

God is God and We are Not

DOCTRINAL ELEMENT

Christian Prayer

TOPIC

Forms of Prayer

GOAL

The goal for this session is to introduce teens to the five forms of prayer: adoration, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise. Teens should be able to distinguish one form from another; recognize the importance of each; find examples of each throughout Scripture; and formulate their own prayers based on each form.

SECONDARY RELIGION GUIDELINES

(II.I.D.1.c) (II.II.D.1.b) (II.I.D.1.b.ii.(a),(b))

SCRIPTURE

Adoration: Eph 1:3-14; Ps. 19:1-11; Ps 100

Petition: Rm 8:22-26; 1 Jn 3:19-22; Lk 11:9-13; Mk 10:46-52

Intercession: Phil 2:3-5; 2 Thess 1:11-12; 1 Tm 2:1-2; Mk 2:1-12

Thanksgiving: 1 Thess 5:16-18; Col 4:2; Ps 116; Lk 17:11-19

Praise: Ps 8; Ps 33; Ps 66

CATECHISM

CCC 2623-2625

Adoration: CCC 2626-2628

Petition: CCC 2629-2633

Intercession: CCC 2634-2636

Thanksgiving: CCC 2637-2638

Praise: CCC 2639-2643

GOLDEN THREADS

The Trinity: It is only in and through the Holy Spirit that we are able to pray at all. “Every time we begin to pray to Jesus it is the Holy Spirit who draws us on the way of prayer by his prevenient grace” (CCC 2670).

The Dignity of the Human Person: God is a communion of persons, and we are called to share in the life of that communion through prayer. “The life of prayer is the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God and in communion with him” (CCC 2565).

ANNUAL THEME RELEVANCE

Built on Christ. It is Jesus who modeled each of the forms of prayer for us, as we read in the Scriptures. Jesus also responded to those around him who came to him with expressions of adoration, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise. If our lives are truly to be built on him, we will follow his example and engage in the personal relationship with the Father for which we were created.

PROCLAMATION

The Catechism paragraphs listed above and the Secondary Religion Guidelines should be reviewed by the individuals presenting this session. Key points are as follows:

Prayer of Adoration

- Adoration is the first attitude of man acknowledging that he is a creature before his Creator. It exalts the Lord’s greatness and the Savior’s almighty power.

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- Adoration is homage of the spirit and respectful silence in the presence of the “ever greater” God. Adoration blends with humility and gives assurance to our supplications (CCC 2628).

Prayer of Petition

- We have a rich vocabulary of supplication from which to draw in the New Testament: ask, beseech, plead, invoke, entreat, cry out, even “struggle in prayer.” Prayer’s most usual form, and most spontaneous, is that of petition, by which we express awareness of our relationship with God (CCC 2629).
- Unlike the lamentations of the Old Testament, in the risen Christ the Church’s petition is buoyed by hope, even if we still wait in a state of expectation and must be converted anew every day. The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us (CCC 2630).
- The first movement of the prayer of petition is asking forgiveness – a prerequisite for righteous and pure prayer, for the Eucharistic liturgy and personal prayer (CCC 2631).
- By prayer every baptized person works for the coming of the Kingdom. Christian petition is centered on the desire and search for this Kingdom. We pray first for the Kingdom, then for what is necessary to welcome it and cooperate with its coming. This collaboration with the mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit, which is now that of the Church, is the object of the prayer of the apostolic community (CCC 2632).
- When we share in God’s saving love, we understand that every need can become the object of petition. St. James and St. Paul encourage us to pray at all times with the confidence that Christ is glorified by what we ask the Father in his name (CCC 2633).

Prayer of Intercession

- Intercession is a prayer of petition that leads us to pray as Jesus did. He is the one intercessor with the Father on behalf of all men, especially sinners (CCC 2634).
- Since the time of Abraham, intercession – asking on behalf of another – has been characteristic of a heart attuned to God’s mercy. Christian intercession participates in Christ’s as an expression of the communion of saints, and it recognizes no boundaries (CCC 2635-2636).

Prayer of Thanksgiving

- Thanksgiving characterizes the prayer of the Church especially in the celebration of the Eucharist. Every event and need can become an offering of thanksgiving (CCC 2637-2638).

Prayer of Praise

- Praise is the form of prayer that lauds God for his own sake and gives him glory for who he is, beyond all that he has done for us. Praise embraces the other forms of prayer and carries them toward God (CCC 2639).
- The Eucharist contains and expresses all forms of prayer. It is the “pure offering” of the whole Body of Christ to the glory of God’s name, and it is *the* “sacrifice of praise” (CCC 2643).

