

**1. Read** — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

**2. Meditate** — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

**3. Pray** — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

**4. Contemplate** — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence.  
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**How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

# Quick Connect

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## **Gospel Reading – John 6:1-15 – Roman Missal - Cycle B (OT17)**

Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee. A large crowd followed him, because they saw the signs he was performing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. The Jewish feast of Passover was near. When Jesus raised his eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to him, he said to Philip, “Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?” He said this to test him, because he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, “Two hundred days’ wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little.” One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to him, “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?” Jesus said, “Have the people recline.” Now there was a great deal of grass in that place. So the men reclined, about five thousand in number. Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted. When they had had their fill, he said to his disciples, “Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted.” So they collected them, and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat. When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, “This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world.” Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain alone.

## **Spiritual Reading – From the Interior Castle by Saint Teresa of Avila**

Ah! My Lord, your help is absolutely necessary for me; without You I can do nothing. In Your mercy, O God, do not allow my soul to be deceived and to give up the work it has begun. Give me light to know that my whole welfare depends on perseverance. Make me understand that my faith in You must rise above my misery, and that I must never be alarmed if I feel weak and fearful. I must make allowance for the flesh, remembering what You said, O Jesus, in Your prayer in the garden: “The flesh is weak...” If You said that Your divine and sinless flesh was weak, how can I expect mine to be so strong that it does not feel afraid? O Lord, I do not wish to be preoccupied with my fears nor to be discouraged at my weakness. On the contrary, I wish to trust in Your mercy, and to have no confidence whatever in my own strength, convinced that my weakness comes from depending on myself.

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**The School of Prayer** – “When Jesus raised his eyes...”

“The Evangelist says: *When he had lifted up his eyes* that we might learn that He did not turn His eyes this way and that, but sat recollectedly giving His attention to His Disciples.” “Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples” What does this verse from Saint John’s Gospel say about prayer? It says three things:

One, we must go “up”. This does not mean that we have to literally go to a mountain, but we do have to elevate our heart and mind. The Catechism says that prayer is “the elevation of the mind and heart to God in praise of his glory; a petition made to God for some desired good, or in thanksgiving for a good received, or intercession for others before God. Two other times our Lord took Peter, James, and John with Him. One was the Transfiguration the Lord where Jesus unveiled His beauty, the other in Gethsemane where they witnessed Jesus tenacity in prayer as he deeply desired communion with His Father. Saint John, the beloved disciple, was given a Revelation and called to “come up here” where he witnessed the awesome majesty of the throne of God. Through prayer the Christian experiences a communion with God through Christ in the Church.” Saint Therese of Lisieux says, “For me, prayer is a surge of the heart: it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.” Prayer is an invitation to meet God in the secret place, where his glory dwells.

Two, we must sit “down”. Our hearts and mind must go “up” as is stated in step one, but we must sit down. This means that we stop moving, both our busy body and our busy mind and that we put away all earthly cares aside. In the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom the people pray, “Let us set aside all the cares of life that we may receive the King of all.” This prayer from the Divine Liturgy summarizes how we must “sit down” in order to “lift up” our hearts and minds. For how can we lift up our hearts and minds if they are weighed down by the heaven burdens of “the cares of life”. We must sit down as Mary did when she, “sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak,” while her sister Martha remained busy with “the cares of life”. Many times in prayer we obsess even more over “the cares of life” as we present a litany of requests to Jesus, asking Him to take “care” of our “cares”. If we are truly going to give over our “cares” to His “care” we must let go, sit down, listen to Him, and trust. We must decrease, He must increase. As we take the lower seat of humility we open ourselves up for the great grace of God. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humility is the currency of heaven opening up for us the spiritual treasure of the Lord. The Saints are great examples of this throughout history as they lay down their lives so that He might raise them up to Glory.

Three, Jesus was with His disciples. We have to remember that Jesus is with us. He dwells within us because of the Divine Life we have received. He dwells with us “for where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” He is with us physically in the Eucharist. Jesus is focused on us in prayer and attentively communicating with us. In this Gospel, we see that Jesus was so attentive to His disciples that He had to “raise his eyes” to see that “a large crowd was

coming to him.” Jesus is not distracted when we are in prayer with Him. Rather, He attentively gazes at us and listens to us. How do we get distracted in prayer, and how can we stay attentive to Jesus? Fr. Robert Barron in the *Catholicism* series says that our mind is like a monkey. Just as a monkey swings from branch to branch, our mind in prayer tends to swing from thought to thought. Repetitive prayers like the Rosary or the Jesus Prayer (Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner) tend to calm the “Monkey Mind”. The calmness of the chants and prayers at Mass and the psalms and antiphons in Liturgy of the Hours also calm the “Monkey Mind” allowing us to attentively listen and gaze at Our Lord. Jesus and the Disciples were sitting, but they were not idle. Prayer is not “a break” from life; it is the very source of life. We are at rest in prayer, but indeed much work is being done. “For He did not sit idly with His Disciples, but studiously conversing with them; holding their attention upon Himself. Then raising His eyes He saw the multitudes coming towards Him. On whose behalf did he question Philip? For He know which among the Disciples of His gathering most needed instruction. Such a one was Philip, who was afterwards to say: Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us (Jn. 14:8). And He first instructs them. For if He had simply wrought the miracle, the sign would not have seemed so striking. So now He makes them proclaim their lack of food, that they might see more clearly and perceive the greatness of the miracle.”

Prayer is like school, in fact Blessed John Paul II stated, “...our Christian communities must become genuine 'schools' of prayer...” The Catechism states, “*Prayer groups*, indeed ‘schools of prayer,’ are today one of the signs and one of the driving forces of renewal of prayer in the Church, provided they drink from authentic wellsprings of Christian prayer. Concern for ecclesial communion is a sign of true prayer in the Church.” **How is prayer like a school?** The steps in this lesson answer this question. We must “go up”. This means that we have the desire to learn, that our hearts and minds are in the right place. The best teachers are those that motivate and spark a desire within the student to learn. Do we want to “go up” with Christ, as Blessed Pier Giorgio would say, “Verso l’alto!...to the heights!” Once we have the desire to learn we must enter the classroom by “sitting down”. The classroom does not have to be a physical place but we must be willing to enter to classroom, where the teacher is teaching. **What good is it to have the greatest teacher in the world, teaching in an empty class?** The teacher would be only teaching to himself. **Where is the classroom that Jesus teaches in?** The greatest classroom is the Church, the liturgy. Do we enter into the liturgy and learn from the great Teacher, Jesus Christ? Our life is also a classroom, which Jesus calls us to follow Him and be attentive to what He is teaching us during the different times and experiences in our lives. Prayer is also like a school in which we learn with others. Jesus sat down “with his disciples”. There are others that are learning, just as we are learning. These other disciples can assist us and we can assist them as we learn together from the Great Teacher. Prayer is like school in that we tend to get distracted by others, sometimes distract others, and even at times are disciplined due to our disobedience. The school of prayer like, any school, helps us to eliminate distraction and to be obedient to the mission of the school.