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PEOPLE OF PRAYER
National Bulletin on Liturgy
A review published by the Canadian Catholic Conference

This Bulletin is primarily pastoral in scope, and is prepared for members of parish liturgy committees, musicians, singers, teachers, religious and clergy, and all who are involved in preparing and celebrating the community liturgy.

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This issue of the Bulletin has three important purposes:

- to help us deepen our understanding of liturgy as public prayer;

- to explore the relationship between the liturgy and personal prayer of individual members of the Church: God's people must be called to faith and conversion before they can celebrate liturgy.

- to encourage priests and liturgy committees to help the people in their parish to grow in prayer.

In this way we are working to achieve one of the goals set last year by the National Council on Liturgy: "Personal prayer: Sincere, fervent and frequent prayer by individuals and families throughout the week is the best preparation for the community's celebration of the Sunday liturgy."
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EDITORIAL

ACCEPT NO SUBSTITUTES

At various periods in history, the people of God have been assailed by an alluring temptation: keep busy with good works for God and man, so busy that you have no time to pray.

Today this temptation comes under various guises:
- The mother has to get the family up, dressed, fed, and off to school or work on time. She’s too busy to pray.
- The teacher has many details of assignments and lessons on his mind. He is so busy preparing religious education classes and projects that he is too tired to pray.
- Some parents are so occupied with important tasks, such as the evening paper or TV, that they cannot find time to pray with their children.
- Some people see no need or value in going to church on Sunday: “I can do just as well by myself in the woods.”
- The parish council is so busy organizing bazaars and picnics and eavesdropping that it has no time or energy to help people learn how to pray.
- Some priests celebrate Mass faithfully, but rush or skip the liturgy of the hours because there is so much that needs doing.

People of God, we are called to be people of prayer and praise. Many, however, are concentrating on good works, and are neglecting prayer, both public and personal.

This Bulletin offers many approaches to prayer in the parish setting. Let’s start now to make prayer an important part of our parish work.

Nothing can replace personal and community prayer: it is at the heart of our apostolic works, our worship and our lives.

The time has come for the children of light to be as wise as the children of this world, and accept no substitutes for prayer.

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God’s people must be called to faith and conversion before they can celebrate liturgy. This is the message that the Vatican Council gives us in paragraph 9 of its liturgy constitution.

We must prepare for public prayer — our Christian liturgy — by turning back to God in faith and personal prayer. These are the foundations of individual and community worship. Liturgical renewal is not a matter of changing one set of rubrics or books for another. In its true sense, renewal is a change of heart, a conversion by the community, and then the celebration of this wonderful grace.

God’s people need to be called back to this constantly. The National Bulletin on Liturgy offers this issue as one way of helping you to make this call stronger in your parish or community.
PUBLIC PRAYER

PRAISE AND PRAYER

Today's Christian is slowly beginning to become aware of a most important facet of spiritual life: prayer is not a favor we do for God, but our vocation in life. Our heavenly Father has chosen us to be people of prayer and praise.

He calls us to be his beloved people. Chosen in Christ from all eternity, we are dedicated to his glory. We are anointed with the Spirit to be a royal priesthood. Christ is our mediator and high priest: we offer our prayer to the Father through the Son in the Spirit.

We are called to praise God both by our lives and by our prayer. Good works without prayer or prayer without good works quickly lead to imbalance and distortion in our faith.

Prayer of the Whole Christ

The liturgy is an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ, with full public worship being given by the mystical body of Christ, by the head and his members.

Because every liturgical celebration is an action of Christ our high priest and of his body the Church, it is a sacred action beyond all others. No other action of the Church is as efficacious or holy (see Liturgy constitution, no. 7).

Liturgy is the prayer of Christ: He is always present in the Church, the people of God, especially when the Church celebrates liturgy. The various ways in which he is present are described by the Vatican Council: in the person of the priest, under the eucharistic species, in the sacraments by his power, in his word, in the assembly which prays and sings. (Liturgy, no. 7) To these we may add his presence in our neighbor when we do or refuse good works: see Mt. 25:31-46.

Christ instituted the eucharist and placed it in the care of his Church as a memorial of his death and resurrection. When we worship, it is Christ who presents our praise to the Father. Indeed he has united us with him to the extent that he makes our puny offering of ourselves part of his living sacrifice. The Church offers its worship through Christ to the eternal Father.

Liturgy is the prayer of the Church: The Lord Jesus always associates the Church with himself in the work of offering perfect praise to God and making men truly holy (see Liturgy, no. 7).

When the local church gathers, especially on the Lord's day, the whole Church is represented. (See the General instruction of the Roman missal, no. 75.)

When your parish assembles for Sunday worship, the Lord Jesus is present, and you are representing his whole Church. Your liturgy is the liturgy of God's people. It is the liturgy, the public worship, offered by Jesus Christ.
Public Prayer

Liturgy is public prayer. From the weekday Mass in a small mission church to the splendor of a papal ceremony at St. Peter's in Rome, every Mass, every celebration of the sacraments or the liturgy of the hours is the prayer of Christ and his people.

* * *

Today's Church needs to face two problems:

- How do we help people, along with their celebrants and ministers, to realize that their celebration is public prayer, that Christ is offering their worship to the Father, that they are representing the universal Church in their gathering?

- How do we encourage members of a worshipping community to make their liturgy the finest gift they can give to the Lord?

* * *

What ideas does your parish or community have to share with others? What are you doing in your part of the Church to help your people fulfill their God-given vocation of prayer and praise?

CELEBRATING LITURGY

Liturgy is the worship which the entire Church — head and members — offers to the Father. We celebrate liturgy when we celebrate Mass, the sacraments, or the liturgy of the hours (formerly known as the divine office or the breviary).

It is community worship. The entire Church is involved in the celebration of liturgy: the bishop (Liturgy, nos. 41-42), the pastor (no. 42), the community (nos. 26-27), the ministers (no. 29). It is Christ the Lord who offers his Church's worship to the Father. (no. 7) These passages from the liturgy constitution form a strong catechesis. They should be read through once more and shared with all the members of your worshipping community.

In our zeal for promoting liturgical growth, (no. 43) we should always keep in mind why we celebrate liturgy: it is to give honor, praise, worship, thanks to God, and to bring his grace and teaching into our hearts. If done through habit only, or with little thought of God's glory, it could become a futile exercise in sterile rubrics and stage management. (See Liturgy, no. 14.)

The attitudes of the community and celebrant make a most important contribution to the celebration. Our dispositions (no. 11) and our participation (no. 14) are vitally necessary for a worthy celebration of liturgy.

- In a spirit of faith: As a celebrating community, we take part with Christ and his whole Church in this act of worship. By fervent preparation, by sincere prayer, by reading and study, we need to ask God to deepen our faith: Lord, we believe! Help us to believe more firmly! (See Liturgy, no. 9.)
○ *Listening to the Spirit*: A Christian community needs to be a listening community. God's Spirit speaks through the readings, the homily and the prayers of the Mass, as well as through the faith of the celebrant, ministers and congregation. Our lives throughout the week, our daily scripture reading, our willingness to listen to the Spirit will deeply influence the quality of the Sunday celebration.

○ *From the heart*: God does not want lip service, but total, dedicated, loving service from our heart. He wants worship that reflects our lives of love for God and neighbor, worship that leads us forth in joy and peace to live another week in his service. He is not satisfied with persons or communities that shut Sunday Mass and daily living into separate compartments: the Lord calls us to let life and worship interpenetrate and permeate and influence each other and the world around us.

○ *Praise and thanks*: In the preface dialogue, which the Church has been using almost from the beginning, we are invited to lift up our hearts to the Lord and to give him our thanks and praise. We thank him for calling us to be his people, for giving us forgiveness and life through the death and rising of Christ.

But it is not enough to express thanks for the Church in general. This particular assembly, these individual believers too need to thank God for his gifts to them. They have to realize, for example, when they praise the Father for sending his Spirit as the first gift to those who believe, (eucharistic prayer IV) each of them should also thank God "for sending your Spirit into my heart." The celebration needs to be particularized by our dispositions and participation. (Liturgy, nos. 11, 14)

○ *Prayer*: The Mass is a time of prayer. Numerous suggestions are outlined in the following article, *Making Mass more prayerful*.

○ *Responsibility*: Helping the celebration to have more meaning, encouraging people to understand and participate better, guiding those who fulfill various ministries — these are heavy responsibilities, and they rest directly on the pastor or celebrant and his liturgy committee.

The burden, however, can be light and sweet if we trust the Lord, use the faith and brains he gives us, and take advantage of the resources the Church is providing for our work.
MAKING MASS MORE PRAYERFUL

Sunday Mass should be the week's highlight of individual and community prayer. Every weekday Mass too should be an experience in prayer. Yet more and more priests and people seem to be saying, "I can't pray at Mass any more."

In this article, suggestions are offered for celebrants and liturgy committees to help the community find the Sunday Mass more prayerful. These ideas may also be adapted for weekday Masses.

Before Mass

What is done before Mass — in the days of preparation as well as in the few moments before the celebration begins — will help the community to take part in a more prayerful spirit.

Theme: In the weeks before the celebration, the priest and the liturgy committee decide the theme of the day's Mass, based on the readings and prayers. An extraneous theme should not be imposed; it should be found in and flow from the Mass texts. This theme will influence music, preaching, and other preparations for the celebration.

Music: The choice of music, psalms and hymns is based on the liturgy of the day and its theme. The responsorial psalm may be proper, or chosen from one of the seasonal psalms (lectionary, nos. 174-175; hymnal, nos. 172-200). Music played softly while the community is assembling may help to set the mood for the Mass, but should not disturb those who wish to pray.

Banners and posters may be used to reflect the spirit of the day or season. If left up too long, however, individual ones may cease to be seen.

First thoughts: Preparation for Mass belongs to the congregation too. Families should be encouraged to begin the day by praising God at home on his day, by looking forward to the community celebration, and by praying for all who will be celebrating with them. Liturgy comes after faith and conversion. (Liturgy, no. 9)

Bulletin: The parish bulletin can help prepare people for the celebration. When distributed after Mass, it may contain a note about the theme and spirit of next Sunday's Mass. This is particularly valuable when a new season is beginning the following week. If the bulletin is available before Mass, a note on the day's celebration may be included. The daily starter (see Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy — 1974, pages 19-20) is another source of ideas for this note.

Prayer before Mass: People should be encouraged to be in their pews at least five minutes before Mass, preferably earlier, so that they may spend time in prayer and in preparation for the celebration.

Introduction: In a growing number of parishes, the Sunday Mass is introduced by a minister who, in a few, carefully prepared sentences, points out the theme and its meaning for this congregation and for the entire people of God. In other communities, the celebrant gives the introduction after the greeting.
Introductory Rites

By these rites the people become a worshipping community, and prepare to listen to God's word and to celebrate the eucharist. (See General instruction, no. 24.) Celebrant and liturgy committee can help this part of the Mass to be more conducive to prayer each Sunday by their careful planning.

**Introduction:** The celebrant or another minister may introduce the day's Mass briefly after the greeting. Its value is described above.

**Penitential rite:** The celebrant calls on the community to reflect in silence, recalling their sinfulness and need of God's forgiveness. By remembering that we are poor, in need of God's help, we are opening our hearts to receive his abundant grace. Only those who feel self-sufficient are refused his help.

As the need for salvation is more deeply felt, the *Lord, have mercy* will become more prayerful. (In most communities, this prayer could be said more slowly, and with greater meaning.)

- **Invitation:** The celebrant may express the invitation to the community in a way that reflects the theme of the day or season. It should be sincere, a true expression in words of his pastoral role to lead God's people to repentance and renewal. A real pause for personal reflection must follow the invitation if the rite is to have any value.

- **Third penitential rite:** Special petitions may be prepared in the third form of the penitential rite. They should be prepared in advance and inserted into the sacramentary for the celebrant's use. Two examples are given in the pastoral notes, page 15, of *Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy — 1974,* and a number have been included in the permanent sacramentary.

**Opening prayer:** The collect is a prayer offered by this community and by the universal Church, expressing the needs of God's people; this prayer is offered through Christ, our high priest and one mediator. While the text of the prayer is given in the sacramentary, the celebrant is free to compose his own invitation to the community.

- **Invitation to pray:** The celebrant may invite the community to prayer with the traditional *Let us pray,* or he may expand it with a few words. Examples of these are given in the CCC sacramentary.

- **Silent prayer:** The general instruction of the missal (no. 32) states that priest and people spend some moments in silence, realizing they are in the presence of God, and making their personal petitions to him. A reasonable time is needed here: the two-second pause that is sometimes observed is a disservice to the people of God, and is destructive of the spirit of prayer.

Occasionally the people should be reminded of the meaning of this silence, and encouraged to use it well.

- **Acclamation:** After an adequate time of silent prayer, the celebrant prays the collect with dignity. It is printed in senselines so that the priest may say it well, while all listen to the words he addresses in their name to God. It is not necessary for them to read it silently while the priest says the prayer.
He concludes the prayer by offering it to the Father through Christ, in the Spirit. By their acclamatory Amen! the people give assent to the prayer and make it their own.

Over the period of a year, the Church praises God in the collects, and asks for the help, grace and virtues needed by his people in this community and throughout the world.

Liturgy of the Word

In the liturgy of the word, the people of God listen to his word, reflect on it in prayer, and prepare to take part in the liturgy of the eucharist. Careful preparation is needed by priest, readers, choir and committee to ensure a good celebration and fruitful participation in this part of the Mass.

First two readings: A brief but carefully prepared introduction to all the readings or to each of them will help the congregation listen with greater faith and understanding. This may be given by the celebrant, deacon or reader. The dignity of the proclamation and the bearing of the reader should be signs of respect for God's saving word. After each reading, all may pause for a moment of silent prayer. This time of quiet meditation will help the assembly respond in prayer (now) and in action (during the week) to God's word. When first done, the purpose of this pause should be explained. Occasionally it is good to introduce this period of silence in words like these:

We have heard God speaking to us.
Let us think about his words
and answer him in silent prayer.

An article outlining the benefits of silence in the liturgy is contained in Bulletin 38, page 93.

Responsorial psalm: The psalm is the communal meditative response to the first reading from God's word. Normally it should be sung by the choir or cantor, with the people listening to the text and singing the refrain. (Further suggestions are given in Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy — 1974, page 21.)

Gospel acclamation: Sung as a joyful shout of welcome to Christ, who is about to speak to this assembly through the gospel reading, the acclamation with its ringing alleluias should be a moment of exultation, and a preparation for a reflective hearing of the gospel. If not sung, it may be omitted, but Catholic Book of Worship puts its singing within reach of the ordinary parish: See Guidelines, page 21.

Gospel: The proclamation of the gospel is the high moment of the liturgy of the word. The deacon or priest who is to proclaim it (normally, it should not be the celebrant: he presides throughout the readings, listening with the rest of the community, and then he gives the homily) bows in prayer, then goes in solemn procession to the lectern. To emphasize the importance of the gospel, the servers carry lighted candles, and incense is used. After incensing the book as a sign of our respect for God's word, he proclaims this word while all listen, standing in reverence, for it is the Lord Jesus speaking to us. (Liturgy, no. 7)

Following the gospel, all may spend a moment in silent prayer.
Such a manner of proclamation encourages people to read the scriptures in a prayerful way during the week (see *Bible and prayer*, in this issue), and prepares them for the celebrant's homily.

*If someone is looking for an effective way of destroying the prayerfulness of the celebration, and of sabotaging the rhythm of the liturgy of the word, he can do this most efficiently by inserting a few announcements at this point. If any are needed, they should be in the bulletin, or made before Mass, or after the prayer after communion, just before the celebrant dismisses the assembly, but never during the liturgy of the word.*

**Homily:** By proclaiming the wonderful works of God, especially as shown in the day's readings and other Mass prayers, and in the life of the Church (including this congregation), the celebrant leads the people into the eucharistic liturgy. As he expounds the mysteries of faith and the guiding principles of the Christian life, he is helping the members of this community to grow in faith and its practice by life and prayer. (*Liturgy*, nos. 52, 35:2) A moment of silent prayer and reflection may follow the homily; announcements may not.

