

PRAYER: A PATH TO VOCATIONAL CALL

Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.

Opening Prayer - (The Grail Prayer)

Lord Jesus, I give you my hands to do your work.

I give you my feet to go your way.

I give you my eyes to see as you do.

I give you my tongue to speak your words.

I give you my mind that you may think in me.

I give you my spirit that you may pray in me.

Above all, I give you my heart that you may love in me your Father and all humankind.

I give you my whole self that you may grow in me, so that it is you, Lord Jesus, who live and work and pray in me.

Amen.

Scripture

"I write these things to you so that you may know that you have eternal life, you who believe in the name of the Son of God. And we have this confidence in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in regard to whatever we ask, we know that what we have asked him for is ours." (1 John 5:13-15)

Take time for silent reflection, and then read the Introduction out loud.

Introduction

As baptized Catholics, we have already set out on a faith journey that continues to grow and develop throughout our lives. Consequently, our relationship with God becomes a vital part of that journey whereby the only response is a life of prayer.

While there are many writings on the nature, effects, struggles, experiences, methods, and “how to” of prayer, the common theme is that the human heart is drawn toward God and our spirit is satisfied with nothing less than the fullness of God’s love. In essence, our relationship with God is nourished and deepened through prayer, which is how we communicate with God as we participate in daily living. Just as communication among friends requires time and attention, communication with God also requires time and attention.

The Church gives us many prayers for vocations, but it is important to realize that *prayer itself is a vocation*. As a Catholic, praying and vocation cannot be separated from one another. Since prayer is considered necessary to discern a vocation, the very act of praying leads us to who God created us to be.

All prayer is a consequence of our first vocation, which was baptism. From this initial sacrament, all the other vocations of life spring forth. The experience of praying and preparing to receive from God becomes a vocational reality as the divine initiative of love leads us to the vocation of Christian living and renewal of the Church.

Because the universal call to holiness is rooted in our baptism, it is through prayer that we come to know, love, and serve God. We come to understand that there is a reason for our existence and there is meaning in our lives. While the universal call to holiness is an ongoing conversion experience, it keeps opening our eyes to new awareness of God's loving presence. It invites us to turn toward God by aligning our will with God's will to fulfill the vocation of our lives.

We live out the invitation 'to be holy' depending on our chosen vocation. We can choose single life, married life, consecrated life, or the ordained ministry as a response to closely follow Christ.

Someone choosing a single life has made a personal commitment to put their freedom at the service of others in their work and prayer. In this, they strive to follow Christ in their daily lives.

Married couples follow Christ by giving themselves to each other completely and without any reservation, promising to love each other faithfully for the rest of their lives, sharing their joys and sufferings in whatever circumstances life brings them.

Someone who has chosen the consecrated life follows Christ through his or her vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. They are called to live as Christ lived, modeling their lives on the life of Jesus who was chaste, poor, and obedient, so their hearts are more free for prayer and service.

Men who have chosen the ordained ministry through sacramental ordination share in the priesthood of Christ in a special way. Their very beings are transfigured so that they can represent Christ the Good Shepherd for God's people, and Christ as the Head of the Church.

Each vocation demands prayer in order to foster our own holiness and sustain us in living a certain way. The object of every vocation is a willingness to do God's will. We have to believe that God loves us more than we love ourselves, and that God wants our happiness more than we want it. Secondly, the basis of our desire to find and to do the will of God should be the belief that God's will for us is our way of evangelizing and encouraging vocations.

By this virtue, prayer is the fruit of vocation and vocation is the fruit of prayer as we experience the movement in our lives to share our gifts with the community. It is through this process of contemplation and action that we maintain, develop, and deepen our relationship with God and learn the way God wants us to serve. Finding our vocation of service is accomplished through our vocation to prayer by participating in the various forms of prayer given to us by the Church.

These forms of prayer are blessing and adoration, the prayer of petition and intercession, and the prayer of thanksgiving and praise.

- The prayer of blessing is our response to God's gifts as we bless the Almighty who first blesses us and fills us with his gifts. The prayer of adoration is our humble acknowledgement that we are creatures of the Holy Creator.
- The different forms of petition can be a petition for pardon or also a humble and trusting petition for all our needs either spiritual or material. Intercession consists in asking on behalf of another. It conforms us and unites us to the prayer of Jesus who intercedes with the Father for all.

- Thanksgiving prayer is when the Church gives thanks to God unceasingly, above all in celebrating the Eucharist in which Christ allows the church to participate in his own thanksgiving to the Father. Finally, prayer of praise is that form of prayer that recognizes that God is God. It is a prayer that sings God's praise for his own sake and gives him glory.

***Introduce a speaker or the facilitator can read
the following paragraphs with pauses in between***

Documentary Tradition

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* gives a very beautiful definition of prayer from Saint Therese of Lisieux. She says that prayer is a "surge of the heart," a look toward heaven, a "cry of recognition and love, embracing both trial and joy" (CCC #2558).

The *Catechism* also gives other definitions: "Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God" (CCC #2559) and a "response of faith to the free promise of salvation and also a response of love to the thirst of the only Son of God." (CCC #2561).

There are as many definitions of prayer as there are people who write about it. Saint Augustine says that prayer is "nothing but love", and Thomas Merton describes prayer as "the freedom and affirmation growing out of nothingness into love."

"In the New Covenant, prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their Father who is good beyond measure, with his Son Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit. The grace of the Kingdom is "the union of the entire holy and royal Trinity . . . with the whole human spirit." Thus, the life of prayer is the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God and in communion with him. This communion of life is always possible because, through Baptism, we have already been united with Christ. Prayer is *Christian* insofar as it is communion with Christ and extends throughout the Church, which is his Body. Its dimensions are those of Christ's love. (CCC #2565)

***The facilitator can read the Discussion Questions out loud
for a general or small group discussion.***

Discussion Questions

1. Make a list of all of the prayers you have learned throughout your life. Include blessings at meal times, prayers before going to sleep, and prayers for special occasions. Which of these have you forgotten or ignored? Which prayers have become your favorites?
2. How do you experience prayer and vocation in your life?
3. How has your experience of prayer as a member of Serra influenced your faith life?

***If time permits invite the small groups to share with the large group
any insights that they gained from the group discussion,
then read the Closing Reflection.***

Closing Reflection

We pray in response to the presence and action of God in our world. We pray because we believe. We pray as a response of faith to the reality of God's existence in our lives. We pray to

expresses our earnest hope that our salvation is at hand. We pray because it is our vocation to meet God and encounter his holy will more directly than in any other way.

Seen in this human framework, prayer is a great mystery. Nevertheless, God desires our attention in prayer and calls us tirelessly to prayer. We may forget our God, follow false idols, or accuse God of deserting us, but our true God relentlessly summons us and reveals himself to us throughout salvation history.

From this ongoing revelation, prayer must become the foundation for every choice and every action in our life. Once God and his desire for us are encountered in prayer, we must then allow our vocation to emerge by being attentive to the rest of our daily living. Prayer alone must become the source of all we choose in life because prayer is the vocation given to us by the will of God.

Bibliography

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