

Chapter 8
Santa Teresa de Jesús
José Alcázar Tejedor
Understanding Types of Prayer

In this assignment, students will learn about different kinds of prayer. The artwork Santa Teresa de Jesus depicts St Teresa engaged in the exercise of mental prayer, also known as contemplative prayer. Students will learn more about what contemplative prayer is and gain competency in identifying other forms of prayer. They will be given brief descriptions of the three main types of prayer: vocal, meditative, and contemplative. They will then be asked to identify what prayers might fit into a particular category. Some prayers may fit well into more than one category. For example, the Rosary would be a type of vocal prayer but is also properly categorized as meditative.

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When someone says the word “prayer,” what comes to mind? Is it an Our Father, the Rosary, a hymn, or perhaps something more like Eucharistic Adoration or the Mass? All of these things are examples of prayers. But you will note that the kind of prayer that you engage in during adoration, a Bible study, or when praying the Rosary are different.

There are a few types of prayer that we can name; for example, vocal, meditative, and contemplative prayer. A basic description of each follows.

Vocal prayer is the starting point of all other prayer. It is how we are first taught to pray as children, being given the words and reciting them. These prayers are recited out loud, often pre-written, and generally done in a community setting.

Meditative prayer is the type of prayer that typically involves beginning with a close examination of some spiritual work of art or writing as a starting point for internal prayer. This allows the heart and mind to enter a conversation with God. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, “Meditation is a prayerful reflection that begins above all in the Word of God in the Bible. Meditation engages through imagination, emotion and desire in order to deepen our faith, convert our heart and fortify our will to follow Christ. It is a first step toward the union of love with God” (2708).

Contemplative prayer is the highest form of prayer. It is difficult to describe as it goes beyond words and reflection. Contemplative prayer is a simple “resting” in God’s presence. St. Teresa of Ávila says this about contemplative prayer (also called mental prayer): “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.”

Do all of the following.

1. Summarize each category of prayer in one word.

Vocal Prayer:

Meditative Prayer:

Contemplative Prayer:

1. Put the following examples of prayer under the prayer type it corresponds to: Eucharist, Our Father, Scripture Reading, Rosary. (Each example may fit under more than one type.)

Vocal Prayer	Meditative Prayer	Contemplative Prayer