

CHAPTER 10

Prayer

Parish Religious Education Adaptation

Student Preparation

- Students were asked to read Chapter 10: Prayer (pages 242–256) in preparation for this session.
- Students were requested to come prepared to share their favorite prayer with the class and to write out their responses to the “Discussion Questions” on page 246 of Chapter 10.

Warm-up (10–15 minutes)

- Gather the students in the prayer area of your classroom. Call on volunteers to share their favorite prayer with the class. Note the variety. If someone’s prayer is one that is familiar to the class (e.g., the Lord’s Prayer, Hail, Mary, etc.), encourage everyone to join in.

Part I: Lesson (25–30 minutes)

Text Reference: Letters to God; What Is Prayer?; The Bible and Prayer (pages 242–248)

- Direct the students to write at the top of a sheet of paper the words “Prayer Definitions.” Then ask students to share the definitions of prayer they wrote prior to the session. Tell the teens that if any of their classmates’ definitions strike a chord with them, they should write them on the sheet. After the sharing, call attention to page 244 and the definition in the top left corner. Have them write that definition on their sheets. Finally, review the other definitions of prayer found on page 246. Have the students write these definitions on their sheets as well.
- Go on to have the students share the responses they wrote prior to the session to the remaining “Discussion Questions” on page 246.
- Have two copies of the “Phone Call Script for Bell Ringer Activity Phone Call” (see page 315 of the TWE) available. Choose two students who are confident, trustworthy, and able to think on their feet to present the skit. Give each a prop phone. Ask them to sit in the front of the room, back to back, so that the rest of the class can see them but they can’t see each other. Explain to the class that they will be witnessing a phone conversation between friends. Then, turn the session over to the actors.
- Invite the students to talk about what they learned from the skit. Accept all reasonable replies; expect answers such as:
 - God calls us first; we respond to God’s call.
 - God is always communicating love to us.
 - God holds us accountable for what we do and don’t do.
 - God listens but won’t always rescue us from ourselves.
 - Prayer is as natural as any conversation with a friend.

Stress here how God is *first*. God *calls*. We *respond*. Prayer, then, is a response to our experience of God’s inbreaking. If the definition “Prayer is a response” is not already on the students’ list of definitions of prayer, have them add it now.

- Take a moment here to deal with a couple of the bigger problems many teens have with prayer: *genuineness* and *meaningfulness*.
 - First of all, because prayer is responding to God from the heart, we tend to think that if our heart does not overflow with praise or gratitude for God’s presence and begin to pray on its own, then our prayer is phony. Remind the teens that prayer never happens apart from life, and because life is painful as well as joyful, frustrating as well as fulfilling, prayer is more than pouring out the fullness of our hearts to God. Prayer is finding the way to God whether our hearts are full or empty. Jesus knew this. That’s why he prayed at times of fullness and emptiness.
 - A second danger about believing the heart can pray by itself is equating prayer’s worth with how it makes us *feel*. Tell the students that too often we judge the worth of prayer according to how *meaningful* it feels to us. Too often we expect prayer to engage our full attention and provoke an immediate response of our emotions—like theater does. When this doesn’t happen—which is most of the time—we figure our

prayer is meaningless, dull, and not from the heart. But if the immediate response of the emotions is the only criterion available for calling something personal and meaningful, then almost everything we do is meaningless—not from the heart. Stress that this is not to say that prayer doesn't engage us emotionally, because it does. But it does so only now and then, briefly, and usually unpredictably. Point out to the teens that what prayer does *consistently*, however, is to nurture the expression of *religious* affections: wonder, awe, and joy, and longing and gratitude.

- List the above affections on the board as follows
 1. Wonder, Awe, and Joy
 2. Longing
 3. Gratitude
- Point out the three types of prayer listed on page 245. List them opposite the affections:
 1. Blessing, Adoration, and Praise
 2. Petition
 3. Thanksgiving
- Point out that we express our wonder, awe, and joy in prayers of blessing, adoration, and praise; our longing or need in prayers of petition; and our gratitude in prayers of thanks. Ask for volunteers to offer an example in their own words of each kind of prayer.
- Give the teens time to work with a partner to complete the “Prayer in the New Testament” activity on page 246. Check responses: Luke 18:1–5 = petition; Luke 1:46–55 = adoration or praise; Mark 10:46–49 = petition; John 11:41–42 = thanksgiving and praise.

