

Doctrinal Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA Forms of Prayer

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. Philippians 4:6

Insight

In a typical week, how often do you pray? What different kinds of prayers do you offer to God?

Mary Alice and Tom liked to think of themselves as thoughtful parents who were very attentive to the needs of their five children. In every aspect of their family life, Mary Alice and Tom tried to stay on top of things.

So every Sunday on the way home from church, they had always posed the question, “What did you get out of Mass?” Mary Alice and Tom were accustomed, by now, to a variety of responses.

Today, Sheila, the oldest, liked the music. It lifted her spirits. Lizzy, the youngest, liked the children’s Liturgy of the Word because she got to pray for her gold fish. Tommy thought the Eucharistic Prayer was “cool.” It got real quiet and he could concentrate. The Responsorial Psalm stood out for Dave because the cantor’s voice was clear and strong—and she was good-looking too! Sarah liked the homily. The priest’s remarks reminded her of all the things for which she was thankful.

As usual, following their short discussion, the family wrapped up by praying the Glory Be. Then it was on to breakfast!

For Reflection . . .

The earliest Christians give us a pattern for prayer to follow. The Church is founded on apostolic faith, animated by charity, and nourished by the Eucharist.

What are the key moments in the liturgy that fuel your own prayer? Why?

What does it mean to you to be part of a community that voices its prayer to God in a variety of ways?

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2623–2649

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 467–468

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 550–556

Church Teaching

There are many different ways to reverently lift up our hearts to God. That is, there are five distinct forms of prayer traditionally held by the Church.

Blessing and Adoration express the fundamental or core movement of a believer who experiences being gifted by God. That giftedness binds God to the person and the person to God. In other words, the gift itself and the person’s acceptance of it, produces a dynamic. Because God blesses us, the human person is able, in turn, to bless the divine One, the source of every good. Similarly, adoring God expresses a fundamental stance of the person to the One who frees us from sin and bestows life.

Petition expresses our reliance on God, our Creator and Redeemer. We cannot do anything without his help. And so we ask, beseech, plead, invoke, entreat, and cry out as we seek the assistance of the Master, the one who buoys us up in times of need or adversity.

Intercession is a form of petition that mirrors the way in which Jesus prayed for others. To intercede is to ask on behalf of another’s welfare. Saint Paul echoes Jesus’ teaching, emphasizing that this form of prayer has no boundaries. We are to pray for everyone, including our enemies and persecutors (see 1 Timothy 2:1 and Romans 12:14).

Thanksgiving characterizes the prayer of the Church in celebrating the Eucharist. It reveals most clearly the Church’s identity as the People of God. In every circumstance of life, believers constantly give thanks to God the Father in Christ Jesus, his Son, through the Holy Spirit for the work of our Salvation.

Prayers of Praise recognize God as God. These prayers applaud God for his own sake, rendering glory to him simply because he is who he is—our all, our everything.