**General intercessions:** These are covered in *A real prayer of the faithful*, in this issue.

**Liturgy of the eucharist**

*Recollected prayer, sincere offering and community action take place during the liturgy of the eucharist. Priest and liturgy committee have to work hard to help the congregation toward a more prayerful celebration of this central part of the Mass.*

**Preparation of the gifts:** Much misunderstanding exists about this part of the Mass. It is a quiet moment of recollection, a time of reflection between the busy liturgy of the word and the proclamation of the eucharistic prayer. It is a time of preparation rather than energetic action.

The rubrics point the way to a better celebration. While an offertory song is being sung by people or choir, the priest is literally “setting the table” for the eucharistic banquet. He is preparing the gifts, not offering them. The rubric notes that he says the prayers quietly — that is, *silently.* If no hymn is being sung, he *may* say two of the prayers aloud (*Blessed are you, Lord God*): all others are to be said in silence. When these two prayers are said aloud, the people *may* respond. In their subtle Roman way, the rubrics are telling us “to cool it” at this part of the Mass, and to gather our strength for the central part which is about to begin. (See *Bulletin 33*, pages 77-78.)

It will take some effort, but celebrants and committees and musicians have an important task of education here.

The invitation to the prayer over the gifts (*Pray, brethren*) is another of the formulas the celebrant may reword according to circumstances, inviting all to join him in prayer, especially in offering the eucharistic prayer.

**Eucharistic prayer:** A number of sincere but unfortunate errors have crept into the central part of the Mass. While we just mention them here, we also point out the correct ways of participation, so that communities may adjust local
practices, and continue to pray with the Church in the way the Church teaches us to do so.

These errors include: breaking the unity of the eucharistic prayer by inserting directions or comments between the preface and the body of the prayer; constant use of the same one or two eucharistic prayers; failure to vary the memorial acclamation; inviting the congregation to say the words of the whole eucharistic prayer, or parts of it, or to join the celebrant in saying or singing the final doxology. Each of these practices lessens the prayerfulness of the celebration.

There are many acceptable ways of making the eucharistic prayer more prayerful:

- **Introducing the prayer**: After the prayer over the gifts and before the preface dialogue, the celebrant may suggest to the congregation some reasons why they are giving thanks. By helping them to feel that their lives are part of the history of salvation, the celebrant enables them to pray better and to benefit more from this Mass (see Bulletin 40, page 199, no. 8). Then he begins the preface dialogue.

- **Holy, holy**: The acclamation becomes a much more prayerful moment when it is sung. As one of the three interventions the congregation makes during the eucharistic prayer, it cries out to be sung. This should be one of the first pieces of music a congregation learns. Occasionally a new one should be learned to keep the freshness and joy of this acclamation.

- **Silent participation**: The Vatican Council tells us that silence at the right times is one of the ways by which people participate actively. (Liturgy, no. 30) Listening in reverent silence is the way the congregation takes part in the eucharistic prayer, thus joining in the true offering that takes place in this Mass: the Church, especially this assembled community, offers the victim to the Father in the Spirit. “The Church’s intention is for the faithful not only to offer the spotless victim but also to learn to offer themselves and daily to be drawn into ever more perfect union, through Christ the mediator, with the Father and each other, so that God may be all things in all.” (General instruction, no. 55f, quoted in Bulletin 28 and again in Bulletin 33, page 89)

It is the responsibility of celebrants and liturgy committees to teach people to offer themselves in this way.

- **Proclamation**: The priest helps people to observe their reverent silence and offer themselves to God when he proclaims the prayer well, preferably so that they can listen to the prayer and not have to keep the words before their eyes.

“A truly living and communal celebration requires the president and all other ministers to examine carefully different forms of verbal communication with the congregation. . . . When the priest says a prayer, especially a eucharistic prayer, he should not only avoid a dry, monotonous style of delivery, but an overly subjective and emotional way of acting as well. As he presides over the liturgical action, whether by reading, singing, or by use of gestures, he should carefully help the participants achieve a true sense of community as they celebrate and live the memorial of the Lord.” (Letter on eucharistic prayers: see Bulletin 40, page 201, no. 17.)
**Memorial acclamation:** This acclamation is the second time the congregation is invited to enter the eucharistic prayer vocally; it is preferable to sing it (hymnal, nos. 211-215). It should be varied according to the needs of the celebration and the community. Celebrants who insist on the same one all the time, or who vary it mechanically (the first one with the Roman canon, the third with the third eucharistic prayer) can hardly be described as imaginative leaders of prayer. When people understand the place of this acclamation in the celebration and their part in it, they are led to better prayer.

**Memento of the living and of the dead:** In the first eucharistic prayer, a distinct pause is made for these, and people should be taught to use them as moments of prayer. In the second and third eucharistic prayers, the living are mentioned, and the dead may be named in a special petition. The fourth prayer has no place for naming individuals who have died, but — like the others — names pope and bishop, and prays for the living and the dead. At these points in the celebration, people in the pews should be praying for the Church on earth and in eternity.

**Concluding doxology:** These concluding words summarize the praise of the eucharistic prayer, and are sung or said by the celebrant alone. The people make the prayer their own by their acclamatory Amen. This may be sung in a more solemn form: see Catholic Book of Worship, nos. 216-220.

**Concelebration:** Directions for concelebrants are clearly marked in the CCC sacramentary. Concelebrants should take careful note of this directive from the General instruction (no. 170): The concelebrants say their parts in a low voice and in such a way that the voice of the chief celebrant is heard and understood clearly by all the people. In other words, the congregation should not hear the concelebrants at all.

An air of quiet prayer, of careful listening as the celebrant proclaims the eucharistic prayer in their name, and three acclamations, preferably sung by all: this is the atmosphere of the central part of the Mass. The participation of the laity in the eucharistic prayer is generally by silence instead of by word. Their role is to offer spiritually what the celebrant is doing publicly in their name.

**Communion rite:** In general, this part of the Mass is quite prayerful in present practice. But a few observations may be helpful as we review our manner of celebration:

**Our Father:** The celebrant may prepare his own invitation to this prayer. Whether sung or said, the Lord's prayer should not be rushed, but said in a respectful prayerful manner. The celebrant says the next prayer with meaning, and the congregation joins him for the concluding acclamation.

**Rite of peace:** The celebrant's prayer needs to be said carefully: he must mean what he is saying; the same is true of the greeting of peace he offers to all. He invites all to share the peace of Christ with one another, and should share it with a few other persons himself. This will not become a perfunctory rite if all make a sincere effort to work for peace and love for others throughout the week, so that the ceremonial act is based on and proclaims their lives.

**Breaking of the bread:** This rite — the name for the Mass in the early Church (Acts 2:42) — is not emphasized by the present order of Mass. It takes
place while the people are singing (saying) the *Lamb of God*. Normally the celebrant should break the host so that the people can see; it makes no sense to hide his actions behind the security of the chalice.

- **Invitation to communion**: The priest may vary the words of the invitation to communion (*This is the Lamb*), in order to help people appreciate more fully the gift they are receiving. But he would do well to warn them of the change, tell the reasons for it, and to be ready to lead them into the following words, *Lord, I am not worthy.*

- **During communion time**: The dignity and bearing of the celebrant and other ministers who distribute communion, the orderly procession of the people, and psalms, hymns, organ music or silence contribute to the atmosphere of prayer. Long delays may be avoided by using a sufficient number of auxiliary ministers for communion.

- **Silence after communion**: The celebrant may leave the purification of the vessels until after the Mass, and may invite the people to spend a few moments in silent prayer; a hymn of praise may be sung instead.

- **Prayer after communion**: A pause for silent prayer follows the invitation to pray — as at the collect — unless the congregation has already spent a few moments in silent prayer.

**Concluding rite**: The celebrant will contribute to the general spirit of prayer by avoiding announcements at this time, if possible, and by carrying out the concluding rites with unhurried dignity.

- **Announcements**: Is this announcement really necessary? That question should be asked of each one; if possible, it should be contained in the bulletin and not made; or mentioned before Mass. Care should be taken not to turn this final part of the Mass into the parish pump for gossipy news items.

- **Blessing**: The usual simple blessing may be replaced with a seasonal or festive form of the solemn blessing, or with one of the prayers over the people. By his careful selection of the text and his manner of giving the blessing, the priest concludes the celebration on a prayerful note.

- **Dismissal**: Three forms are provided in the order of Mass to allow variety as the deacon or celebrant sends every member of the worshipping community to carry on the work of God's people by doing good works and praising the Lord.

**Prayer after Mass**: Priests may encourage some people to remain for several minutes of prayer after Mass. Personal prayers of praise, a few moments of meditation on the theme, readings or homily, or praying the responsorial psalm again, are some suggestions that can be offered. Perhaps the choir may sing another hymn after the recessional, or the organist may play another quiet selection.
Pastoral Practice

In order to use all the elements of the Mass in a way that will help the congregation pray better, priests and liturgy have much work to do:

Look at the celebration: They should take an honest look at the way each Mass is celebrated on Sunday. The points that contributed to prayer should be examined to see if they can become even more effective. Customs or personal habits of celebrants or ministers that detract from prayerfulness should be changed: one could consider indistinct speech, lack of personalized admonitions, failure to use options, refusal to work with others in preparation, a constant tendency to be late, prayers and ceremonies carried out with haste. Areas for gradual change should be agreed upon, and plans laid for beginning to make the Mass more prayerful.

Preparation: How much preparation is being made for Sunday celebrations? What needs improvement? How can you do better? (See Bulletin 43, pages 84-87.) Are priests and people being called to faith and conversion as the primary preparation for liturgy? (Remember the words of Liturgy, no. 9.)

Formation: Committee and priests must be concerned with helping people to grow in prayer (see Bulletin 35, pages 194-196). Short notes in the parish bulletin each week, an occasional explanation of different parts of the Mass (similar to those in this article), especially when introducing a new practice or giving life to old ones; these are some ways in which your parish can help your people to pray better during Mass.

The problems won't be solved in a week, but sincere concern and good preparation will help your people to find the Sunday Mass more prayerful, and once again at the center of their spirituality.

SUNDAY SCHEDULES

Here is a problem for your parish liturgy committee to discuss:

What is your present Saturday evening and Sunday schedule? Does it contribute to a happy celebration of the Lord's day liturgy, or do hassles in the parking lot nullify the good effects of your liturgy?

Should more time be allowed between Masses?

Do you need the same schedule in winter and summer? If there is a notable exodus of parishioners to holiday areas in one season of the year, should your church have fewer Masses and arrange to let one of your priests help in nearby cottage or resort areas to which your people are flocking?

You may not come up with all the answers, but do face the questions honestly!
**Singing Is Prayer**

The Church uses music in liturgy to enhance the rites, to deepen the spirit of prayerfulness and community, and to add solemnity to the celebration. In the Sunday liturgy, music should be recognized as a normal and important element.

Singing is prayerful work, and the musicians are carrying out a true liturgical ministry:

- **By their music:** The music used in our services adds to the praise and glory we offer God. Music makes the service more joyful, and lifts people up to a greater degree of celebration.

- **By the words they sing:** The words of hymns and psalms are prayers. It is good for both choir and people to reflect prayerfully on these words now and then. A careful choice of hymns for each celebration will help increase the community's spirit of prayer.

Singers too are praying when they sing. But they have to be careful not to exempt themselves from the rest of the Mass by being busy over hymnals and music sheets. They too are called to full participation by listening, praying, offering and responding, for they are part of the worshipping congregation.

The Vatican Council (Liturgy, no. 29) points out their need, along with other ministers, to carry out their office with the "sincere piety and decorum" which their ministry demands and which God's people should expect of them. In order to do this, they need to be thoroughly penetrated with the spirit of the liturgy, and trained to carry out their responsibilities well.

**Help and Training**

The priest and parish liturgy committee share this responsibility. What has been done in the past to help your choir members, organist and other musicians grow in the spirit of the liturgy? What training or resources have been made available to them? When was a day of prayer and recollection last held for the musicians of the parish or of the area? Here is a task where parishes can rightfully ask for help from their diocesan liturgical commission.

*If the commission in your diocese is non-existent or dormant, keep asking your bishop and senate and pastoral council, respectfully but firmly, to give you one — see paragraphs 45-46 of the liturgy constitution — in order to advance the liturgical apostolate in your diocese.*

To carry out their work well, and to achieve the spiritual results which only Christ's Spirit can effect, your choir needs spiritual help as well as musical training.

**General understanding:** A choir needs to grow in its understanding of the role of music in the liturgy. It needs to know the purpose and nature of the music used in the different parts and actions of the Mass. New members need to be given this help as they join the choir, and every member needs some further ideas in this area at least once or twice a year. What sort of information and guidance are you giving them?
**Preparation:** When your choir is preparing for Advent Sundays, for example, who helps them to understand the spirit and direction of Advent in the Church year? Who is helping them to relate the music they sing to the Mass and season?

**Day of recollection:** An annual day of prayer and recollection provides musicians with an opportunity to reflect on their liturgical ministry, to express their gratitude to God for the gift he has given them, and to realize more fully how their gift is to be used for the service of God’s people.

**Prayer:** Each choir member and musician needs to be encouraged to do his best for God and his people. The only acceptable standard is the highest: **striving for excellence** should describe everyone in the ministry of music. Each musician should be praying daily that his work in liturgy will be listened to by others in faith, and that through his ministry they will be brought closer to Christ. **To attempt to achieve spiritual results without prayer, personal effort and suffering is foolish and unChristian.**

The people of the parish should be asked occasionally to pray that the choir will continue to lead the community to greater praise by their ministry of music.

We have often heard the axiom, *He who sings prays twice.* Its truth will be even more evident in your parish if you help singers and musicians to carry on their ministry in a spirit of faith and personal prayer.

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**NEXT ISSUE**

The September-October issue of the Bulletin, no. 45, will be ready by Labor Day. Called *Learning about liturgy,* it is intended to be an introduction to things liturgical.

It will be a valuable aid to members of liturgy committees and choirs, to teachers, readers and clergy.

Single copies cost $1.50 ($1.75 outside Canada). May we suggest you order sufficient copies now for all involved in preparing and celebrating liturgy in your parish, and be ready to enter fall with an enthusiastic approach.
A REAL PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

In the prayer of the faithful (also known as the general intercessions or universal prayer), the people of the community exercise their share in the priesthood of Christ by praying for the welfare of all mankind (see 1 Tim. 2:1-2). This is one of the ways the community responds to God's word, as proclaimed to this assembly in the readings and homily.

It is the strong recommendation of the National Liturgical Office that every parish should prepare its own prayer of the faithful each Sunday. No community should be satisfied with ready-made, hand-me-down petitions: see the editorial, Ready-to-serve, in Bulletin 33, page 59.

Every worshipping community should prefer to develop its own petitions for this prayer with insight, expressing the needs of this assembly of God's people in this particular celebration. Preparation of the petitions for Sundays and other special occasions is one way of introducing the parish or community worship committee into a deeper understanding of the liturgical life and needs of their community and the world.

How to do it is covered in Bulletin 35, on the work of the parish liturgy committee (see pages 204-207); a simple outline is given in Bulletin 40, page 226.

Many articles in the National Bulletin in the past two years have discussed this prayer. The complete list of these articles and notes is given in the annual index (Bulletin 36, page 299; no. 41, page 317).

Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy — 1974, pages 23-24, describes the content, preparation and celebration of the general intercessions, while the CCC Homily Aids provide a few examples of how your committee can prepare petitions related to the readings and homily.

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The preparation of the prayer of the faithful is easy to put into practice, and can be a source of confidence to a parish liturgy committee. If you have not been doing it, start now and feel that satisfaction that comes from making it a real prayer of the faithful people in your worshipping community.