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MEDIA SUGGESTIONS

Songs & Music Videos

- Steven Curtis Chapman, “Dive”
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2v-wZP6I3c&ob=av2e>
- Natalie Grant, “Held”
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iOufqWodFNo>
- Mary Mary, “Shackles (Praise You)”
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRayKxgePQI>
- Nichole Nordeman, “Gratitude”
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waYUzxK8TYA>
- Nichole Nordeman, “Small Enough”
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eC73Qa90phg&feature=related>
- Bebo Norman, “Nothing Without You”
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLeDySWGfOw>

YouTube Videos

- “Prayer audio Part 1 (Fr. Larry Richards)”
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t13KYSyTmKc>
 - This is the first of a series of six 10-minute videos comprising his talk on prayer. Follow links from this page for others. Also available for purchase as mp3, CD, and DVD.
- “Coffee with Jesus”
 - <http://www2.godtube.com/featured/video/coffee-jesus>
 - Exaggerated, slightly campy view of what our prayers are like sometimes: out of balance (full of petitions and intercessions) and one-sided (not letting God say much of anything). Makes its point, though.

Websites

- Boston Catholic, “Four Basic Forms of Prayer”
 - <http://www.bostoncatholic.org/Being-Catholic/Content.aspx?id=11444>

OTHER RESOURCES

- *The Catholic Way: Faith for Living Today* by Bishop Donald W. Wuerl
 - Chapter 79 – What is Prayer?
 - Chapter 80 – Kinds of Prayer
 - Chapter 81 – Ways of Praying
- *The Tradition of Catholic Prayer* by the Monks of St. Meinrad
 - Chapter 2 – New Testament Boldness (gives an overview of prayer in the New Testament, including Jesus’ example and the role of prayer in the early church)

GATHER

Icebreaker: *Bumpity Bump Bump* by Karl Rohnke & Steve Butler

Ask your group to “form a circle,” then put yourself at the center of the circle. Those in the circle should be about four or five steps away from you. Point decisively at one of the circled folks, say that person’s first name with conviction, and immediately exclaim, “*Bumpity Bump*

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Bump.” The person that you pointed to and named must respond by saying the first name of the person to the left, before you finish exclaiming, “*Bumpity Bump Bump.*” If they mess up the name or completely forget who’s who, that person takes your place in the center, and subsequently attempts to trap someone else. It obviously pays to know who is on your left, unless the person in the center exclaims, “RIGHT!” before pointing and saying, “*Bumpity Bump Bump,*” then you must name the person to your right.

Opening Prayer

Prayer of St. Anselm of Canterbury

O Lord my God, teach my heart where and how it may seek you, where and how it may find you. You are my God, and you are my Lord, and never have I seen you. You have made me and renewed me, you have given me all the good things that I have, and I have not yet met you. I was created to see you, and I have not yet done the thing for which I was made. How long, O Lord, do you forget us; how long do you turn your face from us? When will you look upon us? Hear us, enlighten us, reveal yourself to us. Pity our toilings and strivings toward you since we can do nothing without you. Teach me to seek you, and reveal yourself to me when I seek you, for I cannot seek you unless you teach me, nor find you unless you reveal yourself. Let me seek you in longing, let me long for you in seeking; let me find you by loving you and love you in the act of finding you. Amen.

EXPLANATION

We have a lot to grapple with in our Catholic faith. It’s an awesome mystery! “Who is God? Why does he love me? Why did he create me? What is he asking of me? Where is all of this going?” We don’t get answers to these questions all at once, but gradually over the course of our lives. Though our faith will always be somewhat of a mystery, we are called to believe in it, celebrate it and live it out. We express our belief in the creed we say each Sunday at Mass; we celebrate it through the sacraments we receive; and we live out this mystery each day through being in a personal relationship with God. This relationship is prayer.

Like any other relationship in our lives, our relationship with God requires communication. God gives to us, and we respond to those gifts with faith and love. Prayer is a place of encounter – a place of meeting – with the One who made us and knows us. It’s a place of intimacy with the God who loves us more than any other. Prayer is where our thirst for God and God’s thirst for us meet.

Prayer is not the same for every person. For example, St. Thérèse of Lisieux said, “For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.” Other saints have described prayer differently, and if I were to ask each of you to describe what prayer is like for you, I’d imagine we’d get lots of different answers.

