



Ways Of Prayer - Session 1

Prayer Practice of the Week Suggestions for Practice Additional Resources

Prayer Practice of the Week: Praying with Symbols of Our Faith

The doorway to prayer is everywhere!

A symbol is a mark, a sign, or a word that has the potential to take us beyond what our eyes see and what our mind knows. Our faith is rich in symbols of great depth and meaning. Here in our parish, they surround us. For many of us they are such fixtures of parish life that we do not even see them anymore and, perhaps, have never really seen them at all! Here is your chance to draw near. Open your eyes and heart to let these great symbols of faith become your doorway to prayer.

Take a walk around the church. Let the Holy Spirit guide you to the holy image/object/space that that calls you to pause for a closer look.

Place yourself prayerfully before it.

Take time to truly see it. Move in close. Stand back.

Sit with it. Breathe with it.

Invite Jesus to join you, if you like. Talk with him about it.

What do you notice that you never noticed before?

What drew you to this particular object?

What does God wish you to see?

If you wish, record some of your impressions in your prayer journal:

Where did your prayer lead you?

Questions? Dialogue? Memories? Insights? Silence?

Alternatively you may wish to sit in prayer with: the name of Jesus (God Saves) is itself a prayer, the Sign of the Cross, any holy word that presents itself to you.

Where does this prayer lead you?

If you wish, record your impressions in your prayer journal.

Here are some symbols you will find in our church:

The Altar
The Resurrection painting (behind the Crucifix in the Worship Space)
The Baptismal Font
Holy Water
The Easter Candle
The Crucifix on the Main Altar
The Crucifix in the Chapel
Our Processional Cross
The Presider's Chair
The Stations of the Cross - one or all together

The Votive Candles
Mary and Joseph Statues
The Icon of Mary – “Our Lady of St. Michael” in the Chapel
The Ambry – place of the Holy Oils
The Tabernacle
The Tabernacle Candle
The Last Supper painting and other Jesus images in the parish center
The Holy Spirit statue in the gathering space
Images of Mary throughout the church

Suggestions for Prayer Practice

Because prayer is not “one-size-fits-all” here are some simple ways of prayer for you to try during the coming week. Chose the practice/s most appealing to you. Start small and build from there. Begin to listen for God’s call to pray. The only rule with prayer practice is that you commit to show up and trust God to show you the way.

- Set a regular time and place for prayer each day. Our bishop recommends 15 minutes of prayer each day but if that is not possible start with 5 minutes.
- Use the Prayer Process Card. It is a great way to review your day with God before you go to bed each night. If you do not have the card you can find it here: <https://dynamiccatholic.com/rediscover-jesus-program/reflections/the-prayer-process>
- Start a prayer journal. Many find prayer journaling a wonderful companion for reflection on the journey. Questions, prayers, dreams, doodles, names of people for whom you pray, praise, thanks, moments when all you could say is WOW! Anything that fuels your prayer.
- Pray with a Holy Symbol or Image in your own home. Listen to your heart as you imagine the many ways God appears to you.
- Create a piece of your own art and expression of God in your life now.
- Sit quietly, repeat the name of Jesus “God Saves” or another holy word “Maranatha- Come Lord” or phrase (Come Holy Spirit and fill the hearts of us your faithful)
- Try praying in new places: in the check out line, in your car, when you’re on hold with the cable company
- Pray what is on your mind and heart. Write a letter to God to express your honest feelings about a relationship or life situation.
- Try the Parish App as a prayer aid. Use the prayer reminder feature to remind you to stop and take a moment for spontaneous or rote prayer.

Additional Resources

Online Resources

Bishop John’s Pastoral Letter – ‘Transforming Fire

This prayer workshop is a response to the Bishop’s invitation to “be a friend of Jesus.”

If you don’t have time to read the whole letter - Part 1. Sec. 1. Be a Friend of Jesus: Personal Encounter and Prayer is a lovely invitation to living a prayerful life.

<http://www.dioceseofmarquette.org/images/files/Bishop/TransformingFire-PastoralLetter.pdf>

Matthew Kelly Reflection on the Prayer Process Card – This link includes a brief video meditation by Matthew Kelly about growing in relationship with God through prayer.

<https://dynamiccatholic.com/rediscover-jesus-program/reflections/the-prayer-process>

The Bible Online – This is an awesome resource to access many translations and paraphrases of the Bible. Sometimes our prayer with scripture is enhanced when we hear or read a familiar passage in a different translation. One of my favorite options is the ability to compare a passage in several translations. As a FYI, the NABRE (New American Bible Revised Edition) is the closest translation to the scripture used in the current Catholic Lectionary used for our daily and Sunday readings.

<https://www.biblegateway.com>

The Catechism of the Catholic Church – Part 4 is on Prayer. Rich in theology, scripture, wisdom teachings of the Church's great saints and considered one of the most readable and accessible sections of the catechism.

http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p4s1c2a2.htm

Bread for the Journey

There is a great wealth of spiritual writers to accompany and guide us on our journey. These are just a few. On my own walk with God, I have learned to trust that the book or author I need to read will fall into my hands when I need them.

Some Spiritual Classics – all in print some available free online

Story of a Soul – the Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux (the Little Flower)

This is available as a free download through Project Gutenberg:

http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page

Introduction to the Devout Life - St. Francis de Sales

“In the 17th century, Saint Francis de Sales and Saint Jane de Chantal developed a set of practical, realistic and freeing principles that helped people in rural France live happier, more fulfilling lives. The saints’ teachings were published and shared widely, and their teachings remain as relevant today as they were then. Carrying on this tradition, people world-wide continue to live their lives using the principles of Salesian spirituality.” From the Embraced by God website devoted to sharing the wisdom and spirituality of St. Francis de Sales.

The most respected translation of St. Francis de Sales’ book is by John Ryan, published by Image/Doubleday Books

A more modern translation and perhaps more accessible to modern ears is published under the title: Authentic Devotion translated and edited by Bernard Bangley, published by Shaw Books

A free downloadable pdf is also available

<http://www.philothea.de/devout-english.html>

The Way of a Pilgrim and The Pilgrim Continues His Way - author anonymous – the story of the Jesus prayer of the heart: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.” Link to free downloadable pdf:

http://jbburnett.com/resources/french_way_of_a_pilgrim.pdf

Some Contemporary Authors

The titles listed are good entry points to their many works on the inner life and prayer.

Catherine Doherty. *Poustinia – Encountering God in Silence, Solitude and Prayer.*

Thomas Merton. *New Seeds of Contemplation*

Henri Nouwen. *Return of the Prodigal Son* is a deep meditation on the Father's transforming love.

Richard Rohr. *Immortal Diamond – The Search for our True Self*

