

The Sources and Manner of Praying

We must do more than rely on an impulse for our prayer life. St. Paul calls us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thes 5:17). The will to pray in a daily, sustained, and structured manner is essential for becoming a prayerful person. The Holy Spirit guides the Church at prayer through her reading of Scripture, her celebration of the liturgy, and the practice of faith, hope, and love.

Daily familiarity with Scripture is a rich source of prayer. We need to do more than read or study Scripture; we should also converse with God, whose Spirit lies within the text and who draws us to appreciate “the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:8).

By our active participation in the liturgy, the prayer of the Church, we encounter the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who impart to us the gifts of salvation. Spiritual writers tell us our heart can be an altar of adoration and praise. Prayer internalizes the liturgy both during and after its celebration (cf. CCC, no. 2655).

Faith puts vitality in prayer because it brings us to a personal relationship with Christ. Hope carries our prayer to our final goal of permanent union with God. Love, poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit, is the source and destiny of prayer.

St. John Vianney (1786-1859) wrote: “My God, if my tongue cannot say in every moment that I love you, I want my heart to repeat it to you as often as I draw breath” (CCC, no. 2658, citing *Prayer*).

“Because God blesses the human heart, it can in return bless him who is the source of every blessing” (CCC, no. 2645).

Christian prayer is always Trinitarian. The sweep of our prayer should direct us toward the Father. But access to the Father is through Jesus Christ. Therefore, we also address our prayer to Christ and can do so using titles of Jesus found in the New Testament: Son of God, Word of God, Lamb of God, Son of the Virgin, Lord and Savior, etc. Christ is the door to God.

We must never tire of praying to Jesus. Yet it is the Holy Spirit who helps us to draw near to Jesus.

“No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3). The Church invites us to invoke the Holy Spirit as the interior Teacher of Christian prayer. (CCC, no. 2681)