CALL TO PRAYER

The spiritual life of Christians is not limited to taking part in the liturgy. We are called to pray with our brothers and sisters in Christ, but we must also go into our room and pray in secret (see Mt. 6:6). According to St.Paul, we should pray without ceasing (see 1 Thess. 5:17). He teaches us that we must carry about in our body the dying of Jesus, so that his life may be made evident in our bodies (see 2 Cor. 4:10-11). This is why we ask God during Mass to make us an eternal gift as we offer the spiritual victim.

See Constitution on the liturgy, no. 12.

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SACRAMENTS ARE WORSHIP

When we were children, sacraments were seen as things that did something to us: baptism made us God's children, penance took away our sins.

Then we began to realize that sacraments are the actions of Christ. It is the Lord who baptizes when a man baptizes. It is the Lord Jesus who brings us into the family of God's people, who forgives our sins, who joins our lives in marriage.

Gradually, sacraments became known as encounters with Jesus. But for many who assimilated this truth, the sacraments still remained a private meeting between Christ and the individual recipient. The community seemed to have little to do with the encounter, other than providing a building, a minister, a book and the necessary equipment. Priests and bishops "administered" sacraments — no one celebrated them.

Then Vatican II brought a new and expanded dimension in sacramental theology before the minds of many Catholics:

Christ gave us the sacraments in order to make men holy, to build up the Church, his body, and to give fitting worship to God.

As signs, they also instruct us. They are sacraments of faith: they presuppose faith and conversion, (Liturgy, no. 9) and also nourish, strengthen and express our faith. They give us grace, and their celebration disposes the people of God to receive his grace fruitfully, to offer him due worship, and to practise charity in our daily lives.

For this reason, the Council adds, it is most important for believers to understand the sacramental signs with ease, and to celebrate these sacraments frequently and eagerly, for they are intended to nourish our Christian life. (See Liturgy constitution, no. 59.)

Renewed Liturgy

In the ten years since the Council issued its constitution on liturgy, we have seen the renewal beginning:

Baptism:

- *Adults*: The final translation of the preparation of adults for baptism or for admission into full communion with the Church is ready to be issued this fall. As we begin to grasp the import of these rites, we will have to take a fresh look at the instruction of adults, and at the role of the entire community in their preparation. The Council called for these reforms in the liturgy constitution, nos. 64-66, 69.

- *Children*: Emphasis is now placed on the responsibility of the parents for the Christian upbringing of their children. Greater care is being taken in helping parents to prepare for the celebration of baptism; the sacrament is sometimes postponed until they are ready to carry out their responsibilities. (Liturgy, nos. 67-70)
**Confirmation:** This sacrament has been rescued from warlike metaphors and brought back into closer contact with baptism and eucharist as the sacraments of initiation. To emphasize this the candidates renew their baptismal promises, and as a rule, confirmation is celebrated within Mass. When an adult is baptized or received into full communion with the Church, normally within Mass, he is confirmed and receives the eucharist as part of the rite.

**Eucharist:** The early and major reforms of the Council took place in the celebration of the eucharist. Now the emphasis is on good celebration, on a balanced viewpoint, and on the full nature of this sacrament. A complete issue of the Bulletin would be needed to describe all the reforms in the eucharist, which remains the center of the worship and activity of the Christian community.

**Penance:** Penance celebrations were the first sign of a move by local churches toward renewal of this sacrament. A fuller reform has been brought about by the recently issued order of penance. Future issues of the Bulletin will study this document carefully. (Liturgy, no. 72)

**Anointing of the sick:** The sacrament is once again seen in its fuller nature as a sacrament for Christians who are seriously sick or weak with age, not only for those who are dying. The entire ministry to the sick is now the responsibility of the whole Christian community as well as the priest. Viaticum is the proper sacrament for the dying. (Liturgy, nos. 73-75) A study of anointing of the sick and suggestions for its celebration are found in Bulletin 43, pages 114-125.

**Ordination:** The ordination of priests, bishops and deacons has been totally revised. The relationship of the bishop with the rest of the bishops was emphasized in many Council documents, and by the establishment of episcopal conferences and international synods. The subdiaconate and minor orders have been abolished, and ministries of acolytes and readers have been instituted. (Liturgy, no. 76)

**Marriage:** The sacrament is to be celebrated during Mass; if outside Mass, scripture readings enrich the revised rite. (Liturgy, nos. 77-78)

*The principles used in the renewal of the sacraments are the same as those in the Mass: use of the vernacular, more readings from the bible, active participation by the people, simple signs that teach, frequent options, specific roles for different persons, right to make local adaptations.*

**A Pastoral Question**

The basic reforms of the Roman rite are almost complete. Parts of the pontifical books and the ritual blessings are still on the way, but we have received most of the ceremonies and rubrics we are going to have for a while.

We are now in a period of consolidation, of exploring the wealth of the liturgy we have. This is a time for growing in our understanding, for penetrating more deeply, for broadening our grasp of liturgical principles and pastoral needs, and for putting them into regular practice in our parish celebrations.

More suggestions for growth in liturgy, including the celebration of the sacraments, are given in Bulletin 38, page 71, *What’s new in liturgy?*
Now is the time for your parish liturgy committee to look at each of the sacraments, and see what steps you are taking to help all members of the parish, young and old, to be concerned with the celebration and preparation of these sacramental events. This is the time to begin a program of education so that every member of your worshipping community will have a post-Vatican II understanding of sacramental living.

CHRIST PRAYS TO THE FATHER

Liturgy consists of the Mass, the sacraments and the liturgy of the hours. Formerly known as the breviary or divine office, the hours continue the praise of God by his people throughout the day and the night around the world.

Praise by God’s Chosen People

The Second Vatican Council emphasized the meaning of the liturgical hours of praise in the life of the Church:

As high priest of the new covenant, Jesus joins the entire human race to himself, and associates us with his own hymn of praise to the Father.

Through the Church, the Lord Jesus continues his priestly work. We are to be ceaselessly involved in praising the Father and in praying for the salvation of the whole world. The Church does this by celebrating the eucharist, and in other ways, especially in praying the liturgy of the hours.

Tradition: Since early Christian times, the prayer of the Church has been arranged so that day and night are made holy by our praise of God. When this song of praise is worthily celebrated by those the Church has designated to offer it officially, or by the faithful praying together with their priests in an approved form, it is the voice of the Church speaking to its Lord; it is the prayer which Christ himself, together with his body, addresses to the Father.

All who pray the liturgy of the hours are sharing in the Church’s responsibility to be the people of prayer. When we offer this praise to God, we are standing before his throne in the name of the Church.

Priests in the pastoral ministry offer the praises of the hours with greater fervor as they try to obey St. Paul’s exhortation to pray without ceasing, (1 Thess. 5:17) since only the Lord can give fruitfulness and growth to the work they are doing. Without me, he said, you can do nothing. (Jn. 15:5) When the apostles appointed deacons, they said: We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. (Acts 6:4)

The liturgy of the hours has been reformed in the past decade in order that it may be more worthyly prayed in modern circumstances by members of the Church. (See Liturgy, nos. 83-87.)
Principles of Renewal

Some of the principles involved in this renewal in the prayer life of the people of God:

1. **Prayed in common**: The Church is a community called by God to pray. As the celebration of the whole Church, the liturgy of the hours is designed as common prayer. Individual recitation is not the norm, but the exception, and should exist only when common celebration is truly impossible. Priests are encouraged to celebrate at least part of the divine office in common. (Liturgy, no. 99)

2. **Consecrating the entire day**: The liturgy of the hours is an invitation to praise God and reflect on his word at various times during the day. It is a constant reminder that God is present among his people. Its purpose is to make the entire day holy by giving continual praise to God. (Liturgy, nos. 84, 88, 94)

3. **Celebrated at the proper times**: Each hour should be prayed at its proper time of day (Liturgy, nos. 88, 94):
   - *Office of readings*: at any hour of the day, even the night before;
   - *morning prayer*: at the beginning of the day;
   - *midday prayer*: during the day, continuing the Church’s tradition of praying in the midst of the day’s work;
   - *evening prayer*: toward the end of the day, when daylight is failing;
   - *night prayer*: the final prayer of the day, said before going to bed.

   Other than joining the office of readings with another hour, it is an abuse to lump a group of hours together or to “clean up” the daily office in one or two sessions.

4. **Chief hours**: Morning and evening prayer are the most important hours. The Council calls them the hinges of the liturgical hours. (Liturgy, no. 89a) These should become the prayer of the Christian community.

5. **Belong to laity too**: All members of the Church are called to join in the public prayer of God’s people, praising God and praying for the welfare of mankind. It is not reserved to clergy or religious. Lay persons are encouraged to celebrate at least some of the liturgical hours, especially in common. Pastors should promote this work of praise in their parishes. (Liturgy, no. 100) Parish worship committees should be looking for ways of promoting the celebration of the hours in their community.

6. **Nourishing personal prayer**: Celebrating the liturgy of the hours should be a source of piety and nourishment for personal prayer, especially among priests. Those who take part in the hours should improve their prayer by deepening their grasp of the liturgy and the bible, especially the psalms. (Liturgy, nos. 90, 86)

7. **Sacred silence**: As at Mass, silent meditation is desirable in the liturgy of the hours, allowing each person to join his prayer to that of the Church, and to reflect on God’s word. A period of silence should follow each psalm and reading, and may come before or after a responsory. Meditation and silence are also encouraged as an aid to devotion when one prays the hours alone.
Every so often, someone gets up and spouts nonsense about a divorce between liturgy (the public prayer of the Church) and personal prayer (the prayer of individual members of the Church). The two extremes to which such speakers go are these: they say that liturgy eliminates any need for personal prayer; or they seem to think that personal prayer is sufficient, and that public prayer is an unnecessary frill.

The truth lies in the middle.

Liturgy is the source and summit of every Christian activity, including prayer. (Liturgy, nos. 10-12) It should provide each believer with a model for his personal prayer, and be a source of nourishment for his prayer life.

Personal prayer by individuals and families should lead up to participation in the liturgy; after the liturgical celebration, they should continue to pray about the themes of this celebration, and about the words of the Lord.

Liturgy without personal prayer is a sham. Personal prayer without liturgy is incomplete. When each member of the community is a praying person, the Sunday assembly takes on new power. People of prayer bring a much deeper sense of reverence to worship, and good liturgy helps Christians to deepen their life of prayer and action throughout the week. A praying parish is active in the Lord's work.

Mass: During the week, people can pray about some of the thoughts in Sunday's homily. Perhaps the theme of the celebration or the Sunday starter could be reprinted in the bulletin for their use at home. As the days go by, people are continuing to spend their daily lives as a living sacrifice for the Lord. Depending on the strength given them in the bread of life and trusting God's promises, they keep on carrying their cross as they follow Christ, day by day. Prayer is necessary too for strength to live up to the teachings of God heard in the Sunday liturgy, and in preparation for the following week's Mass.

Before Mass, we gather up our week's service, with its efforts and failures. We admit our faults, we ask for help to do better. We bring the intentions we wish to remember, and ask God's mercy for all his people.

Sacraments: We prepare for each sacrament by prayer, in order that our dispositions may be better, so that we will be more prepared to receive the grace and benefits the Lord wishes to give us. We should continue to pray after receiving any sacrament, asking for strength to live up to its grace, and relying on God's promised help. At times we should seek to renew and stir up the grace he has given us through the sacraments. (When did your parish last do this for baptism, confirmation or marriage?)

The Church gives us the example of such a renewal during Lent, when the people of God are called on to renew their baptismal promises, while catechumens are preparing to be baptized into the community. During Lent, therefore
the parish community should be in harmony with the universal Church, and should not be dashing off on particular themes of its own which have little or nothing to do with the lenten task of God’s people. (See Bulletin 42 on the way God calls his people to penance in Lent and throughout the year.)

**Liturgy of the hours:** Those who celebrate the liturgy of the hours prolong throughout the day the praises offered to God in the Mass, where all honor and glory — including that of our public and personal prayer — is given to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit.

To expect to celebrate the public prayer of the Church well when one does not pray at any other time is to tend dangerously toward the formalism of lip service, so severely condemned by the Lord Jesus.

Public and private prayer go hand in hand. One divorced from the other cannot please the Lord.

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Further suggestions for your priests and liturgy committee are contained in *Prayer life of the parish*, Bulletin 35, pages 194-196.

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**BEGIN THE MEETING WITH PRAYER**

*Think back to meetings you have attended, where the opening prayer went like this:*

The chairman apologetically asked the chaplain or someone to say a prayer, or did it himself. A slovenly, mumbled sign of the cross, a hurried *Our Father*, or *Hail, Mary*, an ejaculation, another sign of the cross, and a common sigh of relief: now we can get down to the business we came for!

*Even if such perfunctory prayer is all we have known, we can do much better. The beginning of a meeting can be a moment of real prayer:*

- **Jesus is present among us:** Whenever two or more of us gather in his name — for any good purpose — the Lord Jesus is among us. He is with us during the entire meeting. We should recall this wonderful fact at the beginning of the gathering, and perhaps once or twice during it.

- **Listen to Jesus:** An appropriate paragraph from the gospels is read reverently. By his actions and words, the Lord is speaking to this group of his people. A moment of silent reflection will give him further opportunity to carry this message into our hearts.

- **Pray with Jesus:** We join Jesus in praying to the Father. We place our gathering in the hands of our Lord, and begin it in his name.

Then the meeting does not begin. Rather, it *continues* in the presence of the Lord.
PRAYER'S VALUES

We learned about the “ends” of prayer when we were children, but for too many now, prayer has come to an end. Let’s take a fresh look at the values that prayer can bring into our lives, both as a worshipping community and as individual believers.

We Adore You

How many times did we stop yesterday to worship God? Did we pause at all to offer him glory for being God? to admire him for his wonderful love, goodness, power? Do we ever do this at Mass?

In the prayers used in the Mass and liturgy of the hours, there are many expressions of adoration and glory. Do we ever advert to them, and agree with them?

A few moments should be spent each day giving God simple glory for his greatness. We can do this in our own words; sometimes we may want to use traditional prayers from the Church’s treasury: Glory be to the Father; Glory to God; Holy, holy, holy Lord; the canticles of Mary (Lk. 1:46-55) and of Zechariah (Lk. 1:68-79); many psalms also fit this category of simple adoration.

We Praise You and We Thank You

Praise and thanksgiving go together. When we do one, we are doing the other. The greatest act of thanksgiving we have is the Mass: eucharist means thanksgiving.

Looking back at our life yesterday, how often did we say “thank you, God,” to the Father? We should recognize his many gifts to us, and praise him for them: for creation, the beauties of nature, for calling us to be his beloved people, for the talents he has given us to use for others.

Does our parish or community ever pause to offer public thanks for his gifts to us? The liturgy committee should plan ways of helping people become more aware of the thanksgiving aspect of Mass; Thanksgiving day could be celebrated more fully.

The hymn of praise (Te Deum) is almost unknown to our people, though it was the first Christian hymn sung in America when Columbus landed in 1492. Are there ways in which your liturgy committee can promote its use in prayer as one way of thanking God in our personal, family and community prayer. Do we realize that “Holy God, we praise thy name” (hymnal, no. 393) is a simple form of this hymn of praise?

We Ask Your Help

The prayer of petition seems selfish, some say; we should not ask God for what we need: he already knows. But Jesus disagrees with these opinions. By his word and example, he teaches us to pray for ourselves and for others, and to ask our Father for our needs, even though he knows them better than we do.
It is time to accept the Lord's teaching seriously. We have to realize that God our Father is interested in everything that concerns us: our salvation, our relationships with others, our prayer life, our family, our work, our physical health, our neighbors, friends and relatives; he is interested in our concern for world peace, for justice, for the missions, for vocations, for industrial peace, for schools, and everything else that we worry over.

The prayer of the faithful gives us a brief example of how the people of God follow St. Paul's teaching (1 Tim. 2:1-2), praying for the needs of the Church; for those governing our country, and for the salvation of everyone in the world; for those crushed by troubles and needs, including sick, suffering, persecuted, victimized persons everywhere; and finally, we pray for our local community.