Divide the class into three groups and assign each group one of the three types of prayer:

- Group 1 = Blessing, Adoration, and Praise: Have this group create a prayer that offers praise for God's creation or abiding love or help in making our hard times good times.
- Group 2 = Petition: Have this group create a prayer asking God to respond to personal, Church, and/or world needs.
- Group 3 = Thanksgiving: Have this group create a prayer of gratitude for the many gifts God has bestowed upon us: health, friends, family, faith, freedom, etc.
- Emphasize that the point is not to create a perfect prayer but to pray. Remind the teens that as Catholic Christians, we don't only pray what we believe. We believe only what we pray. That is why prayer—not social justice, not evangelization, not catechesis—is the very first task of Christians. We must receive before we can give, commune before we can communicate, and be converted before we can convert. Stress that prayer is a hard but healthy exercise. There's no substitute for it. Good works, self-sacrifice, and almsgiving all have their place, but they cannot stand in for prayer. They cannot make prayer an extra. Allow about five minutes for the groups to compose their prayers.

Break/Shared Prayer (10 minutes)

- Join the students in a break with refreshments.
- Before returning to the second part of the lesson, have the small groups share the prayers they wrote.

Part 2: Lesson (25–30 minutes)

Text Reference: How to Pray; The Lord's Prayer (pages 248–256)

- Introduce the second part of this lesson by writing the following Bible passages on the board and having the students look them up and read them aloud: 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18; Luke 11:9–10; and Luke 18:1–8. Then ask: Why do you think Paul and Jesus stress *persistence* so heavily when it comes to prayer? Accept all reasonable replies.
- Go on to point out that “practice makes perfect.” Remind the teens that persistence can turn raw talent into excellent artistic or athletic performance. Hours of practice on the court turn a gangly player into a strong champion. Repeated scales on the guitar can transform the novice player into another B. B. King, Jimi Hendrix, or Eric Clapton. Persistence can make dreams come true.
- Distribute copies of the activity sheet “Persistent Practice Makes Prayer” from the end of this lesson. Read the directions with the students. Then give them time to choose the best ways for them to be persistent in prayer.

- Move to the section “Prayer Expressions” on page 250. Provide students examples of vocal, meditative, and mental prayer. Point out the definitions of “meditation” and “contemplation” in the margin. Explain that in meditative prayer we reflect on God’s words and think about how our life fits into God’s plan. Contemplative prayer uses no words—spoken or unspoken. We simply sit in silence in God’s presence, bathed in God’s love. Meditative prayer often can lead us into contemplation.
- Draw attention to the list of Bible passages on page 251. Encourage the teens to draw on these lists for meditative prayer at home.
- Then, to ready the students for their investigation of the Lord’s Prayer, lead them in the following meditation.
 - *Have the teens sit comfortably. Pause to make sure everyone is at ease. Then, invite the students to enter into prayer, saying:*
 - + The Father’s voice calls us; the Son’s glory shines upon us; the Spirit’s love fills us with joy.
 - *Read Luke 11:1–4. Use questions like the following to help the students picture the scene so that they are present with Jesus:*
 - + Where was Jesus when his disciples asked him to teach them to pray?
 - + Where are you in this scene?
 - + Image the place. Is the sun shining?
 - + How do you feel?
 - + Is Jesus close to you?
 - + Is he looking at you?
- *Invite the teens to talk inwardly to Jesus as they would talk to a friend. Again, use questions like the following to help them with their interior dialogue:*
 - + What’s on your mind today that you’d like to talk over with Jesus?
 - + What worries do you have today?
 - + What are you happy or excited about today?
 - + What is Jesus saying to you about your life and your prayer?
- *Conclude the meditation by inviting the students to join in praying the Lord’s Prayer.*
- Before moving on to examine the Lord’s Prayer, ask the teens to open their Bibles to Romans 8:26–27. Read the passage aloud with the teens. Tell them that even if we begin our prayer ragged and resentful, the Spirit is smooth and serene. Remind them that whenever Jesus prayed, he prayed to the Father through the Spirit. Like Jesus, we never pray alone. So, when we don’t know what to pray, we can simply shut up and let the Spirit do the talking.
- Distribute copies of the activity sheet “Connecting the Lord’s Prayer” from the end of this lesson. Help the students match the parts of the Lord’s Prayer in the left column to the correct explanations in the right column by going through each section of the prayer with them. If you wish to expand on the explanations, draw on material from pages 253–255 in the text.

