

Session 2: PRAYER

Goals:

- To help the candidate grow in understanding, valuing and practicing an active prayer life.
- To help the candidate grow in overall pursuit of the values and lifestyle Taught and modeled by Jesus.

Rational:

Prayer is an essential skill for effective membership in the faith community and for maintaining an overall Christian lifestyle.

Background:

We are not concerned about instant results here. The focus is on processing and developing those skills and habits that will lead the candidate to closer identification with Jesus in the years ahead.

How one prays is not as critical as THAT one prays. Your discussion with your candidate, therefore, should focus on nurturing a positive attitude toward prayer and helping him/her to develop a style of praying that is suitable for him/her at this point in their life.

In your discussion with your candidate, try to maintain a balance of nurturing the good that is already there and curbing negative elements, which may be present.

Outline of Session:

1. Discuss what you feel PRAYER is for you; when you pray; how you pray; why you pray; and where you pray.
2. Follow the instructions for **Activity I – Discussion**
3. Follow the instructions for **Activity II- Vital**
4. Follow and pray the A.C.T.S Prayer found on **Activity III- A.C.T.S. Prayer.**
5. Help the candidate create a prayer plan to follow for the next month.

Activity I: Discussion

Read together and use the discussion questions to talk about prayer in your life.

Prayer is conversation with God and a vital part of our relationship with God. Prayer is a back and forth exchange of love between us and God.

Prayer is possible only through God's initiative through the Holy Spirit. This means that when we pray, we are responding to God reaching out to us. That is pretty amazing—God loves us so much that He thinks of us, reaches out to us, and calls us to respond and communicate with Him.

Discuss:

-In what ways is prayer a relationship?

-What role do we have in our relationship with God?

-How often do we talk with our friends? How often do you think we should talk with God?

-What do we talk about with our friends about? Do you think God wants to talk about the same stuff with us??

Prayer is sometimes a public action that we participate in with a community. Mass is a great example of this kind of prayer. Other times, prayer is something that is personal and between ourselves and God.

Communicating with God interiorly through prayer may look different than communicating with our friends. We can't message God and receive a direct response. Sometimes we may not feel like God responds to our prayer. Remember prayer isn't about giving God a list of demands or hoping for direct responses; it is about building a relationship. Think about prayer as a way of abiding with God. Imagine two old friends sitting together on a porch. They may not say anything at all, but being with each other is life-giving.

As we dive into interior prayer, we have to keep in mind some important truths about what prayer is not. Prayer is not an internal dialogue or personal psychological analysis. To think of prayer as psychology, more or less, makes it inward focused and not God-focused. Yes, prayer helps us learn about ourselves, but only because it is a two-way love exchange with God. Prayer may show us something about ourselves, but it doesn't come from ourselves. If prayer were merely psychological, it wouldn't mean much. Rather, we let the Holy Spirit freely tell us about who we are and who God is as part of a loving relationship.

Prayer for a Christian is also not a “mental void.” In some Eastern religions, the goal of prayer or meditation is to completely clear the mind of any thought. To think of prayer as a mental void is dangerous. We need to think about God when we pray. Our goal is to free our minds of distraction, but our goal is not to enter into nothingness. Our goal, again, is a love exchange. The intimacy offered in prayer is unmatched by any other intimacy we can know.

Lastly, “unproductive” prayer is not useless. We aren’t always going to “feel something” when we pray. We may not always feel like our prayer is answered. We must remember that all prayers are heard by God. Every moment of prayer impacts and changes us, even if we don’t recognize the ways in which we are changed. Saint Josemaria said, “Persevere in prayer. Persevere, even when your efforts seem barren. Prayer is always fruitful.”

Discuss:

- **Do you ever hold any misconceptions we talked about? Which one? Dose this ever make prayer a struggle for you? How?**
- **Why do you think it is it important that we keep our mind focused on God during prayer?**
- **Have you ever had a prayer answered? Describe the situation. What about the opposite—have you ever had a prayer you didn’t feel was answered, but later on you realized that God just responded in a different way?**

Beyond those three misconceptions about prayer, there are three facts about prayer that we need to know.