How sincerely does our community prepare and offer the general intercessions? (See A real prayer of the faithful in this issue.) How do we bring this type of broader concern into our personal prayer? Do we have faith enough in God to ask for all our needs?

While praying for these various needs in our personal and family prayers, we should not lose sight of the value of traditional prayers of the Church, including the Our Father, Hail Mary, Lamb of God.

We Suffer With Your Son

The prayer of reparation has not been too prominent in Catholic circles in recent years. At one time, the practice of a morning offering of the day's prayers, works and sufferings was common. It was a good idea, for the redemptive value of prayer, penance and good works is still important and true. While one might want to quibble about the wording used in the old morning offering, its basic idea was sound. (See Bulletin 42, Redemptive value of penance, pages 9-10.)

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○ We are called to be people of prayer and praise. (1 Tim. 2:8; Eph. 1:12)
○ We are called to be eager to do good works. (Titus 2:14)
○ We are called to be people who carry the cross of Jesus each day. (Lk. 9:23)

People of God, are we listening to the Lord's word?

PRAYER IS A FORM OF Penance

In their invitation to the Canadian Church to listen more seriously to Jesus' call to penance, our bishops have urged us to take a fresh look at penance, and to practise it more sincerely throughout the year.

Prayer is one of the forms of penance discussed in Bulletin 42: (see The top ten, pages 20-33.)
MEDITATION ON THE LORD'S PRAYER

_The people of God say the Lord's prayer solemnly three times each day in the liturgy: in morning and evening prayer, and in the eucharist. By meditating occasionally on the words of Our Father, we can deepen our love and respect for God, and use this prayer in a spirit closer to the mind of Christ, who taught it to us._

_This article provides a few starting points for fruitful meditation on the Lord's prayer. How can you share some of these thoughts with members of your parish community?_

The Lord's prayer begins with exalted expressions of praise, and then leads us into asking for practical help in our daily needs.

**Praise and Glory**

_Father:_ God uses many terms in the Bible to describe his love and concern for us: he tells us that he is our maker, ruler, king, shepherd, spouse, mother, father. Jesus recognized him first of all as his Father, and addressed him so. But the word Jesus teaches us to use in this prayer is really a more familiar, affectionate, childlike, family term of loving trust, like Dad or Daddy in English. Each of us is God's adopted son or daughter, and we can call him our Father. We can pray to him in terms of affection and respect and confidence, for we come to him through Christ our Lord. Our love for the Father is strengthened, for we know he loves each of us as an individual person.

_Our Father:_ God is more than my Father: he is our Father. Jesus is his first-born Son, and he alone can truly call God his Father. We first hear this term placed on Jesus' lips in the gospel account of the boy in the temple. (Lk. 2:41-52)

From all eternity, God chose us in Christ to be his beloved children: to share in the inheritance of Jesus Christ, to be members of God's own family. With Jesus we rejoice in the Father's name and sing his praises. By ourselves we are nobodies, but now we are God's own people.

In calling us out of darkness into the kingdom of light, God has made us members of one family, his Church. He has poured out his Spirit upon us, to make us one body and one spirit in Christ. (third eucharistic prayer) It is his Spirit who calls us out of ourselves so that we may live for Christ, and seek to complete his work on earth while we receive the fullness of his grace. (EP IV) It is the Spirit of our Father who helps us to pray at all times (Rom. 8:26-27), especially when we recognize God as our Father. (Rom. 8:15-16; Gal. 4:6)

In this light, we begin to understand Jesus' discourse in John 13-15: the love of others, of our brothers and sisters, is the way we love God (1 Jn. 4: 7-21); it is also the way we love Jesus. (Mt. 25:31-46) If we turn against anyone else, we are turning against our brother Jesus, and we are turning against our Father. It is for this reason that Jesus could tell us: "If you love me, keep my commandments. This is my commandment to you: love one another. As I have loved you, you must love one another. If you do love one another, all the world will know you are my followers." (Jn. 14:15; 15:17; 13:34-35) God is the Father of us all.
Heaven: For too many people, heaven seems to be away up there. Yet Jesus tells us: "Anyone who loves me will keep my word. My Father will love him, and my Father and I will come to him and live in him.” (Jn. 14:23)

Jesus too is with us: in order to carry out his work of saving the world and giving glory to the Father, Christ is always present in his Church, especially when it is celebrating liturgy. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, both in the person of his minister, and especially under the eucharistic species. He is present by his power in the sacraments, so that when a man baptizes, it is really Christ who is baptizing. He is present in his word: it is he who speaks when the scriptures are read in the church. He is present when his people pray and sing, for he has promised: Where two or three are gathered together for my sake, there am I in the midst of them. (Mt. 18:20) (See Liturgy, no. 7.)

His Spirit is ever with us: “I will ask my Father, and he will give you another helper, the Spirit of truth, to remain with you for ever. You know him, for he abides with you and lives in you.” (Jn. 14:16-17)

Our God is not a remote, distant God: he is with us, always, at all times.

In the same way, heaven is not a remote thought. It is our home too. At present we are a pilgrim people, on the way to our heavenly homeland. Because we do not have a lasting dwelling place here, Jesus encourages us to travel without too much baggage (Lk. 12:13-34; James 5:1-6; see also the starter for September 25 in Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy — 1974). Too many possessions and concerns can leave no room for our daily cross, and other interests of the Lord.

Heaven is our goal: Jesus is there now, seated at God's right hand and praying for us. Someday, each of us will hear him knock and invite us to enter the joy of our Lord. Then he will free us from the corruption of sin and death, so that we may sing the Father's glory with every creature through our Lord Jesus Christ. (EP IV)

God's name: At first glance, it seems that we in North America lack the Hebrew approach, in which the name stands for the person; if we try to swear by using the English equivalent of nom d'un nom, we are frustrated. Yet in our culture, one's good name or reputation is important; our signature on a cheque or contract can have strong and lasting implications. Our name stands for us; it reflects who we are and what we represent.

In this phrase of the Lord's prayer, we are expressing our desire that God may continue to be praised, especially by us. We are the people he has chosen to praise him through Christ, to give him glory by our lives as well as by our liturgical worship. He has chosen us from all around the world so that we may make a perfect offering, a living sacrifice, to the glory of his name. (EP III) As the crown of visible creation, we are to voice the mute praise of all his creatures. (EP IV)

Called to live not for ourselves but for Christ, we are invited to make God's name holier, to give him further honor by everything we are, have, do, and say. Whatever we do, whether we eat or drink or do anything else, we are to do it with Christ for the glory of our Father. Once again, as we pray these words, we offer our day's efforts and sufferings, our daily carrying of the cross with Jesus.
Sometimes it is good for us to remember the other side of this responsibility: by our lives and example, are we leading others to God or away from him? Are we helping them to raise their thoughts to him, or are we making it more difficult for them to lift up their hearts to the Lord?

The psalms frequently speak of praising God's name for all his wonderful deeds among his people. As we pray them, we should let them be summed up in this phrase of the Our Father.

**Kingdom:** The Lord Jesus is coming — and he is here among us. He is our resurrection, our coming to eternal life — and he is our life. The kingdom too is coming — and it is present among us.

One way of looking at the kingdom is to see it as the extension of God's reign among us. As creator and supreme ruler, he reigns over the world and all who live here. And yet, he does not rule fully until each of us, freely and in response to his love, accepts our Father's mastery over our will and allows him to rule our heart.

God's plan of love for creation is to restore it to his rule by making Christ its head and king. Then, when the Lord Jesus has brought all things into his kingdom of justice, love and peace, he will restore the kingdom to the Father.

As individual members of Christ's Church, as communities of his people, what are we doing — by prayer, by suffering, and by loving action — to make the kingdom come, be present, in our midst? Does God's will really guide our lives?

The work of the kingdom is the work of Christ. By following his gentle leadership along the road of suffering, we will come to his glory. Some day, when his people have grown to the full stature he has called us to, he will come again as our king to judge us, and then hand us over to the Father as an important part of his kingdom. Then will God be all in all.

**God's will:** Too often we tend to see Jesus' obedience to the Father's will as instant sanctity. We forget that the Lord had to learn obedience in the same way we did, so that he could become the source of salvation to us who obey him. (Heb. 5:8-9) Before he could say, "My food is to obey the will of the Father who sent me, and to carry out his work," (John 4:34) Jesus had to think and pray and suffer to understand God's will for him. We should look back at our own life-long struggle to know and keep God's will, and remember that Jesus is like us in all things except sin: he obeyed God's will at all times, while we have not.

How often he must have prayed the words of Ps. 119 (118), guided and encouraged by the Spirit! So well did he seek the Father's will that the author of Hebrews (10:5-7) characterizes his human life from the beginning as being consecrated to doing God's will.

The more deeply a person becomes committed to Christ, the more concerned he becomes with knowing and doing God's will. This is not scrupulosity, but rather a consuming passion to fulfill the will of the Father as perfectly as possible. The statements and petitions of Ps. 40 and Ps. 119 take on a richer meaning. Guided by the Spirit, we can begin to pray them a little more fully, a little closer to the way Jesus prayed them.
One who seeks to do the will of God is constantly being tested. Day after
day, other people and circumstances seem to be pressuring us to move to an
easier view of God’s way. In the Lord’s prayer we pray for help to keep his will,
not the world’s.

Jesus taught us by his word (Mt. 7:21) and example (Lk. 22:42) about the
importance of God’s will in his life. He wants us to continue to make sure that
the will of God has primacy in our lives as we say his prayer to our heavenly
Father.

Earth and heaven: God wants us to obey and carry out his will. This is not
to be merely a reluctant acceptance or passive resignation, but a willing, active
embracing of his way: and truly, Jesus reassures us, he himself is this way. We
are asked to follow him and carry his cross each day of our lives — a command
that few think or pray about these days.

Called to be God’s children, we, like Christ our teacher, must be about our
Father’s business. God’s will for us is to praise him — we are the people of
praise — and to work for the salvation of the world. In these tasks, the accom-
plishment of our Father’s will, the Lord Jesus works with us and in us.

If we do love God truly, we will be ready to work each day to discern his
will, to become more sensitive in the situations we meet each day, and to be
able to read the signs of his presence in people and things. (See Rom. 12:1-2.)

Petition

“Ask, and you will receive,” Jesus tells us. God is generous with his gifts
to his beloved children. Trusting in his love, and in obedience to Jesus’ leader-
ship, we ask as he has taught us to ask.

Bread: Jesus reminded us that any human parent would not give a stone
when his child asks for bread. How much more will our heavenly Father answer
our requests for good things! (Mt. 7:7-11) In a parallel passage, St. Luke adds
an exciting note: “How much more the Father will give the Holy Spirit to those
who ask him!” (Lk. 11:13) There words lead us to the ideas of the fourth
eucharistic prayer:

And that we might live no longer for ourselves but for him,
he sent the Holy Spirit from you, Father,
as his first gift to those who believe,
to complete his work on earth
and bring us the fullness of grace.

Our heavenly Father is interested in all our now needs. Everything that
concerns us — our personal salvation, world peace, the needs of our family and
friends, the life of the Church, our vocation, our physical and mental problems,
our goals and ideas — is what he wants us to discuss with him in our prayer. He
wants us to trust in him, to depend on him for our needs. Our prayers for the
world and the Church are important too, as well as our personal problems, for
you and I and all the world belong to God.

Once again we are reminded of the fact that we belong to a community.
When we ask God to give us our daily needs, we must include others: we cannot
exclude them. At the same time, they are remembering us when they make this petition.

When we sing or say this prayer together just before communion, we are naturally inclined to think of the bread of life. While this is normal, we should not forget that Jesus is teaching us to ask God for all our needs, spiritual and temporal. By using all God's gifts, we are able to grow in our love and praise, and bring him greater honor as we advance his kingdom in the world.

**Forgive us:** *Could it be that we have been forgiven so often and so easily that we have come to look upon it as a right?* The whole teaching of the scriptures reminds us that God's forgiveness is completely gratuitous: the great wonder is not that we have loved him, but that he loved us first, (1 Jn. 4:19) while we were in sin, (Rom. 5:8) and called us to him in Christ.

Our generation needs to revive its sense of sin: nothing bothers us any more. We are more disturbed by a maltreated animal than by Hiroshima; it is easier for us to become upset by spilled soup than spilled blood.

The penitential rite is deliberately placed at the beginning of Mass to wake us up: unless we are ready to admit our sinfulness, our powerlessness to raise ourselves without God's help, he cannot help us. He casts down the proud, and lifts up only those who are willing to admit that they are totally dependent on God for life, forgiveness and strength. By honestly admitting our need for grace, we are aligning ourselves with the humble, sinful tax collector instead of with the self-sufficient and self-righteous Pharisee.

Do we relate the sacrament of penance, the sacrament of reconciliation, with the Easter peace that Christ gives us? (Notice the close proximity of the Lord's prayer and the rite of peace in the Mass.)

When we ask for forgiveness, it is good for us to remember the price that the Lord Jesus had to pay for it: he bought our reconciliation with his blood, shed for all men's forgiveness. He paid this price to free us from the slavery of sin and to let us rejoice in the freedom of the children of God. It is for this reason that Jesus would say, after forgiving a sinner, "Go in peace, and sin no more." *How often do we heed these words?*

**As we forgive others:** In the gospel, Jesus links our forgiveness by God with our readiness to forgive others. (Mt. 6:14-15) The bond is inexorable, for it is based on his command of love. If I do not love others, then I am unable to love God; if I do not forgive others, then I am unable to be forgiven. In fact, he teaches us to say to our Father: "Please forgive me in exactly the same way I forgive others!"

Forgiveness is an act of love. It can be generous, as was the father's loving forgiveness for his prodigal son, for God has poured out his Spirit of love and reconciliation into our hearts. But forgiveness can be begrudging, or even refused, as in the case of the unforgiving servant (Mt. 18:21-35). Would we like God to forgive us in the same way we forgive one another?

As we meditate on the relationship between love and forgiveness, we become more aware than ever that the Church deliberately places the Lord's prayer (with its reminder of forgiveness) within the Mass: though we have passed the point of
offering our gift, we have not completed the sacrifice until our communion. The meaning and importance of Mt. 5:23-24 come to fuller light when we actually greet one another — especially those closest to us, members of our own family — with gestures and words based on love-as-we-are-loved, forgiveness-as-we-are-forgiven-by-God.

**Trial and temptation:** St. James points out the value of trials to our faith (James 1:2-4), and reminds us that God is not the source of our temptations, but rather the source of our help, of light and gifts. (1:12-18) The entire epistle, though brief, is an encouraging letter on faith and prayer, and can be helpful in our personal quest to know our Father better and to love him more.

In Gethsemane, when undergoing his own agony, Jesus encourages his apostles to get up and pray that they will not fall into temptation. (Lk. 22:46) He prays that Peter’s faith will not fail, so that when he turns back to Christ, he will be able to strengthen his brothers. (Lk. 22:32) Jesus asks the Father to take the cup of suffering away from him, but accepts the Father’s will in words that each of us must learn to use frequently: “Not my will, Father, but your will be done.” (Lk. 22:42)

In time of trial and temptation, do we pray? Do we put our total trust in God, accepting trials and rejecting temptation? (Or do we persist in rejecting trials and accepting temptations?)

The Father is with us, leading us safely through dark valleys to the kingdom of light. (Ps. 23) He is with us, knowing all we do and protecting us with his Spirit. (Ps. 139) He guides our steps on the paths of peace. (Lk. 1:79)

**Free us from evil:** God has shown his love for us by freeing us from the kingdom of darkness and bringing us into his kingdom of light. Christ spent his life seeking to liberate men from the slavery of sin, for its only reward is eternal death. He came to bring us eternal life.

It is good for us to realize what the psalms mean when they constantly refer to God as our rock, our protector, our refuge, our shepherd.

In the brief prayer which follows the Lord’s prayer at Mass, the Church shows us how to develop this petition: we ask God to free us from every kind of evil and to give us peace; we ask him to keep us free from sin, and to protect us from all sorts of anxiety. This prayer is offered in a spirit of joyful hope as we wait for the coming of Christ our savior. We might add a further petition from the priest’s private prayer of preparation for communion, that we will be kept faithful to the Lord’s teaching, and never be separated from him.

