



Archdiocese
of Toronto

Belief Brief - Why Pray?

WATCH VIDEO: <http://bit.ly/BeliefBriefs-Prayer>

Reflection

Why pray?

What's the point of prayer? If we've grown up Catholic, we might take for granted that we can talk to God.

Why raise our hearts and minds to God?

The Catholic Church teaches that we ought to believe in, celebrate, and live from the mystery of faith in a "vital and personal relationship with the living and true God."

A vital and personal relationship. With the living and true God.

This relationship, says the Catechism, is prayer.

Prayer is our response to God's continuous, loving call to encounter Him. In prayer, we give what is most personal and valuable in our busy lives: our time, attention, and our very presence. We give ourselves.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, we find the words, the silences, and the actions of prayer. We open our hearts to the Lord so that we can hear His voice and let Him lead us deeper into communion with Him as we go through life's ups and downs, trying to grow in faith and love as a disciple.

We pray because we need help. We ask for forgiveness for our sins, for strength in times of trial, and for the grace to 'live lives worthy of our calling'. We trust that we are not alone.

We pray because we have been blessed abundantly; we express our gratitude to God.

We pray because others need our prayers.

We praise God. We realize that God is God, and we are not!

We pray so that we can become people of hope in a sometimes dark world, proclaiming the Gospel with our lives.

Sources from Scripture and Tradition

1. Psalm 42.2-3

As the deer longs for streams of water,

So my soul longs for you, O God.

My being thirsts for God, the living God.

When can I go and see the face of God?

2. The teachings of Jesus on prayer:

Luke 11.1-4 <http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENGo839/PWU.HTM>

Matthew 6.5-15; 7.7-11 <http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENGo839/PVF.HTM>

3. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 83-89 cited in CCC 2763

The Lord's Prayer is the most perfect of prayers.... In it we ask, not only for all the things we can rightly desire, but also in the sequence that they should be desired. This prayer not only teaches us to ask for things, but also in what order we should desire them.

4. Selected reflections from Carmelite Tradition:

(accessed from <http://ocarm.org/en/content/ocarm/teresa-avila-quotes>)

Prayer deepens our intimacy with God and transforms us into our truest self – humbling us and creating us anew.

- St. Mary Magdalen de'Pazzi

Mental prayer in my opinion is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us.

- St. Teresa of Avila

Teaching from the Catechism of the Catholic Church on Prayer:

1. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Part IV, paragraph numbers 2558 -2865.

The English translation may be found here:

<http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENGO015/P8Z.HTM>

The Catechism is available in 9 languages. For the complete list and links, go to:

<http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc/index.htm>

2. *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Questions 534-598.

The English translation may be found here:

http://www.vatican.va/archive/compendium_ccc/documents/archive_2005_compendium-ccc_en.html

The Compendium is available in 14 languages. For the complete list and links, go to:

<http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc/index.htm>

3. *Treasury of Catholic Prayers*, in “Appendix,” *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Reflection Questions

1. St. Paul tells us to *pray without ceasing*. How might this happen in your life?
2. Prayerfully read and reflect upon Mary’s response to the angel Gabriel in Luke 1.26-38, and to her cousin Elizabeth, in Luke 1.39-56.
<http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENGo839/PWK.H>
What does she teach us about how to pray?

For Further Reading

1. Cardinal Thomas Collins, Pastoral Letter on the Holy Name of Jesus
<http://bit.ly/HolyNameofJesusPastoralLetter>
2. *Thirsting for God: Daily Meditations*. By Mother Teresa and Angelo Scolozzi, MC III.O (Compiler). Published July 2013. Available at: <http://bit.ly/thirstingforgod>
3. “The Hour that Made His Day,” *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, (Washington, DC: USCCB Publishing, 2006), pp. 461-462. Reflections of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen on prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.
4. “Rummaging for God: Praying Backward Through Your Day,” by Fr. Dennis Hamm, SJ.
<http://bit.ly/rummagingforgod>