

Holy Trinity Catholic Church
RCIA Class Transcript
Prayer
Lecturer: Father Francis Peffley
Date: October 5, 2004

Our topic tonight is a wonderful topic – it is the subject of Prayer. It's a little bit out of the normal schedule, because if you notice, what we've been doing is going through the existence of God, and then how God reveals Himself to us through Sacred Scripture and Tradition. Then normally, after we cover the existence of God, His revelation, we would cover the Creation of the Angels, and the fall of the human race, and Adam and Eve, and then go into the life of Christ, and get into the Church, and the whole history of salvation. And then sometimes prayer doesn't come until almost the last class. We've done it this way in the past, but we decided that prayer should be moved up toward the beginning of the year, to encourage you to develop your life of prayer, so that, as you are on this journey (God willing) to receive the sacraments, maybe get baptized, or receive Holy Communion, that prayer will accompany you, since prayer is the food for our soul, and that prayer is our spiritual nourishment. We didn't want to wait until the very end of the year to teach you how to pray, but to talk about this vital way for us to connect with God. So that's why we moved it up here, even though it really doesn't fit into the schedule of the other classes, we thought it was vitally important that we discuss it sooner rather than later. Tonight really is one of the greatest topics that we'll be covering in our full 24 week course on the Faith.

Hopefully, you got the handouts. Let me start with this one called "Prayer: The Stairway to Heaven." Once we take a look at prayer, prayer really has many definitions. Perhaps the most beautiful is "prayer is the lifting of our mind and heart to God." Prayer is a conversation with God. It's not just us talking to God - it's us listening to God. It's a two-way street. It's almost like a game of tennis – the ball goes back and forth from one side of the court to another. It's not a game of golf where we just hit our own ball every shot. It's more like tennis – back and forth, talking with God and listening to God. Prayer is the food of our soul. It's our spiritual nourishment. It keeps us alive. On the very back of that sheet, at the very bottom, it says, "As our body cannot live without nourishment, so our soul cannot spiritually be kept alive without prayer." That's how important prayer is.

Think of any relationship that you have with a person. What is the basis of that relationship? Well, it's communication. If you're engaged or married, you know how important communication is to keep that relationship healthy and strong. It's the same thing with our relationship with God. You see, prayer is communication with God. On earth, when you get to want to know somebody, what do you do? You spend time with the person, you talk to that person, and you listen to that person. It's the same thing with our relationship with God. If we want to have it healthy and strong, we want to spend time with the one we love, namely God.

The sign of the healthy relationship with God is how much time we spend in prayer with the Lord. St. Augustine says, "Prayer is the key of Heaven." St. Louis of Grenada says, "Prayer is a royal gate through which we enter into the very heart of God. St. John Vianney says, "Prayer is union with God." Again in the back, bottom page, St. John Chrysostom says, "God governs the world, but prayer governs God Himself." St. John Vianney says, "I know something stronger than God - the man who prays. He makes God say 'Yes' when He had said 'No'." And perhaps one of the most powerful quotations from the saints about the importance of prayer is from St. Alphonsus, "He who prays is saved; he who prays not is damned." So, prayer is absolutely vital for a healthy relationship with God. If we pray, we'll get the grace to be saved. If we don't pray, we just won't get that grace that we need.

As you know, we cannot save ourselves. Eternal life, eternal salvation is a gift from God. How do we get the grace, which is the supernatural power that we need, to obtain a supernatural end? Realize that of our own human effort, it's impossible to save ourselves. Only by the grace of God can we be saved. Please remember, Heaven is a supernatural destiny, and we need a supernatural means to obtain a supernatural end. That way in which we get the grace (or the power or the strength) we need is through prayer. The more we pray, the more grace we receive. The less we pray, the less grace we receive. It's almost like recharging the batteries. Or, imagine if a car was running out of gas, you're trying to run your car without gas, it just won't go anywhere. Our spiritual life won't go anywhere if we don't have the grace which comes from prayer.

Let's take a look at the different ways in which we can pray. Perhaps the most simple and best way to explain it is to use the word **ALTAR**, and have every letter stand for a different type of prayer. And there really are about five main kinds of prayer, give or take some, but the easy way to remember it is to use the word **ALTAR**, (spelling) "A," "L," "T," "A," and "R."