Here’s a short video that shows what prayer is like for another person, a guy named Chuck. Chuck is like us – still working on becoming a saint. See if you recognize any part of yourself in this scene... (*Show “Coffee with Jesus” video from above resource list*) We’ll come back to Chuck in a little while and learn a few lessons from his prayers.

While the experience of prayer is unique to each person, the Church teaches us that there are five *forms* of prayer. These forms were modeled for us countless times by Jesus and were used also by the apostles and those in the early church. We find examples of them throughout the Scriptures, and our Church today continues to pray in each of these forms. Some of our

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prayers can include all of these forms, like the ‘Our Father’ that Jesus taught us does. Other prayers can focus on one or two forms at a time. It’s important to include all of these forms of prayer in our conversations with God. We should be people of prayer, people who “pray always and pray all ways.”

Have you ever stood on the top of a mountain, or looked down into a deep canyon? There’s a feeling that comes over you – it’s a combination of awe at the vastness of what you’re seeing, but also a realization of your own smallness in relation to the sight. That’s what the form of prayer known as *adoration* is meant to evoke in us. It’s sometimes thought of as a “speechless” form of prayer, and can certainly seem quieter in comparison to the other forms. Adoration is simply acknowledging that we are creatures and God is our Creator. We didn’t call ourselves into existence, and we don’t sustain ourselves now. We are God’s. He is our Master and we are the creation in which he most delights. In adoration we exalt God’s greatness, his power, and his might. We humble ourselves in adoration through realizing how very small we are in comparison to our God, and how very much we depend on him for EVERYTHING. God is God, and we are not – and that’s as it should be.

As God’s creatures, we bring our needs to him. *Petition* is the most common form of prayer because it’s the most spontaneous. We express our awareness of our relationship with God through prayers of petition. If God is God and we are not, we need his help! First of all, we need to seek his forgiveness and share with him our sorrow for our own failings and sins. We are weak and broken creatures. How many times each day do we encounter something (or someone) that we need his help with? Whether it’s a problem at home, a bad grade at school, a fight with a friend, or just something that’s nagging at us and weighing on our mind... Each of those situations can be a petition we can bring to God.

Nothing is too large or too small for us to bring to him. Have you ever had a problem or been in a situation that seems so big or so bad, you don’t even know how to put it into words? Good news – you don’t have to! Petitions don’t even need to have words. God knows our hearts and will hear even the wordless prayers of petition we raise to him. Remember how St. Thérèse described prayer, as a simple look turned toward heaven? God sees our glances, too, and hears our unspoken prayers in the same way. In Luke’s Gospel, we hear of another woman who didn’t use words to present her petition to Jesus. (*Read Luke 8:42b-48*) The woman with the hemorrhage reached out – literally – in the only way she could, and Jesus responded to her just as he does to you and me, if only we have faith.

Petitions aren’t meant to just be about what’s in our immediate vision, though, and sometimes it’s easy for us to get stuck in what we see and experience around us. Remember who we are in relation to those mountains and canyons? That’s right – little. God’s plan for us is big, and it involves the coming of his Kingdom here on earth. The Catechism tells us that by prayer, every baptized person works for the coming of the Kingdom. Our first petitions should be for the coming of God’s Kingdom, just as we ask for it each time we pray the ‘Our Father’ prayer that Jesus taught us. Our next petitions should be for whatever is necessary for God’s kingdom to be realized here on earth and whatever graces we need in our lives in order to cooperate with God’s kingdom. By keeping these petitions in mind, we’ll better recognize God’s will and we’ll be sharing in the mission of Christ.

While it’s great that we can talk with God, pray for the problems we’re experiencing in our lives and bring to him all of our needs, who’s missing? That’s right, everyone else! Our world is full of pain and suffering. We all know people who are going through tough times.

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Maybe you have a relative who is having trouble finding work, a sick neighbor or classmate, a friend who's depressed or struggling with an addiction... All of these are needs you can bring to God through what are called prayers of *intercession*.

You may recognize this word, "intercession," from Mass. After we say the Creed and before the gifts are prepared, what are called the "Prayers of the Faithful" or "General Intercessions" are shared. "Intercession" comes from the word "intercede," which means to ask on behalf of another. Jesus intercedes for us, taking all of our prayers to the Father, who hears and answers them. Mary and the saints intercede for us, too, and their prayers are powerful indeed! But we can intercede for others just as they do for us.