First, we can’t develop a rich interior prayer life without the Eucharist. Our personal prayer needs to flow from our reception of the Eucharist at Mass each Sunday.

Second, it is always possible to pray: alone, in a car, on a plane, on a school bus, in a crowded lunchroom, at the mall, in a coffee shop, when you’re shopping, while you shower.

Finally, prayer is vitally necessary. We become slaves to sin if we do not engage the freedom and grace from prayer. God can’t live in our hearts without prayer

Discuss:

- Where are places where you can pray?**
- Do you pray at Sunday Mass or just go through the motions? How might this impact the rest of your prayer life?**
- What is the biggest challenge you personally face in prayer?**
- How might your prayer life be connected to sin?**

ACTIVITY II: Vital

Read each of the Scriptures and discuss on what common battle it presents to a fruitful prayer life. Please journal first, then read about the distraction.

1. “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (John 12:24)

- What common battle to a fruitful prayer life does this Scripture present?
- How can feeling like we aren't receiving anything in prayer or that God isn't listening to us lead to a deeper relationship with God?
- In what ways does “dying” to old ways of prayer lead us to new forms and expressions of prayer?

2. “Apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

- What common battle to a fruitful prayer life does this Scripture present?
- Have you ever used prayer as a “last resort”? Prayer should be our first step in anything—but sometimes we use it as a desperate bid for success when we haven't studied enough or we are worried about an event for which we are underprepared. What is the difference between praying when we begin something versus praying as a last resort?

3. “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Matthew 26:41)

- What common battle to a fruitful prayer life does this Scripture present?
- Distractions from prayer include being tired, hungry, angry, sad, or ill. Have you ever been distracted by these things? Describe the experience.
- Now, think about how these things can also aid your prayer if we hand them over to God when we begin praying. How might this impact prayer?

*“For prayer is nothing else than being
on terms of friendship with God.”*

– St. Teresa of Avila

Activity III: A.C.T.S Prayer

ADORATION

Adoration is when we recognize and adore God for who He is.

Take time to adore God. Think about who God is—Creator, Savior, All-loving, Good. Think of your favorite titles for God. Journal your prayer of adoration below:

CONTRITION

Contrition is when we recognize our sinfulness and ask for God's mercy.

Make a short *Examination of Conscience* by reviewing your thoughts, words, and actions since your last confession. Also, think about your behaviors toward God, your behaviors and interactions with others, and your behaviors with yourself. Journal your prayer of contrition below.

After your *Examination of Conscience*, pray the *Act of Contrition*:

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you, whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In His name, my God, have mercy.

THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving helps us to acknowledge all that God has done for us and allows us to understand the Lord's love in a deeper way. Take time to thank God for specific people, things, and events in your life. Nothing is too big or too small to be an object of our thanksgiving. Journal your prayer of thanksgiving below:

SUPPLICATION

Supplication means to ask for something.

We can ask for ourselves (petition) and for others (intercession). Just like thanksgiving, nothing is too big or too small for us to ask.

Journal your prayer of supplication below:

"Christ does not force our will. He takes only what we give Him. But He does not give Himself entirely until He sees that we yield ourselves entirely to Him."

- St. Teresa of Avila

SUMMARY SHEET – PRAYER

Name of Candidate: _____

Name of Sponsor: _____ Date of Session: _____

1. Jot down your impressions of your candidate's present state of faith development in relation to this topic. (What did he/she know, didn't know, was interested in.)

2. In your discussion and sharing on the topic, how was the information received from you by the candidate?

3. What specific areas of this topic does the candidate need to review?

4. Your overall impression of the candidate in their seriousness for the Sacrament of Confirmation is:

5. Your personal thoughts and suggestions on how you were able to present this session.