The "A" stands for **Adoration**. Adoration means to worship God, who is our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Adoration is praising God, worshiping Him. See, we're creatures; God is our Creator. When we adore God, we're really fulfilling our purpose of why God created us. Remember, God created us so we could be perfectly happy with Him for all eternity. How we obtain eternal happiness is doing the Lord's holy will. And, the way we really fulfill our nature as creatures, as creations of God, is to worship our Creator. When we worship God, we ourselves grow into the fullness of what God has created us to be, namely, children of God, made in His image and likeness. We begin by adoring God, praising Him, worshiping Him, that He is our Creator, our Redeemer, and our Sanctifier.

The "L" is **Love**. We love God. Scripture says, "That we should love God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind." In other words, love Him with all of our body, with all of our intellect, and with all of our will, with all the different facets of

our person. So, we love God, and we can say simple prayers, like “My God, I love Thee,” or, “Jesus, I love Thee.” Love really is the heart. All the Ten Commandments can be summarized in love of God, and love of neighbor.

And then, we come to “T”, which is **Thanksgiving**, to give thanks to God. We as creatures are called to be grateful to God, for all the gifts He has given us – spiritual gifts, as well as material blessings and benefits that we have in our life. We think of the gift of life itself that God has blessed us with. We thank Him for the gift of our faith, our family, our homes, our health; all these things we should spend some time every day thanking God for the blessings He’s given us. Obviously, your children, you teach them gratitude at a very young age. If you give them something, say, “Well, what do you say?” And then, of course, they’re supposed to say either “Please” or “Thank you.” It’s just good, proper manners. And, of course, when we’re dealing with God, who gave us everything, we too should be sons and daughters of God, filled with gratitude for all the wonderful blessings He’s given us.

Next, the “A” is **Ask**, asking God for what we need. We call these petitionary prayers - asking Him to help our parents, or children, brothers, or sisters. We can pray for ourselves. We can pray for others. We can pray for spiritual things. We can pray for material things. We should always ask God for what we need. But, don’t hesitate to ask. Sometimes, most peoples’ prayers are spent entirely in this category, which is a shame, because we need to round out our prayer life by adoring Him, and loving Him, and thanking Him.

Lastly, the “R” could stand for two different words. One is make a **Resolution**. We’ve heard of New Year’s resolutions, where we decide to exercise everyday, or lose weight, or quit smoking. A resolution is a decision that we make that we want to get better. In prayer, we could make a resolution maybe to be more patient with family members, or to avoid gossiping, or whatever it might be, or to always tell the truth. Whatever it might be, a resolution is always a good way to end your prayer. Say, “Lord, I’ve just spent 10 or 15 minutes talking with You, communicating, help me to be a better husband, or to be a better wife, or to be a better son or daughter.”

The “R” can also stand for **Reparation**. Reparation is really repairing the damage. It’s asking God for forgiveness for our sins, so, it’s repenting (the “R” could also stand for **Repenting**) of our sins, telling God we’re sorry, and helping to make up for them. There’s an interesting concept in prayer, that when we sin, we do hurt our relationship with God. By spending time in prayer, we can help heal the damage that we’ve caused between our relationship with us and God. Reparation is a way that we can pray for forgiveness for ourselves as well as for others. Reparation is a very important part of prayer. It’s sort of helping to make up for our past sins, as well as the sins of others. And, as you know, there are many sins out there in the world, that we should offer reparation to the Lord for – the sins of abortion, the sins of many other things we should offer reparation, or

to try to make up for, all those people who don't go to Church, or all the people who commit all sorts of crimes, or sins. We should offer reparation to the Lord for their sins, as well as our own sins.

Now take a look at the sheet called "Prayer: The Stairway to Heaven," and you'll see the seven main qualities of prayer. The first quality listed here is that we should always *pray with devotion*, with tenderness – in other words, praying from the heart. The Bible says (God is referring to the people) and He says, "These people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." Somebody could be saying a lot of vocal prayers (a lot of prayers with the lips), but perhaps, they're not praying truly with the heart. In a little bit we'll get into teaching you how to pray the Rosary, which is really a prayer of the heart. So, pray with devotion. Pray with tenderness.