Here's an example from the New Testament of someone interceding for someone else. (*Read Mark 2: 1-12, The Story of the Paralytic*) So Jesus is in Capernaum preaching in a house, and people are crowding in to hear him. This paralytic's four friends were so determined to get him to Jesus, though, that they went so far as to tear back the roof of the house so they could lower their friend inside! And the Scriptures tell us, "When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Child, your sins are forgiven.'" It wasn't the paralyzed man's own faith that saved him – it was that of his friends! OUR friends need us to intercede for them through our prayers! None of us have to look far in our lives to find someone who needs our prayers. We ask God to have mercy on others in the same way that he shows mercy to us. But it's not just our friends who need our prayers of intercession: God even asks us to pray for those we dislike or who have wronged us. They need prayers, too, and sometimes the people we come into conflict with are carrying burdens that we can't see.

Prayers of *thanksgiving* are the fourth form of prayer. Through these prayers, we express our gratitude to God. Another story from Scripture illustrates for us the importance of this kind of prayer. (*Read Luke 17:11-19, The Healing of Ten Lepers*) Jesus heals ten people of a disease that isolated them from the rest of their society, and only one returns to thank him! How often do we fail to thank those who give us things or do things for us in our lives? Oftentimes we're so caught up in the moment, in the joy of receiving, in the busyness of other activities that we forget to stop and say 'thank you'. God showers us with blessings, many of them unseen, but the ones we DO see – we need to thank him for. There's a very important word we use in our church, and it comes from the Greek word for "thanksgiving." Does anyone know what it is? Eucharist! The Catechism tells us that thanksgiving characterizes the prayer of the Church, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist. The Body and Blood of Christ are precious gifts of presence and fountains of grace for us, and it's with thankful hearts that we should approach the table of the Lord at Mass.

The Eucharist is also known in our Church as the "sacrifice of praise". Beyond thanking God for his blessings to us and the way in which he provides for all our needs, it's important that we praise him for who HE IS. *Praise* is the form of prayer that embraces all the other forms of prayer and carries them toward God. It exalts God for his own sake, declares his wonders, and gives him glory and honor. Praise is often marked by sounds of joy and gladness. If you think of adoration and praise together, they're like two parts of a whole. Adoration is quiet, humble awe at Who God is. Praise is often more jubilant, excited, caught-up-in-the-moment worship of God and all his goodness to us. Have you ever been so happy you just want to cheer or shout really loud? That's what praise is like! The Psalms of the Old Testament in particular are filled with expressions of praise to God. (*Read Psalm 150*) The Psalmist was so excited; he/she wanted all the instruments of the temple to join in the prayer to God! He is worthy of our praise for who he is.

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Let's look again at Chuck, our friend from earlier, the poor guy in the coffee shop doing all of the talking. See if you can figure out which forms of prayer he's using, and which ones he's neglecting completely... (*Show "Coffee with Jesus" video again; ask the teens for feedback*) Chuck demonstrates what happens when we think of God just as someone who's here to grant our wishes. When we think of him that way, we put ourselves in the center instead of him. We're here because of him, not the other way around...

All five forms of prayer (adoration, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise) put us in touch with the God who wants more than anything to be in a relationship with us now so that we can be with him for all eternity in heaven. Through these forms of prayer, we delve deeper into the mystery of our faith and of who we are created to be. When we're grappling with the questions in our lives, when we're steeped in the mystery, it's prayer that gives us the rope to hold on to and the strong shelter.

APPLICATION

Activity Option # 1: Quiet Reflection Time with Prayer Writing

Ideally in the church or chapel, dim the lights so that it's still bright enough for writing. Have two instrumental songs ready to play softly in the background. Have teens spread out and give each a pen and a half-sheet of paper with the five forms of prayer listed and space below each. (Give the teens all the instructions up front, instead of interrupting the exercise halfway through.) Ask them to put the pen and paper aside until after the first song, and use that time to pray silently, focusing on God's presence with them and listening for his voice. Encourage them to either focus on the crucifix or close their eyes if they become easily distracted. While the second song plays, they should compose their own prayers, one for each form of prayer. They do not need to be long – a few sentences or phrases are adequate. When the song is concluded and all have finished, ask if anyone would like to share one of their prayers. If a number of teens seem willing, see if they will share an example of each of the five forms. Encourage the teens to keep their prayers as reminders of the different forms of prayer. Return to the meeting space or stay for the closing prayer.

Activity Option # 2: Examples from Scripture Race

In the meeting space, break the teens into groups of three or four. Give each group at least one Bible and a piece of paper with three of the five forms of prayer listed on it. Have the groups find examples of the three forms of prayer listed. The examples should be different from those you shared earlier in the evening and may be taken from either the Old or New Testament. If one or more groups accomplish this task quickly, have them choose one of the examples to act out for the other groups to guess.