Prayer Experience (10 minutes)

- Use the following adaptation of the “Presentation of the Lord’s Prayer” from the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* to conclude the session and your study together. Make a copy of the activity sheet “The Lord’s Prayer” for each student.
- Gather the students around the Paschal (Easter) Candle. Light the candle. Then, after a moment of silence, offer the following prayer:
 Gracious, loving God, we bless, adore, and praise you. Tender us, your children. Shelter us in the shadow of your brilliant wings. For all that has been, is now, and shall be, we pour out our heartfelt thanks. Amen.
- Ask one of the students to read Galatians 8:4–7.
- As a response to the reading, invite the students to open their Bibles to Psalm 23. Have the teens recite the psalm together.
- Invite the students to hold out their arms in front of them, about shoulder high, palms up. Say:
 You have received the Spirit that makes us God’s children. In that Spirit, and in response to the summons of the Son, let us now dare to call God our Father.

- Have the students pray the Lord's Prayer together. Afterward, go around the circle and present each student with a copy of the Lord's Prayer, saying:
Receive the Lord's Prayer, the summary of all that is Good News.
- Conclude by sharing a sign of peace.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

If this is your last session with the students, be sure to take time to thank them as a group and individually. If you will be meeting with them again soon around another topic, provide them with any necessary pre-gathering materials.

☀ Persistent Practice Makes Prayer



Persistent prayer is not a way of twisting God’s arm or changing God’s point of view to match our own. God already wants the best for us. In fact, God may already want more from us than we want for ourselves! Prayer can open us to what God wants. Jesus urges persistence in prayer because it can draw us into becoming part of the answer to our own prayer.

Find out what the best way is for you to be persistent in prayer. Read each column. Check the one item that fits you best. After making your suggestions, make a commitment to a consistent place and time for prayer.

PRAYER PLACE	PRAYER TIME	PRAYER POSTURE	PRAYER AID	PRAYER STARTER
<input type="checkbox"/> Bedroom	<input type="checkbox"/> Early a.m.	<input type="checkbox"/> Kneeling	<input type="checkbox"/> Cross/crucifix	<input type="checkbox"/> Quiet centering
<input type="checkbox"/> Church	<input type="checkbox"/> After breakfast	<input type="checkbox"/> Standing	<input type="checkbox"/> Statue	<input type="checkbox"/> Favorite prayer
<input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen	<input type="checkbox"/> Afternoon	<input type="checkbox"/> Jogging	<input type="checkbox"/> Doodling	<input type="checkbox"/> Bible verse
<input type="checkbox"/> Outdoors	<input type="checkbox"/> Early evening	<input type="checkbox"/> Sitting	<input type="checkbox"/> Candle	<input type="checkbox"/> Praying with own words
<input type="checkbox"/> Living room	<input type="checkbox"/> Just before bed	<input type="checkbox"/> Walking	<input type="checkbox"/> Bible	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Prayer book	_____
_____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper	_____
_____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Journal	_____
			<input type="checkbox"/> Song/music	
			<input type="checkbox"/> Other	

I commit myself to pray _____



Connecting the Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Friends let friends in on what they're doing and what they need. God is a friend who cares about our everyday life, so we let our Friend in on ours.

Who art in heaven

We remember again whose we are and we acknowledge of our need for help to become who we are called to be.

Hallowed be thy name

Put first things first. Pray boldly and intimately, like a child speaking to a loving parent.

**Thy kingdom come; thy will
be done**

Recognize that praying this way blesses

on earth as it is in heaven

God's name.

Give us this day our daily bread

We practice what we preach. We can't pray for the Kingdom's coming without seeking to act like Kingdom folk.

And forgive us our trespasses as we

We pray to set our hearts and hands on what

forgive those who trespass against us

is really important, the Kingdom coming.

That way no matter what else we pray for, we'll be praying for it as a means of paving the Kingdom's way.

And lead us not into temptation

We recognize that we belong to God in

but deliver us from evil. Amen.

union with Jesus and the Spirit.

☀ The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.