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We are the beloved sons and daughters of God. He has given us the Spirit of his Son — poured him out into our hearts — to form us and make us able to call him our Father (see Gal. 4:6).

The Lord’s prayer is a most important way in which Christians, individually and in community, recognize God as their heavenly Father, and proclaim their belief as they pray.
PRAYER THROUGH THE YEAR

Our prayer life should be sensitive to the moods and themes of the liturgical year. As the Church reflects on the paschal mystery at different times of the year, our personal prayer should be in harmony. In other words, individual and family prayer during Advent is not the same as it will be in Lent or during the summer.

Some thoughts for discussion and further exploration are offered here to show how we can pray in harmony with the varying seasons of the Church's year of grace.

Page references for scripture readings refer both to the Canadian lectionary and to Sunday Lectionary — Study Edition.

Seasonal or thematic hymns are listed in the liturgical index at the back of Catholic Book of Worship, choir edition, pages i-iv.

Advent and Christmas

Advent: "Make straight the way of the Lord!" is this season's theme. The prayer of Advent is filled with quiet joy and hope. Mary and John the Baptist are among our models: open to the Spirit, they were ready to obey, willing to trust God and to believe in his promises. (Bulletins 36 and 41 are filled with Advent ideas for prayer and practice.)

The two canticles in the first chapter of Luke (1:46-55, and 1:68-79), as well as the Hail, Mary, are good prayers to use frequently during Advent.

Scripture readings on the season's meaning are assigned to the Sundays (Advent Masses, nos. 1-12, pages 1-28; psalms, page 405 in the lectionary).

Advent hymns for family devotions are found in the Canadian hymnal: see the liturgical index under Advent, Mary, Word of God.

Further ideas for Advent prayer are contained in Joyful preparation, Bulletin 36, pages 247-248.

Christmas: "I bring you good news of great joy for all the people: your savior, Christ the Lord, is born." During the Christmas season, rejoicing and praise are the way we greet the coming of our savior. God is faithful to his promises, and we give him glory. A favorite prayer in this season would be Glory to God in the highest, either said or sung.

Scripture readings for the season are found in the lectionary (nos. 13-21, pages 29-50; psalms, pages 405-406). Christmas music in the hymnal is listed under Christmas, kingship, Mary, praise.

Bulletin 36 contains many ideas for prayer in the Christmas season.

Ordinary Time Begins

The first period of ordinary time begins the day after the feast of the Lord's baptism, and ends the day before Lent.

In these few weeks, a quiet period between the Christmas celebrations and the beginning of the Lenten season, reflective prayer would seem to be in order.
The apostles' creed and the first half of the Lord's prayer are suitable prayers for the meditative spirit of this season: see Meditation on the Lord's prayer in this issue.

Scripture readings would include the Sunday texts (beginning at no. 65, page 183; psalms, pages 410-412). Hymns on the Christian vocation, community, unity, praise and creation could be sung in family and group gatherings: these are listed in the liturgical index of the choir edition of Catholic Book of Worship.

Lent

More ardent prayer and prayer for sinners are encouraged in the season of Lent by the Vatican Council. (Liturgy, nos. 109-110) Baptismal renewal, internal and external penance, and closer attention to God's word are part of our lenten task. (Bulletins 37 and 42 are devoted entirely to the work of God's people during Lent, and provide further guidance for family and community prayer.)

Suitable prayers during this time of penance are Psalm 51 (50), the baptismal profession of faith, the Nicene creed, the penitential psalms (Jerusalem Bible: Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143; Vulgate: Psalms 6, 31, 37, 50, 101, 129, 142 — see Bulletin 37, page 29).

The Sunday readings (nos. 22-36, pages 51-91; psalms, pages 406-407) provide inspiration for family prayer. Lenten music could include songs listed in the hymnal under Lent and passiontide, baptism, penance celebrations, word of God.

Further ideas on lenten prayer are discussed in Bulletin 37, pages 9, 11-12, 29; and in Bulletin 42, pages 21-22.

Holy Week

Meditative reading of the scriptures and extra time spent in prayer should be as much a part of personal and family devotion as participation in the special liturgies of Holy Week.

The best readings for this week are those contained in the lectionary (nos. 38-42, pages 93-137; psalms, pages 407-408). The hymnal provides prayers and psalms (pew edition, pages 48-69) as well as suitable hymns: see liturgical index for each day under Holy Week.

During this week, our personal prayer should prepare us for better community celebration of the Lord's death and rising; the liturgical celebrations should inspire and guide our personal and family prayer, and lead us toward greater personal conversion.

Further ideas on the spirit of this week are contained in Bulletin 37, pages 32-44; no. 42, pages 54-59.

Easter Season

We rejoice during the Easter season because God has raised our savior, and in his rising we have new life. The themes of living for God, praise and thanksgiving should predominate in our prayer during these two months.
In the Sunday Masses, the first reading is taken from the Acts of the Apostle, the story of the early Church: God is ready to carry out similar wonders of grace in our community now, and in our families, if we ask for these helps.

The lectionary presents an excellent selection of readings in nos. 42-64 (pages 134-182; psalms, pages 408-409). Easter hymns make good prayers: see the liturgical index of the Canadian hymnal under Easter season, baptism, Christian vocation, confirmation, community, praise, unity.

**Ordinary Time Resumes**

Ordinary time resumes on the day after Pentecost, and continues until the Saturday before Advent.

During this long season, we may find ourselves drifting away from prayer because of the apparent lack of emphatic themes in the Sunday celebrations and because we are so busy relaxing or working. A Christian will react against these temptations by seeking to pray better.

**Summer:** Modern advertising tries to persuade us that summer is a time of total relaxation, recreation and refreshment: work, thought and prayer are to be avoided. In its liturgy, however, the Church presents a steady succession of scripture passages which speak God's word to us, and encourage us to give witness each week, for there is no holiday from conversion, renewal, praise or prayer.

Prayers of quiet trust — such as Psalms 23 (22) and 27 (26), or prayers based on St. Paul's writings (such as Eph. 3:14-19; see also Bulletin 40, page 193) are good. Prayer for the people of God can help to strengthen the Church's work in advancing the kingdom of God on earth.

Hymns celebrating the Trinity, creation, Christian vocation, Sunday, community, Mary and the saints are suitable during this time of year. Scripture readings are given in the lectionary (nos. 86-127, pages 227-312; psalms, pages 410-412).

**Autumn:** An article on autumn prayer was included in Bulletin 40 (pages 212-213; see also pages 217-222 for further ideas). As the liturgical year draws to a close, a believer thinks of the second coming, of death, judgment and resurrection, of the Lord's final harvest. The petitions of the Lord's prayer and the *Hail, Mary*, reflect these themes.

Scripture readings: lectionary, nos. 128-162, pages 313-385; psalms, pages 410-412.

Suitable hymns from *Catholic Book of Worship* are included in the liturgical index under eucharistic devotions, kingship, Mary, saints, praise, word of God.

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As the liturgical year comes to its end, the Christian believer and his family are already preparing to enter Advent and begin a new year of grace with the Lord and his beloved people of praise.

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VISITS SHOULD BE RESTORED

The holy eucharist is celebrated and preserved in the church, which is a house of prayer. The faithful come together in church to obtain help by honoring the Son of God, our savior; once offered for us on the cross, he is present here to continue the work of our salvation. God calls his people to respond in gratitude to his gift to us: his Son. Jesus continues to share eternal life with us, the members of his body, the Church. (See Vatican II, Ministry and life of priests, no. 5.)

In order to carry out the work of salvation of men and of greater praise to God the Father, the Lord Jesus is always present in his Church, in a number of ways. (Liturgy, nos. 6-7)

Why does the Church recognize and continue to revere his presence under the eucharistic species?

- **To continue the work of salvation:** When we pray to our Lord present in the sacramental species, we are praying to the savior who handed over his body and shed his blood in order to save us from our sins. He wants his Church — including us — to pray to him, and through him to the Father, that all men will be saved. Prayer for sinners is one of the Church's continuing responsibilities.

- **To continue the work of praise:** As God's beloved people, dedicated to prayer and praise, we are expected to give this praise in liturgy, in personal and family prayer and in our daily lives. With Christ we praise the Father of all glory, and continue to work to fulfill God's plan to head all things in Christ for the glory of God.

- **To call us to personal prayer:** Public prayer in the Sunday eucharistic celebration and in the sacraments is the greatest form of community praise, but Christians need to spend time in private prayer too. (Mt. 6:6)

- **To call us to conversion:** "Make straight the way of the Lord" is not limited to Advent, for the Lord Jesus came to save his people from their sins at all times, and to guide our steps into the path of peace. A visit provides an individual with the opportunity of listening to Christ's call and of examining his life in the light of God's will for him.

- **To pray for the Church:** We are a Church of sinners, still in need of prayer. We pray for our spiritual leaders, for the Church in our community, our country, and throughout the world, asking God to strengthen the pilgrim Church in faith and love.

Time for restoration: For some years now, the idea of making a visit to the Lord Jesus present under the eucharistic species has been somewhat set aside.

Now is the time to reclaim this part of the Church's eucharistic treasure, and come back to the custom of frequent, even daily visits to the blessed sacrament. Perhaps less sentimentally than in the past, with a stronger balance between the total eucharistic theology and the scriptures, we can share our lives more fully with the Lord for the glory of God and the salvation of mankind.

(See also Bread of life in Bulletin 39, pages 174-176, on bible services as another way of proclaiming our faith in the eucharist.)
GROWTH IN PRAYER

The parish has an irreplaceable role in helping its people to grow in the life of prayer. The following articles offer assistance to the parish community in this all-important task.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY

Whose responsibility is it to teach people to pray? Who should help individuals and families to grow in their prayer life? Different people share this responsibility in a parish, but it belongs to all members. Without attempting to assign priorities here, we consider some of our shared involvement in helping people to mature in prayer.

The entire parish community has the responsibility to see that the parish is a community of prayer. By baptism and confirmation, Christ has brought us into the Church of God's holy people: we are dedicated by him as people of praise, called to give him glory by our lives as well as by our worship, individual and communal. All parishioners have a responsibility toward the others, especially for those who are younger: this is best done by sharing guidance, encouragement and example, as well as by praying for them.

This responsibility is broad: we have to pray for others in our community; we must be concerned about their spiritual growth, especially when home conditions do not seem to promote a healthy prayer life. This concern should extend to the quality of liturgy in the parish, to the Sunday celebration, preaching, sacramental preparation. A mature Christian will also be moved to pray with the sick as well as for them (see Bulletin 43, pages 114-125). Handicapped children and their prayer life are important to him also (Bulletin 38, pages 108-109).

Some members of the parish have particular duties in helping the prayer life of the community:

Priests are called to lead people in liturgical prayer, and to teach them to pray, both in the liturgy and at other times. They should teach the members of the parish to participate in liturgical celebrations so that they may rise to sincere prayer at these times. Priests must lead their parishioners to an ever-improving spirit of prayer. They must teach their people to sing spiritual songs in their hearts, continuing to give thanks to the Father for all his gifts in the name of the Lord Jesus. (See Ministry and life of priests, no. 5)

In particular, the priest should be working to help his people to offer themselves in Mass, especially during the eucharistic prayer: see Making Mass more prayerful, in this issue.

Past articles on the priest as teacher of prayer are contained in Bulletin 33, pages 65-66; no. 35, pages 196, 217; no. 39, page 140; no. 40, pages 213-214, 216.

Parish council: A parish is a community of God's people, gathered around this altar. The center of the parish and its life is the eucharist; the primary work of the parish community is spiritual.
The parish council has as its task to assist the pastor and the people of the community in the total work of the parish, but the spiritual must hold first place. The spiritual side of parish life, rather than plumbing or finances, should be the council’s primary concern. The opportunities for prayer being provided for the people of this community are much more important than parish bowling leagues, bingo and picnics combined.

The prayer of the community, its growth in holiness, the quality of the liturgical celebrations, the work of the kingdom: these are the first concerns of the parish council. (See Bulletin 35, pages 177-182 for further discussion on the parish and its council.)

If the council concentrates on repairs and structures, and neglects the spiritual work of the community of believers, or considers it a problem for the clergy only, then nothing but continuing chaos will result. But when the parish council takes its spiritual responsibilities seriously, God’s kingdom will advance in your midst.

**Liturgy committee:** Much of the parish council's work in the prayer life of the community is going to depend on the vision and energy of the liturgy committee. Its tasks may be described as:

*Working to develop and promote the worship of God and the prayer life of the parish community within the universal Church and the family of man.*

Bulletin 35 is devoted completely to the role, organization, training and work of the parish liturgy committee. Articles on its concern for the community’s prayer life are found on pages 183-184, 194-196, 204-207, 217 and 219 of that issue.

**Teachers** hold a valued place in the community. In Catholic schools and in religious education classes, they have the opportunity of helping children advance in prayer. Personal example is all-important. As teachers grow in the spirit of the liturgy, they are more able to lead children to share in its riches of prayer and praise.

In this issue, *Prayer in the Canadian catechism* describes how children are learning to pray. Bulletin 35 (pages 220-222, 229) and Bulletin 36 (pages 263-264) speak further of the teacher's apostolate.

**Parents:** Though mentioned last here, parents have a unique part to play in teaching their children to pray. They are the first teachers of the faith for their little ones; their home is a little church, where faith is nourished by their prayer, example and suffering for their family (see Constitution on the Church, nos. 11, 35). Teachers, priests and other members of the parish work with them to help them as they raise their children and encourage them to grow to the fullness of stature to which Christ is calling them.

See *Teaching pre-school children to pray*, Bulletin 34, pages 118-120; *Tell me a story*, bible stories for pre-schoolers, in Bulletin 37, pages 57-62; and *Family prayer*, in this issue.

* * *

These are some of the ways in which your parish can work to help people grow in the life of prayer: now it is time to start!
The word of God should be the inspiration and strength of our personal prayer life as it is of the liturgy:

Scripture is of great importance in the celebration of the liturgy. The word of God is the source of the lessons that are read, and then explained in the homily; from scripture come the psalms we sing; the bible inspires the prayers and liturgical songs, and gives meaning to the actions and signs we use. To achieve true renewal of the liturgy, we must promote "that warm and living love for scripture" that has been traditional in the Church. (See Liturgy, no. 24.)

The bible can provide many helps for our life of prayer:

**Daily reading:** A Christian who is truly eager for good works (Titus 2:14) will want to listen each day to the Lord. Each time we read his word in faith, we are opening our ears and heart to his teaching, preparing the ground to receive the seed and bring it forth to a fruitful harvest.

Prayer and scripture readings go together: we pray before we begin and when we have finished reading, of course, but we should also pause now and then to pray and to listen. As the Vatican Council reminds us (Revelation, no. 25): we should remember that prayer is to accompany the reading of scripture, so that God and man may converse together. St. Ambrose says: *We speak to him when we are praying; we hear him when we are reading what God has said.*

**New Testament on prayer:** Followers of Christ that we claim to be, which one of us has ever taken the trouble to search out all that the New Testament teaches us about prayer? Here is a simple project that can be begun in any parish community. Then look for ways of sharing this wisdom with the rest of the parish. How about a bulletin insert on the three Sundays this year that speak particularly about prayer? (See *Preaching on prayer,* in this issue.) Next year you can start studying the Old Testament's teaching on prayer, and sharing it with your community of believers.

**Using the gospels in prayer:** We can use the gospels to nourish our prayer in several ways:

- **Brief prayers:** The gospels contain many examples of prayer that we can make our own:
  
  *Lord, teach us to pray.*
  *Lord, I do believe! Help me to believe more firmly!*  
  *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.*
  *Lord, that I may see!*  
  *Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you.*
  *Jesus, remember me in your kingdom.*
  *Not my will, Father, but your will be done.*

  Each person who reads the gospel narratives can find many of these prayers. Everyone will have his favorite phrases, but they can help us to grow. Putting an example of this type of prayer in the bulletin each week instead of a joke will make them available to all in the parish. When one of these occurs in the Sunday readings, it is good to bring it to the attention of all, recommending it as a good prayer for frequent use, and mentioning it in the bulletin as well.
The epistles contain many greetings, doxologies and prayers which can be used as personal prayer, and which serve as examples of how God wants us to pray.