SEND

Summary: What does this have to do with Jesus?

Jesus was sent by God the Father to redeem us and bring us back into a relationship with him. This relationship is not only something he longs for, it's what God created us for! Through the various forms of prayer, we connect with the God who loves us and claims us as his own son or daughter. By adoring, thanking, and praising God, we honor him and provide fitting worship for him. By bringing our needs and those of our world to him, we glorify his name and grow in humility.

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Challenge: Where do we go from here?

Prayer is conversing with and being in a relationship with a God who loves us. Sometimes, though, prayer is hard work! It's not always exciting, there's not often immediate feedback, and sometimes it can seem like God is far from us. Our challenge is to pray anyway, share our hearts with him anyway. It's the times when we don't feel like doing it that we need to the most! Praying through the difficult times can help us to rediscover the nearness of God and remind us of his great, great love for us.

Closing Prayer

The Universal Prayer (attributed to Pope Clement XI)

Lord, I believe in you: increase my faith.
I trust in you: strengthen my trust.
I love you: let me love you more and more.
I am sorry for my sins: deepen my sorrow.

I worship you as my first beginning,
I long for you as my last end,
I praise you as my constant helper,
And call on you as my loving protector.

Guide me by your wisdom,
Correct me with your justice,
Comfort me with your mercy,
Protect me with your power.

I offer you, Lord, my thoughts: to be fixed on you;
My words: to have you for their theme;
My actions: to reflect my love for you;
My sufferings: to be endured for your greater glory.

I want to do what you ask of me:
In the way you ask,
For as long as you ask,
Because you ask it.

Lord, enlighten my understanding,
Strengthen my will,
Purify my heart,
and make me holy.

Help me to repent of my past sins
And to resist temptation in the future.
Help me to rise above my human weaknesses
And to grow stronger as a Christian.

Let me love you, my Lord and my God,
And see myself as I really am:
A pilgrim in this world,
A Christian called to respect and love
All whose lives I touch,
Those under my authority,
My friends and my enemies.

Help me to conquer anger with gentleness,
Greed by generosity,
Apathy by fervor.
Help me to forget myself
And reach out toward others.

Make me prudent in planning,
Courageous in taking risks.
Make me patient in suffering, unassuming
in prosperity.

Keep me, Lord, attentive at prayer,
Temperate in food and drink,
Diligent in my work,
Firm in my good intentions.

Let my conscience be clear,
My conduct without fault,
My speech blameless,
My life well-ordered.
Put me on guard against my human weaknesses.
Let me cherish your love for me,
Keep your law,
And come at last to your salvation.

Teach me to realize that this world is passing,
That my true future is the happiness of heaven,
That life on earth is short,

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And the life to come eternal.

Help me to prepare for death
With a proper fear of judgment,
But a greater trust in your goodness.

Lead me safely through death
To the endless joy of heaven.

Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR HISPANIC YOUTH MINISTRY

Culturally speaking, Hispanics have a very active and vibrant faith filled with many traditions and rituals which unite them in prayer. Novenas are a popular religious traditional including a Novena to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Dec. 3-11th and the Christmas Novena, Dec. 16-24th.

Other informal forms of prayer that are popular within the Hispanic culture include dramas such as Passion Plays during Good Friday, or “Las Posadas” which is a re-enactment of Mary and Joseph and the Nativity story before Christmas, where participants relive the event taking on various roles. Similarly, processions of the Virgin Mary, for example, a procession of “La Virgen Desamparada” or Our Lady of Sorrows is also common during the Lenten season.

When teaching about different forms of prayer to Hispanic youth, it is beneficial to identify the types of prayer mentioned in this session; adoration, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise; and show how through these popular devotions they are achieving these forms of prayer. For example, a passion play on Good Friday is a way to praise and adore God for what he has done for us, it is a good time to offer prayers of petition and intercession for others and for ourselves through the reliving of Christ’s suffering, and on Easter Sunday we are brought to thanksgiving for the gift of new life through Jesus’ Resurrection. Likewise, novenas can serve different purposes, some of thanksgiving, and some of petition and intercession, while others are simply said to show praise and adoration to God.

Biography

Sarah Richardson has been an Administrative Assistant with the Office of Youth Ministry since 2006. She is a native of Northern Virginia and is proud to have grown up in a large family. One of her most embarrassing moments involved genuflecting in a movie theater.