *Holy Mary* – “You have found favor with God”
(Luke 1:30)
2. *Mother of God* – “Mother of my Lord”
(Luke 1:43)
3. *Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death* (just as we pray for
one another)

3. Isn't the Rosary a kind of repetitious prayer condemned by Jesus in Mt. 6:7?

- a) Matthew 6:7 states, “In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words.” Jesus is not condemning all repeated prayers, only prayer repeated “in the manner of the pagans.” He may be addressing the pagan attitude that the more you repeat a prayer the more likely you are to be heard
(an example is found in 1 Kings 18:25-29).
- b) Scripture shows us that repeated prayer, with the proper attitude, is pleasing to God.

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1. Jesus himself repeats the same prayer three times in the Garden of Gethsemani.
(Mt. 26:44)
 2. The publican who humbly repeated, “O God, be merciful to me, a sinner” went home justified.
(Lk 18:13)
 3. The four living creatures in heaven repeat the same prayer day and night, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come.”
(Rev. 4:8)
- c) The Rosary, recited devoutly, helps us to fulfill the command from St. Paul to “pray without ceasing.”
(1 Thess 5:17)

4. Why do Catholics pray to the saints?

- a) Again, it is important to note that Catholics believe that “Jesus, the only mediator, is the way of our prayer.” (1 Timothy 2:5) Although we as Catholics often use the language “Pray to Saint Anthony or pray to St. Therese”, we are really saying “Ask this saint to pray for you.” We do not pray *to* saints, we ask them *to pray for us*.
(CCC 956, 2618)
- b) Again, as members of Christ’s body, we are all in communion with one another - whether we are living or dead. This is what is known as the communion of saints.
(CCC 954-962)

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c) Saints “share in the living tradition of prayer by the example of their lives, the transmission of their writings, and their prayer today.”
(CCC 2683-2684, 2692; Mt 25:21)

1. We look to the saints in prayer because through their lives and writings they teach us how to pray.
(CCC 2683)

2. We look to the saints in prayer because, as our brothers and sisters in Christ, they can *intercede* for us. Their intercession is powerful because they are closely united to Christ in heaven – we can and *should* ask them to intercede for us!
(CCC 956, 962, 2683)

5. Why do Catholics pray for people who have died?

a) The practice of praying for the dead is found in both scripture and tradition.

➤ Prayer for the dead is mentioned in Sacred Scripture (2 Macc 12:46). Protestants will not find this book in their Bible however. The 1st and 2nd book of Maccabees have always been part of the Canon of Sacred Scripture of the Church. During the Reformation, Protestants removed these books (though they had been part of the Bible since its inception).

b) The practice of praying for the dead has been since the beginning of the Church. The Church has honored the memory of the dead with great respect and offered prayers for them so that they may be purified and enter heaven.
(CCC 958, 1032)

c) It is a “holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead.” They are part of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ and our prayer *is* capable of helping them.
(CCC 958, 2 Macc 12:45)

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STUDENTS SHOULD BE FAMILIAR WITH THE FOLLOWING TERMS

adoration	Hail Mary	pilgrimage
Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament	humility	psalm
blissing	intercession	praise
communion of saints	liturgical year	the prayer of the Church
contemplative prayer	Liturgy of the Hours	purgatory
contrite	meditation	salvation history
covenant	novena	thanksgiving
	Our Father	vocal prayer
	petition	

PRAYER

Review the following prayers and concepts:

Our Father
Hail Mary
Glory Be
Angel of God
A Morning Prayer
Prayer Before Meals
Prayer After Meals
Act of Contrition
Apostles Creed
Prayer of St. Francis
Duluth Diocesan Vocation Prayer
The Ten Commandments
The Seven Sacraments
Rosary (mysteries, Hail Holy Queen)
Novena to the Sacred Heart of Jesus
Novena to the Christ Child

Learn the following prayers and concepts:

Angelus
Prayer for the Faithful Departed
Stations of the Cross

Prayer

Community

1. Participate in special events with the parish, such as patron saints feast, Divine Mercy Sunday, etc.
2. Establish a prayer environment in your home.
3. Gather with others among your age group to pray prayers of: praise, intercession and thanks.
4. Develop ways and occasions to celebrate communal prayer, both formal and informal.
5. Identify ways you can build up your parish family prayer life, i.e. by starting a Liturgy of the Hours prayer group and praying evening or Morning Prayer.
6. Develop a personal relationship with Jesus through prayer, by yourself and with others.
7. Value the sign of the cross as a public sign and prayer of our Catholic witness.
8. Appreciate that prayer is the source of a life of Holiness and service.
9. Participate in prayer for the unity of all Christian believers with people of other Christian religious affiliations.

Worship

1. Participate with all other Catholics in Sunday Mass, our greatest prayer to God.
2. Participate in the reciting and singing of responses at Mass.
3. Experience devotions as prayer: Rosary, Way of the Cross, prayer to saints, Novenas, Eucharistic Adoration.
4. Pray the Diocesan Vocation Prayer at Mass.
5. Pray for vocations and reflect on your personal call. i.e. Holy Orders, religious life, married life and single life.
6. Enter into the practice of examining your consciences daily, and telling God of your sorrow for those sins.
7. Practice various forms of prayer such as meditation, contemplation and prayer with scripture.

Service

1. Understand that saints are people who lived lives of Holiness and service in God's name. In prayer ask God what vocation He is calling you to.
2. Form prayer groups to pray for your needs and the needs of others.
3. Pray for the grace to be open to carrying out the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy.
4. Develop ways to pray with other Christians for peace, unity, end to abortion, etc.