Second, the Bible says *to pray with fervor*. Fervor is really desire. There's a quote here from St. Luke, Chapter 22, that when Jesus was in the Agony in the Garden, it says, "He prayed all the more earnestly, so much so, that His sweat became as drops of blood." If you saw the movie The Passion of the Christ, you see in that movie, Jesus sweating blood. He prayed with fervor, with intensity.

Third, the Bible says *to pray with perseverance*. Persevere in prayer. There are many examples in Scripture. Jesus even tells a story about a man who knocks on somebody's door one night, and says, "A friend of mine has just come in from a journey, lend me three loaves." And Jesus says, "If the fellow on the inside doesn't open the door because of friendship, he'll certainly open it because of perseverance." If the person keeps knocking on the door, eventually he's not going to get any sleep anyway. He might as well open the door, give the fellow the loaves of bread, and be able to go back to sleep. So the Lord said, "We have to pray with persistence. Pray with perseverance, and don't give up."

We have wonderful examples in the history of the Church of people who prayed with perseverance. Never give up on prayer. How many of you have heard of St. Augustine and St. Monica? St. Augustine was her wayward son. He drifted away from the Faith. For 20 years, she prayed every day for Augustine's conversion back to the practice of the Faith. After about 20 years, he did come back to God. Augustine became a great saint – he became a Bishop and a Doctor of the Church. Monica's persevering prayer was heard by the Lord, and God converted her son, most likely because of her perseverance in prayers. St. Teresa of Avila says, "The devil knows that if a soul perseveres in practicing prayer, that soul will be lost to him." In other words, Satan will have no power over souls that persevere in prayer. St. Catherine of Sienna says, "By humble and faithful prayer, the soul acquires with time and perseverance, every virtue." Virtues are good habits, good qualities. If you persevere in prayer, then you will grow in faith, hope, charity, patience, humility, kindness, and generosity. You will grow in virtues if you pray.

The handout talks about praying at least 15 minutes every single day. It'd be hard to imagine how a relationship with boyfriend or girlfriend, or engaged couples, or even husbands and wives, could survive if there wasn't at least 15 minutes of good, heart-to-heart conversation every day. And then, there's a quotation here from St. Luke, Chapter 18, where Jesus says, "Pray always." St. Paul says, "Pray without ceasing, and pray at all times." How is it possible to pray without ceasing? Well, one way to do this is by, every day when you wake up, make the Morning Offering, which is when you offer and dedicate your whole day to God. Say "Lord, I offer you today all of my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings." You offer up everything to the Lord that you're going to do that day. That way, your whole day becomes a prayer. You have your daily devotions, your morning devotions. It's important, I would say, also to pray at different times during the day. You know, if prayer is food for your soul, you just don't eat one meal a day. You eat probably something in the morning, something around lunch, and something in the evening. Our prayers should be similar to that. When you wake up, you should have some time in the morning for prayer, where you make the Morning Offering, and offer the Lord everything – all the good things that will happen to you, the difficulties, the struggles. And if you do that, then you can fulfill what St. Paul says, "Pray without ceasing, pray all the time." It doesn't mean that you have to be on your knees all the time, but try to practice living in the presence of God. That God is always there by your side – He's always there with you.

Fourth, *pray with humility* – be humble when you pray. The Bible says, "God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble." The Bible says, "The prayer of the humble person pierces the clouds." What a beautiful expression that is. Praying with humility, saying, "Lord, you are God, and I am just a lowly human being - listen to my prayer." The more we humble ourselves, the more God will exalt us. The Blessed Mother is a perfect example. Mary was so humble, and yet God took her, and He elevated her to be the Queen of Heaven and Earth – what a wonderful thing that is. There's a parable in the Bible that Jesus talked about how two men went into the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee; the other was a tax collector. It said that the Pharisee went, and he prayed with his head upright, and said, "Oh God, thank you for not making me like the rest of men – greedy, and adulterous, and selfish." It says that man left the temple unjustified, or unsanctified. Whereas another man went into the temple, and it says he couldn't even open his eyes to Heaven. He knelt down in the back of the temple, and kept striking his breast and saying, "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner." And Jesus says, "That man went home from the temple justified, whereas the Pharisee did not." What was the difference? Well, the Pharisee was praying with pride. He was telling God how great he was, and was happy that he was not like the rest of these pagans, and how he was so much better. See, he was telling God how great he was. And that, of course, was a person filled with arrogance and pride. Whereas the tax collector said, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner." He even called himself *the sinner*, like the worst sinner in the world. He admitted he needed God's help. He admitted that he was not the source of his own being,

that God was in control of his life. And so, the Bible says, "He went home from the Temple justified, whereas the Pharisee did not." If you remember any one thing from tonight's class, remember to pray with humility. That's the key to be humble, and then you'll receive graces from God.