- Longer prayers: The Lord's prayer (Mt. 6:9-13), the canticle of Mary (Lk. 1:46-55), the canticle of Zechariah (Lk. 1:68-79), the canticle of Simeon (Lk. 2:29-32) are examples of more developed prayers in the gospels. The first part of the Hail, Mary is contained in Lk. 1:28 and 42. We should endeavor to understand their scriptural backgrounds, so that we can pray with a deeper understanding in words inspired by the Spirit. (See Meditation on the Lord's prayer, in this issue.)

- Teaching on prayer: Look through the gospels and the other N.T. writings, and see what the Lord Jesus is telling us. The sermon on the mount (chapters 5 to 7 in St. Matthew) is a good place to start. The manner in which Jesus, Mary and the apostles prayed should also be seen as a powerful guide for our lives of prayer.

- Sharing Christ's attitudes: As we become more steeped in the gospel teaching, we begin to understand the mind of Christ a little better. Gradually, if we are open to the Spirit's guidance, we let Jesus' attitudes become ours, and we start to act according to his principles alone. He is our way, our truth and our life: he wants us to follow him in attitude as well as in action.

Another important way of allowing the mind of Christ to grow in us is to follow the scripture readings chosen by the Church each Sunday. Over a period of three years, we are presented with the main teachings of our Christian faith; week after week, the Church is forming us, teaching us about Jesus, encouraging us to listen to him as he speaks through the Sunday readings.

Families who want to be formed in the liturgical spirit will find the Sunday Lectionary — Study Edition of great assistance in this way of spiritual growth. The book will also provide them with carefully selected passages and psalms that are open doors to prayer.

Psalms: For a long time the psalter was unknown to many Catholics, but now we are using a different psalm each week as a response in prayer to the first reading from God's word. To make the task a little simpler, the Church has chosen 23 common psalms for use at different times in the year, and encourages us to become familiar with them. They are contained in the lectionary, nos. 174-175, pages 405-412.

These seasonal psalms and refrains are also contained in Catholic Book of Worship, nos. 172-200. The pew edition has the refrain only (all that the congregation normally sings), while the choir edition contains the full text of the psalms.

By helping choir and people to become comfortable with singing these, the liturgy committee may begin promoting the use of psalms as prayer in the parish. But more work remains to be done — see the following article, Teaching people to pray, for further suggestions.

* * * *

As a parish community becomes more familiar with the bible, and learns to use it in prayer, the Spirit of God will guide its members in their following of the Lord Jesus, and will teach them to pray in his way.
TEACHING PEOPLE TO PRAY

In one parish, the pastor wanted to carry out his responsibility for his people's prayer life (see Teacher of prayer, Bulletin 33: 65-66; also no. 35: 196, 217). He began a series of informal classes to introduce those who were interested to a deeper understanding of what God expected of them in prayer.

Beginning in Lent, once a week after an evening Mass, those who wished to remain at church spent an hour in this manner: a prayer to the Spirit for guidance; listening to the word of God (one or two readings, with a suitable responsorial psalm and pauses for silent reflection); an informal presentation on the evening's topic; questions and discussion; further exploration of the scriptures on prayer; time for individual and group prayer. Practical ideas for personal application were suggested for consideration and prayer during the coming week, and the evening closed with a simple prayer of the faithful, based on the theme, and the priest's blessing.

During the week, they were encouraged to read and pray over the various bible passages in a modern translation, and to measure their personal prayer life in light of God's word.

The "course" began in Lent, and was held each week until Easter; then twice a month until it was completed.

On the previous Sunday, the week's session would be mentioned in the bulletin, along with a brief idea of the topic, and an invitation to join in.

In the notes that follow, a brief outline of the course is given. Readings are selected from among those given, or from other suitable passages. The number in parentheses after the scripture reference shows where the text may be found in the lectionary. Psalms are numbered as in the Jerusalem Bible.

The various topics may be covered in a different order if desired, or others may be added.

If these talks are to be given during Mass as a homily, some changes must be made. Since the homily is a proclamation of God's wonderful deeds among us, it is based on the readings or other parts of the Mass. These talks therefore cannot be given at any Mass; if Mass is celebrated for a small group, the readings may be chosen around the theme of discussion. At Mass, the homily should lead the people into the praise of the eucharistic prayer, the nourishment of communion, and then into the daily mission of living as God's holy people.

Topics Covered

1. Lord, teach us to pray
   Readings:  Rom. 8:14-17, 26-27 (no. 749)
             Ps. 86 (no. 223)
             Lk. 11:1-13 (no. 112)

   Our lenten task: deepen life of prayer (liturgy constitution, no. 109), ask Christ to teach us to pray. Must examine present prayer life. Do we want to pray better? Ask Christ to teach us (individually and as a group) this week. In this series, giving some help, sharing our experiences with one another, but it is a lifetime task. The Holy Spirit is in us, helping us to pray.
Practice: This week, ask Christ often: Lord Jesus, give us your Spirit, and teach us to pray.

2. Believe and ask

Readings:  
Rom. 10:8-13 (no. 24)  
Ps. 138 (no. 228)  
Jas. 1:1-11 (no. 335, year II)  
Jas. 4:1-10 (no. 342, year II)  
Mt. 15:21-28 (no. 119)  
Mk. 4:35-40 (no. 96)  
Mk. 10:46-52 (no. 150)

Among the things Jesus teaches us about prayer:

Believe: pray with confidence, trust. Believe in Father's love for us. Believe in Jesus who assures us that God hears and answers us.

Ask: God knows our needs, but tells us to ask. Talk over our concerns, hopes with God: what is important to us is important to our Father. Need to widen our concerns to spiritual matters, world needs, universal Church (as in Sunday prayer of the faithful). Listen to what God tells us in Eph. 3:20, and ask!

If it is your will: always part of our petition, as in Christ's example: Lk. 22:42, Mt. 7:10; see also 1 Jn. 5:14-15, Jas. 4:1-10.

Practice: looking at our faith in prayer and in God's goodness; taking another look at what we have been asking for; beginning to work for improvement by our prayer and action.

3. Prayer of praise and thanks

Readings:  
2 Cor. 1:3-5, 10-11  
Eph. 1:3-14 (no. 105)  
Rom. 11:33-36 (no. 122)  
1 Pet. 2:4-5, 9-10 (no. 753:12)  
Ps. 103 (no. 236)  
Jn. 12:27-33, 35-36  
Jn. 14:1-4, 6-7, 9c, 10b-14

Asking most common in our prayer, but should also praise. Not praise vs. petition, but both. Praise and thanksgiving should come first — unselfish, sign of love, respect. For 1800 years we have been saying:

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Praise: set aside by God to sing his praise (Eph. 1), to be his holy, priestly people (1 Pet. 2), high priests of creation. We are called to praise him because he is so great: our creator, our Father.

Thanks: he loves us and saves us from sin (Jn. 3:16). Through Christ he forgives us and calls us to be his redeemed people who praise him.
**How:** Our parish is called to sing God's praise in our part of the world. We praise him in liturgical prayer (Mass, sacraments, liturgy of the hours) and in other prayers, as well as by our life: lip service can never satisfy him.

**Practice:** review reasons for praising and thanking God in scripture passages and in the order of Mass, especially in the four eucharistic prayers and their prefaces. How can we express our praise and thanks each day?

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**4. Psalms as prayer**

**Readings:**

- Col. 3:1-4, 12-17
- Ps. 42-43 (no. 238)
- Ps. 25 (no. 239)
- Ps. 95 (no. 241)
- Mt. 26:17-20, 26-30

Exploring a way of prayer with which Jesus was brought up. He used these as a child and adult: Lord Jesus, teach us to pray as you learned to pray!

Psalms are prayers, hymns, in poetic form; they run the whole gamut of human emotions, reflecting all our moods. They are the Spirit’s way of teaching us to pray.

Used by the Jewish people, by our Lord and his apostles, by the Church. Presently in Mass (responsorial psalm, source of inspiration — see liturgy constitution, no. 24), hymns, processions, liturgy of hours.

Psalms and other parts of bible nourish the prayer life of the Church and of individual Christians. God teaches us about himself and about ourselves, about good and evil. He teaches us to praise him and to ask for his forgiveness and help. The psalms help us to appreciate beauty of world about us, to deepen our reverence for God who is creator. The bible is used in prayer by community guided by the Spirit (Rom. 8).

Look over some familiar psalms, discuss their prayer value.

Problems: imagery, pre-Christian sentiments.

**Practice:** Use daily in prayer, time of need; meditate. Gradually develop favorites. Use before and after Mass, sacraments. At Mass, join in praying responsorial psalm (preferably sung). Explore examples of praise, thanks, sorrow, petition. Learn by doing: like learning to skate — we keep picking ourselves up. Spirit with us to help us. Suggest *Psalms for Modern Man* (see Bulletin 33, pages 66-67).

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**5. Our attitudes in prayer**

**Readings:**

- Jer. 29:10-14
- Rom. 8:26-27 (no. 107)
- 1 Tim. 2:1-8 (no. 136)
- Heb. 4:12-16 (no. 130)
- Heb. 7:25-8:6 (no. 314)
- Ps. 102 (no. 253)
- Ps. 18 (no. 256)
- Jer. 31 (no. 257, responsorial psalm)
Child to Father: We are sons and daughters, speaking to our Father, as he has told us to do. We approach him with love, respect, reverence. Example of Jesus, our brother. (See *When a Christian prays*, Bulletin 38, page 86.)

We are needy, poor, humble: realizing our total dependence on God, we are ready to ask and receive his help. We are like the publican in the temple, not like the self-sufficient Pharisee. (Lk. 18:9-14) This is why we begin the Mass with the penitential rite, to open our hearts to God's mercy.

Attention: Remember that we are in God's presence: he is near, listening, ready to speak and help. Our Father sees us (pray Psalm 139). Our response to his loving presence is attention, listening, prayer. God dwells within us. (Jn. 14) Christ is present in many ways: see Liturgy, no. 7. (Some moments may be spent on distraction in prayer, if considered helpful at this time.)

Time for prayer: We need fixed times: explore present personal and family practice. Suggest once each morning and evening as minimum (these are crucial or “hinge” hours — Liturgy, no. 89); if possible, pray at least once more during the day. Develop and improve: while it is better to pray once a day than never, better still to pray morning, afternoon, evening, as well as now and then: in time of need, or when feeling particularly close to God, or distant, or sad, or sorry, or when moved by a beautiful sunset . . . It is also good to pray before beginning any particular activity or recreation.

Through Christ our Lord: Jesus Christ is our only way to the Father (Jn. 14:6); he is our only mediator. The eucharistic prayer closes with the doxology *Through him*. We acclaim this truth by our *Amen*! as we do in the normal prayer endings: *We ask this through Christ our Lord; Grant this in the name of Jesus the Lord.* Jesus is always at his Father's side, bringing our prayer to him and praying for us.

(A shorter version of this talk would include only *child to Father, we are needy, through Christ our Lord.*)

Practice: During this week, we will pray over these passages of scripture; we will realize our poverty before God, and ask him through Christ for his mercy.

6. God answers our prayer

Readings: *Jas. 4:1-10* (no. 342)
1 Jn. 3:18-24 (no. 54)
1 Jn. 5:10-15
Ps. 34 (no. 117)
Ps. 117 (no. 88)
Mt. 7:7-12 (no. 228)
Mt. 15:21-28 (no. 119)
Lk. 15:1-3, 11-32 (no. 33)
God's promise: The Father sent his Son that we might live as the beloved children of God, eager to do good works. He assures us through Jesus that he always hears our prayer; in his love he answers us by showering his generous gifts upon us: see Mt. 18:19. Jesus has given us his Spirit to dwell in our hearts, and to express our prayer when we do not know how to pray.

Like the father of the prodigal son, God is waiting to answer our prayer. Jesus too is always interceding for us at the Father's side.

Not my will: Like the Lord Jesus, we add to our prayer, "Not my will, but yours be done." (Lk. 22:42) The more we are ready to imitate the Lord, whose food was to do the Father's will (Jn. 4:34; Heb. 10:7), the more pleasing our prayer will be to God, for we show we trust him.

A sinner's prayer: When a sinner prays for God's mercy and forgiveness, the Father welcomes him back, and the angels rejoice. But if we reject God's will, or are proudly sure we do not need his help, God rejects our prayer: see the parable in Lk. 18:9-14. It is for this reason that Church reminds us of our neediness by placing the penitential rite among the opening prayers of the Mass. While we ask for mercy for ourselves, we are encouraged also to be generous and pray for our fellow sinners.

Bread, not a stone: Our heavenly Father will give us only good things. If we ask for something that he knows will not be good for us, he answers, but by giving us what is better for us. This is a further sign of his love for us.

Practice: As we read over the scripture texts this week, we thank God for his love. Trusting in his word, we ask our Father through Christ for all our needs, and we pray too for the world's salvation, for peace, for help for those in trouble or sorrow.

7. Family prayer

Readings:  Col. 3:12-21 (no. 17)
Eph. 3:14-21 (no. 476)
Eph. 5:15-20 (no. 120)
Mt. 18:19-20

We begin by reviewing our attitudes in prayer (topic 5), and by looking at the way we pray as a family: when, how, for what length of time, what forms of prayer; or do we find that we are not praying as a family?

Christ is present: The first thing we must remember is that Jesus is with us when our family gathers in prayer: Mt. 18:20 refers to your family as well as to the parish assembly.

Leader: The father of the family should be the leader of family prayer and worship. He is the one who should encourage and remind the others to pray. Like the celebrant at Mass, he leads by inviting others to take part by readings, in silence, in suggesting intentions, in responses, in common prayer and hymns. As in Old Testament days, he should be the leader of worship in the domestic church.

Explore possibilities: Consider using various psalms (the prayers used by the holy family of Nazareth), suitable prayers from the Mass, silent prayer for
one another, the Lord's prayer together (as at Mass; it could be sung on some occasions); members may take turns in composing prayers. A family album or scrapbook of favorite prayers would be of lasting value. Meaningful grace before and after meals is another area for exploration: individuals can prepare a simple prayer, or one of the sung forms may be used on special days.

When, how long? Every family has to make these decisions, depending on the ages of the children and on varying schedules. Even one prayer together, perhaps at the end of the meal, is better than none. Care must be taken, however: too often we have time for everything and everyone except God.

Practice: This week, hold a frank family discussion on the question of prayer in your home. See where you are, and try to make the Lord's path a little straighter in your family life.

(See also Family prayer, in this issue.)

8. Prayer in words and in silence

Readings: Phil. 4:4-7 (no. 9)
Rom. 8:26-27 (no. 107)
Heb. 5:7-9 (no. 35)
Ps. 34 (no. 249)
Ps. 145 (no. 247)
Mt. 6:5-15
Mt. 7:7-12 (no. 228)

God is always present, always listening, always ready to help us when we pray.

Vocal prayer: We can pray in words from the bible (psalms, Lord's prayer, canticles), or with prayers composed by others, or in our own words. The bible should nourish the prayer life of God's people: it provides us with a rule of life and the guidance of the Spirit. We need to reflect on his word. In our prayer we can make use of the gospels and the other passages used in the Sunday celebration.

What to pray about: We need to widen our vision in prayer, and be as generous in asking as God is in giving. There need be no limit to the trust we have when we pray. Our heavenly Father is interested in hearing about everything that concerns us (see 1 Pet. 5:7). He wants us to pray about our concerns and attitudes, about our spiritual growth, our life's work, our vocation. As well as for ourselves, he wants us to pray for others: for our spiritual and civic communities, for our country and for the world; for peace; for the suffering, dying, neglected, needy; for sinners, that God may lead them to change their hearts and return to his mercy; for young people, that the Lord may make them ever more generous in the cause of good.

Private and public prayer: We need to pray in the midst of God's people assembled in faith, to help give public witness of our calling as people of prayer, and to raise us above our personal concerns. Christ is present, and helps us to act toward others in a more Christian manner. If we withdraw from the community, we lessen its prayer, and deprive ourselves of giving God greater glory with Christ; we also miss the encouragement and mutual help to be found in community worship, and the challenge of God's word as it is proclaimed to our generation.
Private and public prayer are complementary. Personal prayer prepares us to take part in the liturgy with greater devotion, and to be able to live it more effectively through the week. Public prayer gives us a model of prayer, strengthens our personal attitudes, guides us in our approach to God. Public prayer without individual, personal prayer is a sham, while personal prayer without participation in public worship is incomplete.

Prayer in silence: Read over Rom. 8:26-27: we place ourselves in the presence of God and let his Spirit guide us, speak for us (compare unspoken communication between parent and child, lovers, husband and wife, close friends).

Silence is an important way of participation in the liturgy: pauses for reflection on our sins, on the readings, for silent petition help us to be more aware of what we are doing, and add personal vitality to the community celebration.

Practice: Lord, teach us to pray, and make us people of prayer. This week we make some effort to practise prayer in silence, and to use the bible as an aid as we pray.

9. Prayer from the gospels: See Prayer and the bible in this issue, especially pages 166-167. Suitable psalms for this topic could be chosen from the messianic psalms.

10. Prayer and peace of heart
Readings: Heb. 5:7-9 (no. 35)
2 Cor. 4:1-2, 6-10, 14-15
Phil. 4:6-9 (no. 140)
Ps. 7 (no. 250)
(Most of the psalms in nos. 244-250 are good.)
Ps. 104 (no. 329)
Mt. 5:1-12a (no. 71)
Lk. 12:4-7
Lk. 12:22-32

What is peace of heart? Harmony with God, others, self. Peace comes from love of God and others, not from sin. Pray for faith strong enough not to be shaken, because God is with us in love; his Son is our savior; the Spirit is in each of us as his temple.

Peace with God: Prayer helps us to be at peace with God. Prayer and sin are opposed: are we gathering or scattering, with or against Christ? We are seeking to know and do God’s will. Peace is one of the gifts the Spirit gives us. (Rom. 8) If we grow in prayer, we grow in peace: it is a barometer of our prayer life. “In his will is our peace,” Dante tells us.

Peace with others: We ask help to be able to get along, to love and serve — as God wills. Our prayer is for others who are in need. We ask for strength and patience to bear the crosses that others give us, and pray for light and generosity to avoid imposing crosses on others.

Peace with self: The two passages from Luke help us to view our problems in the light of God’s will and loving providence. The AA serenity prayer is helpful for all. After the Our Father at Mass, we ask God to protect us from all anxiety while we are waiting in joy and hope for our savior to come.

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Praying for peace of heart: The prayers in Mass often speak of peace. We are sent forth in peace at the dismissal. The Lord is our light, our savior: why should we have fear? (Ps. 27) Instead of looking ahead in fear, we pray to God in trust and confidence: the only real disturbance to our peace of heart is sin.

The only complete, permanent peace of heart is in heaven, but now God gives us a foretaste in the Holy Spirit's gift of peace when we know we are doing his will.

Practice: Asking God to build up our trust; to send us his Spirit of peace; praying for peace of heart for ourselves, others — especially someone we know who is seriously troubled. By our prayer and action, we will show more dependence on God. (How we do that is a good subject for discussion.)

11. Other topics: The choice of topics when speaking of Christian prayer is almost unlimited. Some of them might include:

- Mass as public prayer
- Personal prayer and Mass (see Making Mass more prayerful, in this issue)
- Personal prayer and sacraments
- Liturgy of the hours
- Prayer life of the parish
- If it is your will
- Christian joy in our prayer
- Be persistent: keep on praying
- Praying for sinners
- Exploring the Old Testament's teaching on prayer

Further issues of the Bulletin will continue to speak of prayer, providing continuing help to those who ask the Lord to teach them to pray, and to those who help to teach his people to pray better.

MIND OF CHRIST

Do you want to understand Christ's approaches to God and man and life? Do you want to share his attitudes?

In order to bring us closer to the mind of Christ, the Church has spread God's word over a three-year period of Sunday readings. In this time, God's people are formed by his word, and are able to grow in his love.

Encourage the families in your parish and your readers to dip into the lectionary often, to let Christ and his prophets and apostles speak to them. Gradually, they will begin to understand the mind of Christ a little better, and they will be led to better Christian living and more fervent prayer.

By encouraging such use of Sunday Lectionary — Study Edition, you can lead your readers and the rest of your community closer to the mind of Christ.
FAMILY PRAYER

In the post-conciliar Church, family prayer must be seen in perspective as an important part of the prayer life of the Christian community. This prayer life involves personal, family, small group and public prayer. Prayer at home and prayer in church have a strong influence on each other, for better or worse, for richer or poorer.

Every family has three distinct roles in its home prayer life:
- praying as individuals and as a family
- teaching children to pray
- helping each member to continue growing in prayer.

Though distinct topics, they are covered here in one article, just as they happen together in family life.

Learning to Pray

The way children are taught to pray will mark them for life. The attitudes and approaches of parents will form or deform their children's prayer life.

Attitudes and approaches: A Christian prays to the Father with an attitude of loving respect. A child should not be led to be afraid of God, either directly or by association. One still meets people who distort their children's vision by stupid remarks: “Be good, or I'll phone Father X,” or “If you don't behave, I'll march you over to the church for confession.” Instead of threatening children with bogeymen, we should be leading them to a loving trust and confidence in their heavenly Father. He loves each of them personally, and is interested in whatever concerns them. Prayer becomes a simple conversation with our Father in heaven — and conversation implies listening with interest as well as talking.

Praying to and through Jesus is our normal practice. He is our brother as well as our mediator. Most liturgical prayers are offered to the Father through the Son, in the Spirit. Asking the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus is the general practice in liturgy, and should not be neglected in private and family prayer.

The Jesus to whom we pray is not a baby or on the crucifix now: he is the living, risen Lord, at the Father's side in glory, constantly praying for us and with us.

Though the liturgy occasionally addresses the Holy Spirit directly, as in the Pentecost sequence, normally we ask Christ or both the Father and the Son to send the Spirit. The Spirit is within us, teaching us to pray, and even expressing our prayer for us when we are unable. (Rom. 8) Christians should learn to pray to the Spirit, and to the Father and the Son to send us their Spirit. (See When a Christian prays, Bulletin 38, page 86.)

When we pray to the saints, it is not because we fear Jesus, or because we hope to twist his arm in some way: it is because he has given them to us as models and friends. (See Bulletin 41, page 320 for a list of useful articles on the saints.)

Parental example: A hopeful “Now say your prayers and wash your teeth before you go to bed” is not enough. The sight of his parents kneeling in prayer with the family gives a child encouragement and powerful example. (Encouraging
a young couple to pray together while preparing for marriage is a wise beginning for family prayer.) When parents hear of disasters or people in trouble, they should ask God to help these persons; by saying this prayer aloud, and by inviting the children to pray with them, they can help their little ones form habits of prayer for a lifetime in God’s service.

As the first teachers of the faith to their children, parents can reinforce what they teach by the way they help their sons and daughters to pray: “What we believe, we express in our prayer; what we pray about, we believe.” (*Lex credendi, lex orandi; lex orandi, lex credendi.*)

Spontaneous prayer: Parents should help their little ones to learn to pray in their own words as well as by using formulas. See the following article, *Prayer in the Canadian catechism. Teaching children to pray,* in Bulletin 34, pages 118-120, is also helpful.

Prayer for guidance: Children should be taught to pray to Jesus and his Spirit for help and guidance in times of doubt, temptation or need. Prayer for light to know one’s vocation and for strength to follow it should be encouraged. It is a good idea to invite children to pray for a particular vocation, if this is God’s will for them, and for a spirit of generosity in Christ’s service.

Learning to listen: Most of us find it easy to talk but hard to listen. Children should be helped to recognize God’s voice in the bible, in the liturgy and the teaching of the Church, in their parents, priests and teachers (in their words, *but especially in their example*). Children need adult help in learning how to judge right and wrong in this modern age. Some help is available in the 1973 statement by the bishops of Canada, *Formation of conscience* (available from CCC Publications Service — address on the inside front cover — for 30 cents, plus postage).

Prayer for sinners: Prayer for sinners is one of the Church’s responsibilities. (Liturgy, no. 109) Children should be taught to pray for people who hurt others, who break laws or cause trouble. We should teach children to ask God to lead these people back to right ways. Sufficient examples will be found in daily events. A charitable attitude toward the sinner while praying for his conversion should be fostered — the attitude of the Church and of Christ toward those who stray.

Practice of Prayer

Many suggestions on family prayer are given in topic 7 of *Teaching people to pray,* in this issue.

Related to Liturgy: The prayer life of the family is greatly strengthened when it is in close harmony with the liturgy. Public and family prayer reinforce each other. Personal and family prayer should lead to the liturgy and build upon it, nourishing itself all week on the previous Sunday’s celebration. Special seasons and feasts should be celebrated at home too, and find a place in family prayer. (See *Prayer through the year,* in this issue.)

Sacramental occasions — confirmation or first communion for one of the family, the baptism of a new baby, a neighbor’s wedding — can be times for offering special prayers for those involved, as well as for teaching something of the meaning of the sacrament for all. Penitential practices (see Bulletin 42) and Sunday observance (see Bulletin 43) are a vital part of family life and prayer.
Though intended for children from 7-9 years of age, *My Mass Book* may also be found useful for pre-schoolers (available from CCC Publications, at 95 cents plus postage).

**Parish Cooperation**

The entire parish community has an interest in the prayer life of each family: see *Our responsibility* in this issue. The parish needs to cooperate with parents in helping them to teach their children to pray; furthermore, the parish should seek to help each member of the family — young and old alike — to mature in his prayer life. Home and parish life are interdependent: praying families will strengthen the life and liturgy of the parish; active parishes (that is, active in the work of the Lord rather than in the entertainment field) encourage and help families to live holier and more prayerful lives in the service of God and his people.

Parishes may help family prayer in many ways:

*Teaching your children to pray* day: The parish liturgy and education committees could work with the CWL and PTA, teaming up to have a training session in family prayer. It would be held at a convenient time for parents, and would last two or three hours; baby-sitting could be provided to enable both parents to come.

Led by parents and a priest (persons active in the family apostolate), it could discuss teaching children to pray in today's world: scripture, psalms, bible stories would be part of this discussion. Many ideas on these topics are found in *Teaching children to pray* (Bulletin 34, pages 118-120) and *Tell me a story* (Bulletin 37, pages 57-62). Parental example would be stressed, and help offered to parents for their own prayer.

Other subjects for discussion and action would include:

- *Understanding the liturgical year*: a simple picture of the Church's year of prayer and its influence on the prayer of the parish and family. (See *Prayer through the year* in this issue for some ideas.) Practical ways of making each season mean something in the prayer and activity of the family should be shared: Advent wreaths, cribs, lenten ideas could be described, discussed, listed and made available to all. If possible, samples of such items could be on display.

These ideas would be reinforced if, at the proper time of the year, the parish bulletin mentioned them and encouraged their use at home.

- *Discussion and guidance*: Adequate time should be included in the program for parents to discuss their ideas and practices in prayer. Openness and friendly sharing should be the spirit of the day. Follow-up will depend on the group's desire for a similar event on particular topics.

- *Reference material*: Some of the books mentioned in *Helpful books* in this issue could be available and discussed at this day. Copies of these books, and of this issue of the National Bulletin could be available for loan from the parish library. Material from the Liturgical Press (Collegeville, Minnesota 65321) on the family and liturgy is described in their catalogue: write them for a copy.
**Christmas story book:** A simple example of what each family can do is a school notebook into which pictures of the different aspects of the Christmas story are mounted. These pictures can be cut from magazines at Christmas time, or from Christmas cards. (Someone in the parish is sure to have some of last year's still available in July.) This book may be simple or elaborate. If kept in a loose-leaf binder, pages may be changed as better pictures are found. Carols may be included here and there, typed or written by hand, or cut out from a song sheet. The children may add drawings or collages, done by each child or by all together, perhaps with their friends as well.

**Spiritual scrapbook:** A loose-leaf scrapbook of ideas, prayers and pictures, taken from magazines, advertisements, coloring books, can picture the highlights of Jesus' life and teachings, including Mass, sacraments and prayer. The loose-leaf format allows for rearrangement of pages into particular themes, or for special books for Advent-Christmas and Lent-Easter seasons, as well as for inserting additional material over the years. Hopefully this will become a favorite source of story ideas, gradually allowing Jesus to become as important to little ones as Mickey Mouse and Mother Goose are at present.

**Growth in prayer:** Teaching children to pray is one aspect of family prayer life; the other is growth in prayer: how can each member of the family grow to the full potential of Christian prayer? What can the parish do to encourage and help each member grow, to do his best at his present stage and to move further and more deeply into the life of prayer?

* * *

Family prayer must be considered important in your parish if you are to have vitality in your Sunday liturgy. How much (or little) thought and energy are being expended on prayer in your parish? Where does prayer stand in the priorities of your priests, parish council, liturgy committee? Still a long way below the strawberry festival and parish bowling leagues? Or is the full spiritual life truly one of the first objectives of all your parish activities and energies?

Laymen should remember the teaching of the Council: The laity have the right to receive from their pastors the abundant spiritual goods of the Church, especially the assistance of God's word and the sacraments. (See Constitution on the Church, no. 37.)

You'll never get help in prayer from your parish, or get them thinking about family prayer until you stand up and ask for it. Share your concern for this spiritual need, and get others with you in asking for help in family prayer.

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**UNITY**

Christian unity will be built around the cross of Christ, who invites us to go beyond our divisions and be open to his Spirit of brotherhood.
PRAYER IN THE CANADIAN CATECHISM

What are our children learning about prayer in religious education classes? This article, prepared with the cooperation of the National Office of Religious Education, points out the place of prayer in the Canadian catechism.

Prayer cannot be seen as discontinuous with the rest of life. Rather all of reality must be seen as sacramental — a sign of God-with-us.

This means that we can no longer view prayer primarily as something we do but rather as an openness, a being responsive to the initiative of God in our lives. Prayer is more communion with God than conversation. Although speaking with God is still a valid way of describing prayer, yet it is different in that God's response is never given in direct words, nods or smiles, but in a mysterious non-verbal communication which is more real and more convincing than most conversations ever are. Prayer is intimate, constant, essential awareness that in him we live and move and have our being.

If, then, we believe in this nonverbal communication we will be happy to realize that this is the approach to prayer presented in the Canadian catechism. Most people will agree that the little child has an innate sense of the presence of God. Rather than giving the child words in which to express himself to God out there, we try to help him discover this presence within and around him, and to respond to it.

So many people, especially young adolescents, are striving to recover the ability to contemplate. To the child this is a natural tendency that the sensitive parent and teacher can readily direct to the discovery of God and a living in his presence with security and love.

What parents and others complain of today — my little one does not seem to know any prayers — may indeed be true in the early years because what they are referring to is the formulated prayers common to all Catholics. What they seem to forget is that growth in prayer is a lifelong process, and will not be completed at the end of first grade. It takes years to build up a repertoire.

But there is more to it than this. The Canadian catechism avoids the use of words and phrases until the concept is understood by the child, and stresses instead an awareness of God in whose presence we live. A child, captivated by the unspeakable beauty of the snowflake, the flower, or the iridescent coat of the tiny insect, is caught up in contemplation of the wonders of creation. It is a small but very important step to reach out in thankfulness to our Father who gave us all these good things and who gave us an even greater gift in his Son, Jesus; guiding him in this step as in his first baby steps, is the task of parent and teachers.

Little children cannot analyse and make comparisons. They can only ponder, admire, praise, thank and love (contemplate) God our Father, who has given us such great gifts, and perhaps ponder the imponderable mystery of God.

By prematurely insisting on memorized adult formulas, we run the risk of drying up the source of these spontaneous prayer attitudes. For this reason prayer formulas are seldom used in the early years. Instead the children are led to live in the presence of a loving Father; of Jesus who understands, forgives, heals and loves; of the Spirit who speaks in their hearts and enables them to respond
to a Father's goodness and love with gratitude and joy. Yet by the conclusion of
grade one the child will know all the concepts that go to make up the Jesus
prayer,* the Hail, Mary and the doxology (Glory be). In a Christian atmosphere
there is no difficulty for him to recite these prayers and with far greater meaning
than if their memorization had been enforced on him.

Also, right from the beginning beautiful lines from the psalms and other
scripture verses are introduced as a summary of the lesson, or in song. These oft
repeated one-liners become prayer and a source of prayer as he matures.

Liturgical and paraliturgical celebrations have a large share in guided
responses to the children's religious experience. These responses are full of sponta-
neous joy and sense of festivity and wonder. All these deepen within the child
the sense of security in the presence of the loving Father and lead to or center
around the great eucharistic celebration in which he soon will, or already has
shared.

If this quiet, contemplative approach to prayer is continued we may hope
that our adolescents and adults will find ample food to nourish their prayer
life. The child has learned to question and to set aside what seemed no longer suited to
his age. He has experienced a sacramental life which is truly a sign of the presence
of God among us so that even in desolate moments, hopefully he will still hear
within him the powerful murmur, Come to the Father.

* "Jesus, Son of God, savior." This simple prayer may be repeated often, but with meaning. As the child
grows, he will gradually become more aware of the richness of this prayer and the importance of the titles
it uses for our Lord.

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EXAMINE YOUR CONSCIENCE ON PRAYER

Since prayer should have such an important place in the life of a Christian,
it is good for us to take a look once in a while to see how we are doing:

- **Examine your conscience:** Some questions on our prayer life are contained
  in the penance celebrations: see Bulletin 32, page 37; no. 36, page 255; no. 37,
  page 28; no. 42, page 51; see also no. 38, pages 77-78.

- **As a penitent:** talk about your prayer life with your confessor. Ask him
  for guidance in your difficulties, and look to him for leadership in helping you to
  grow in your prayer life.

- **As a confessor:** encourage your penitents to speak about their prayer life —
  both their difficulties and their joys. Be available for balanced guidance. When
  a penitent does not mention prayer, or when he seems to have difficulties, open
  the door by asking him how he is getting along in his prayer life. Instead of giving
  "a bunch of prayers" as a penance, invite the penitent to talk to Jesus in his own
  words, and tell the Lord that he loves him. Let the Lord do the rest.
**PREACHING ON PRAYER**

"With all these new readings, how can we preach on prayer?" A simple survey of the last seven months of Sundays in cycle C, the current year, shows that every Sunday has some reference to prayer in the liturgy of the word; three Sundays are particularly appropriate for a homily on prayer.

In the following notes, I refers to the first reading, Ps. to the responsorial psalm, II to the Second reading, A to the gospel acclamation, and G to the gospel.

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Three Sundays — the 17th, 25th and 30th Sundays in ordinary time — have readings which are particularly suitable for a homily on prayer. On other Sundays, the celebrant may make appropriate references in the homily and in his admonitions during the celebration. Any Sunday is a good time to write about prayer in the parish bulletin.

PARISH BULLETIN AND PRAYER

Use your bulletin to help your parishioners grow in prayer. Set up a prayer corner in your bulletin, and each week include a brief paragraph or two. Among the ideas you can share:

- **Instruction**: some of the Church’s teaching on prayer, as included in the bible, Vatican Council documents, your bishop’s letters, writings of the saints.

- **Ideas for prayer**: see the starters in Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy — 1974, pages 19-20, and the daily starter in the calendar section.

- **Intentions to pray for**: remind the community of some of the people and causes in urgent need of prayer (and include them in the prayer of the faithful too).

- **Prayers**: Brief prayers in harmony with today’s Church (see Liturgy constitution, no. 13) may be reprinted. Give credit to the author and book from which you copied it.

- **Scripture quotations**: Keep the word of God before your people by quoting passages which call them to pray, or suggest models of prayer, or give ideas to pray about.

The parish bulletin can be an effective pastoral aid in helping the people in your community to grow in the life of prayer.

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A growing number of people, groups and movements are stressing the need for a return to prayer and meditation. This is true in the Church, and even among many people who do not accept the Church. More and more seem to feel the need of going beyond and outside oneself to seek and reach out to something that transcends the narrow confines of daily human living.

The constant question is: “How do we pray? How do we meditate?” Or perhaps the Christian puts it in the words of the disciples of Jesus and says: “Lord, teach us to pray.”

There are two traditional definitions of prayer that really describe for us or tell us how to pray. The first states that prayer is “lifting the mind and heart to God.” The second simply calls prayer “a conversation with God.”

The first statement that prayer is a lifting of mind and heart to God is a good definition, but a discouraging definition. We soon discover that it is not an easy task to lift our thoughts and affections to God. The weight gets so heavy. We succeed for a time but then our arms get tired and it all comes tumbling down. We may have a good and true definition, but that in itself doesn’t make it easy to pray. This should not surprise us. We should expect prayer to be hard because it is really a supernatural activity. We are expected to do something that is beyond our natural capabilities when we pray. We might compare it to Jacob’s wrestling all the night with an angel. It is true that God invites us to pray and gives us the grace to do it, but it is still beyond us. And so we should not be surprised that we grow weary with prayer and find so many things that make it difficult to pray. Even people with long experience in prayer encounter these difficulties at times.

Another disadvantage in the first definition of prayer is that it concentrates on our part in prayer. It speaks of lifting our hearts and minds. But the really important element in prayer is not what we do but what God does in us and to us.

From this particular aspect, the second definition of prayer as “a conversation with God” is better. There is a mutuality in a conversation. Both participants contribute something and receive something. But again this definition bothers some people because they say: “My prayer is not like that. My prayer is not a conversation; it is all one-sided. I say my part but God doesn’t seem to answer me.” It is true that we are often tempted to wonder or to ask: “Is there someone listening on the other end?”

But the definition is a good one. It really describes prayer in its true nature. Perhaps it doesn’t fit my prayer because I haven’t advanced that far; I haven’t yet realized in my life what the possibility of prayer is.

Growing in Prayer

Prayer is a growth process. We have to start at the bottom and work our way up. It is an extraordinary grace for God to bring a person suddenly and quickly to a high degree of intimacy in prayer. It is normal to start with the prayer of the poor man and hope to be able to work one’s way up. Prayer that begins poorly is supposed to get better as we go along. Like our other activities, it will improve with practice.
Prayer, like life itself, does not remain static. Five years from now our prayer ought to be quite different than it is today. We should expect to make progress, to grow in intimacy with God, to deepen the level of conversation and communication. What is important is that we be faithful. Remember the parable of the mustard seed. Even if our faithfulness is imperfect and seems insignificant, God can bring it to produce unexpected results. The important thing is to continue. Discouragement is probably the greatest obstacle of all to growth in the life of prayer. Along with faith and love, perseverance is an essential quality of Christian life. The scriptures compare the Christian to a soldier and an athlete. Both must be persons who are willing and striving to persevere and keep trying in the face of difficulties, hardships and obstacles. These are the kind of people who win the victory. Jesus himself is the perfect example of perseverance and dedication. He went so far as to sacrifice his life. All he asks of us is: “Could you not watch one hour with me?”

**Prayer in Our Life**

We should keep in mind that prayer is one of the principal activities of our life. It's not just something added on as a decoration, a kind of prelude, like the national anthem before the hockey game or the formality of a prayer before a civic function or the grace at a banquet. Very often these are nothing more than social conventions. But our prayer has to have the character of something essential to life itself.

This does not minimize our responsibility to love and serve one another as Christ commanded. Both prayer and the difficult tasks demanded by Christian service are essential to a full life. The relationship, and at times the apparent tension, between prayer and action have been compared to breathing out and breathing in. Which is more important? Which one would you discontinue first?

We have to think of prayer like that. Our life as a Christian depends on prayer in action and also in quiet contemplation.

It is incorrect to think of prayer as a kind of burden that has to be carried. Prayer is not something we do for God. It is God's gift to us. Taking time to pray really means responding to Jesus' invitation: “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.” Far from being an additional burden, prayer is the means by which we get the strength to carry all the other burdens and responsibilities of life.

It is really sad to hear people talk about all they have to do and then on top of all the other demands on their time and energy, they have to pray besides. This is a complete reversal of Jesus' invitation to the weary to come to him for rest and support. Spiritual writers have repeated over and over again that when a person takes time for prayer in a busy day, he will be surprised at how much more he is able to accomplish. Experience has borne this out time and time again. The Lord is the source of strength for us. When we are fatigued and under tension and pressure and hassled, if we go to him and give him our hearts, he puts his peace, his quiet and order into them so that we return remade and ready to face the tasks before us.
Prayer, however, is more than a transaction where we expect to receive something from God in return for what we do. Prayer is essentially a communion with God. Communion is what takes place between us and the people we love. It is the sense of joy and well-being that we experience when we are with close friends, with people we want to be with because we know we are accepted, loved, and understood by them. This is the unbelievable grace that God has given us. We don't just have transactions with him, we are not merely his servants, but he has invited us to share his friendship. “I will no longer call you servants but friends.” (Jn. 15:15)

When we stop to think of it, friendship and service are two very basic human relationships. Most of the dealings we have with people every day are in one or other of these two classes. Jesus tells us the incredible fact that our relationship with God is the relationship of friend to friend. Prayer is intended to be the recognition and enjoyment of that relationship. That is what we really mean when we say that “prayer is a conversation with God.” We are trying to express that our relationship to him is deeper and more satisfying than any relationship we have had or could have with the best of friends.

So great and so deep is this mystery that it takes a big act of faith to accept it. That is why some people seem to prefer to remain as servants and not heed that call of Jesus to closer union and a deeper kind of conversation with the Lord. It takes faith and trust even on the human level to accept to be friends, and lots of people find it hard to summon up that kind of trust. We can have the same difficulty in our relations with God, and this is a temptation that comes to all of us in varying degrees. But our faith should assure us that God who invites us to intimacy and friendship with him, also gives us the grace to respond.

Jesus gave us a parable about this when he told us about the king who made a wedding feast for his son and invited people to come. They all had excuses. They were too busy to come to the banquet. But you know, we are the people in that parable. We turn down the Lord’s invitation all the time. He calls us to be his friends and we turn him down because it is too good to be true. We simply can’t believe it. Our faith is not strong enough yet. If we really believed that he is inviting us, we surely could not refuse.

Prayer is nothing else than knowing the grace that God has offered us and opening our hearts to accept it.

In our misery and weakness and poverty we can say: “The Lord loves me, and nothing else counts. I am going to love him in return.”

God’s Action Is First

We have said that God gives us the grace to accept the invitation to the intimacy of prayer. It should be kept in mind that in prayer God’s action is principal and primary and ours is secondary. That’s why the first definition of prayer as “raising our hearts and minds to God” is in some ways unsatisfactory. We do have a part in prayer but our part is really only preliminary. The principal part is what God does. We have to do our part, otherwise we are not praying. We have to take the time and find the place and get rid of distractions, etc. But mainly, we just have to wait on the Lord.
Remember Jesus' advice to the apostles at his ascension. He told them to go back to Jerusalem and wait to be endowed with power from on high. That is our part in prayer — waiting on the Lord. I can't really pray, I just have to be there. The things I do are just to make me be there, like the disciples walking back to Jerusalem, to wait on him.

It follows then that techniques and learning the art of prayer are important, but they are only a beginning. They help us to concentrate, to be recollected, to direct our attention to the Lord. When God gives the grace of prayer, all the techniques and methods fall to the ground.

The grace of prayer is something that God gives freely. When we have been faithful in the responsibilities of our life, God will give us that grace of prayer. This means that the action of God in us depends not only on what we do when we pray, but on what we do all day long. If we disregard or reject the will of God, if we disobey him in other things, we are not going to be able to pray with him. Remember, it is the good and faithful servant who is invited to enter into the joy of the Lord.

If we can be faithful in prayer, the Lord will step in and lift us up with his strong hand. Then we just have to say: "Yes, Lord, I am yours." If we say "Yes" the Lord has touched us and we have only to surrender to him.

He helps us to make that surrender and words become less important. (That is why "conversation" is not a perfect definition, either.) Prayer eventually should become a simple, silent, peaceful, joyous being with the Lord. And that is the best thing that could happen to us ever.

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**POPULAR DEVOTIONS**

The Second Vatican Council warmly commended popular devotions as long as they follow the Church's laws and guidelines.

These devotions should be arranged to be in harmony with the principles of liturgy and with the liturgical seasons. Devotions should come from the liturgy in some way, and lead God's people to public liturgical prayer, since the liturgy far surpasses any other devotions by its nature.

*See Constitution on the liturgy, no. 13.*
Many books have been written on prayer. Some recent books which have proved helpful in families and parishes are described here:

Good News for Modern Man, the New Testament in Today's English Version, and The Psalms for Modern Man. Published by the American and Canadian Bible Societies, these books are available in many, inexpensive editions, some illustrated. The psalm book was favorably reviewed in Bulletin 33, pages 66-67; the same recommendation is given to the New Testament for home use. (Canadian Bible Society, 1835 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario M4S 1Y1)

Other modern versions of the Bible continue to appear. Choose the one that seems most helpful to your situation. In Canada, only the Jerusalem Bible, New American Bible (NAB) and The Revised Standard Version (RSV), along with the Grail psalter, are approved for liturgical use. Other versions may be used in personal and family prayer.

Prayer of the Church: interim version of the new Roman Breviary, the only edition presently approved for use in Canada. With its supplements, it provides the prayer forms for the entire year. 4¼ by 7 inches, xxxii, 655 pages, plastic cover. $9.75 complete. Available from CCC Publications.

A Christian's Prayer Book, psalms, poems and prayers for the Church's year, by Peter Coughlan, Ronald Jasper, Teresa Rodrigues, OSB. A simplified liturgy of the hours, with page format like that of Prayer of the Church; this is a good source book for prayer through the year. 4¼ by 7 inches, x, 374 pages, paper. Chapman, London, 1972.


La Liturgie Familiale, histoire, théologie, pastorale, by Pierre Dufresne. Those who read French comfortably will find useful suggestions for family prayer. Negotiations are currently in progress over the possibility of issuing an English translation. 5½ by 7½ inches, 244 pages. Fides, 245 Dorchester Blvd. East, Montreal, P.Q. $5.00.

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**LETTER FROM JAPAN**

You are indeed to be commended for your efforts in bringing together such a treasurehouse on things liturgical. I indeed look forward to your publications, and derive great benefit from them. May God continue to bless you on your efforts toward promoting good liturgy.

Father David Fitzpatrick, s.f.m.,
St. Mary's International School
Seta, 1-6-19
Setagaya-Ku, Tokyo, 58
JAPAN
Many gospel passages can inspire prayer: some examples are given from the first four chapters of Matthew. These can be used in personal prayer. The parish bulletin could print one or two a week to give people some help in prayer.

Jesus, save your people from their sins. (see Mt. 1:21)

Emmanuel, we have come to worship you. (see Mt. 1:23; 2:2)

Lord, we confess our sins.
Help us to prepare a path for you,
to make straight the way of the Lord. (see Mt. 3:6, 3)

Baptize us with the Holy Spirit and with fire. (see Mt. 3:11)

Beloved Son of God, lead us to the Father. (see Mt. 3:17)

Lord Jesus, help us to worship the Father and to obey him. (see Mt. 4:10)

Teach us to turn away from sin and to come back to God, so that the kingdom may come through our lives. (see Mt. 4:17)

Help us to follow you without doubt or hesitation. (see Mt. 4:19-20)

Further examples can be developed from the rest of the gospels and other books of the New Testament.