Then, fifth, *pray with attention*. Attention is realizing to whom we are praying. See, I guarantee if we were talking to the President of the United States, or to the Pope, we would give them our fullest attention, because whenever we are with somebody of great importance, we're not distracted. We focus on that person; we listen to what they say; we talk to them. How about God? How do we pray to God? Do we really realize who we're talking to? I mean, God is God. We should pray with the utmost respect and attention, and to realize that there's always going to be distractions in prayer. You're going to be praying, and all of a sudden, the thought will come to you about this or that. There's always going to be distractions in prayer, but we should try not to give into them. Don't get upset when you have distractions in prayer; just let them drift by like clouds drifting by, or leaves floating down the stream. Try not to wrestle with distractions. If you have distractions, just observe them, and let them go past, and then gently bring your mind back to prayer, to talking with the Lord. There's all sorts of distractions in our busy life, you know, telephones, and dogs, and kids, and all sorts of things. There's always going to be distractions, but let them try to be involuntary distractions, not deliberate distractions. We should try to focus on our prayer life with the Lord. There's a story once how a man, I think he came up to, maybe it was St. Anthony, and he said to St. Anthony, "I never have any distractions in prayer!" and St. Anthony says, "Well, I'll bet you do. I bet you're just not being honest." And the fellow says, "Nope, I can pray without distraction." St. Anthony says, "OK, if you can say the Lord's Prayer, the Our Father, without being distracted, I will give you this horse." The man starts out, "Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Does it come with a saddle?" He could not say the prayer without being distracted. He could not even get through one Our Father without thinking about whether the horse came with the saddle.

Sixth is *pray with faith*. The Bible says, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." The Bible says, "With men, it is impossible, but with God, all things are possible." So pray with great faith.

Pray with confidence, and pray with trust. One of the other aspects of prayer that is not on your handout, is we should pray with confidence. Confidence and trust are very important virtues. Now, I remember the old Dairy Queen cartoon where Dennis the Menace hopped in the car and said, "Dad, we're all going to Dairy Queen; do you want to drive?" He hopped in the car with his friends. That's prayer with confidence, and that's the kind of confidence we should have in our Heavenly Father. Also, with confidence comes trust, to realize that God is a loving Father. He's not a hanging judge, He's not a monster, He's not some reluctant grandfather. God is a loving father. And so, when Jesus said to pray the Our Father, He said, "Pray Abba," which is "Daddy." That's the kind of

relationship He wants us to have with God, our Heavenly Father (and we'll get into the Our Father in a few minutes) - praying with confidence, praying with trust, praying like a little child to His Heavenly Father.

And then seventh, *pray in accordance with God's will*. Now, this is an interesting point here. It means praying with the right priority, namely, always pray for God's will. We sometimes get into the situation where we're always praying for our will. We're telling God exactly what we want, and we want God to always do our will; but really, that's not the way it should be. The mature Christian says, "Lord, Thy will be done," not "Thy will be changed," or "My will be done." So many times we pray like that. The Bible says, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening," not "Listen Lord, for your servant is speaking." If we can develop that attitude of praying in accordance with God's will, we'll be much more at peace, and much happier. And this follows the example of Jesus, where He says, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup of suffering pass Me by," (this was in the Agony in the Garden); "but not My will, but Thine be done." Even Jesus prayed the Father's will be done, not His own will.

Sometimes, people say, "Well, does God answer my prayers? Will God answer my prayers?" God answers every prayer, and He has three answers. Sometimes He says yes; sometimes He says no; and sometimes He says wait, or keep praying. And that's something to keep in mind – no prayer is unanswered; no prayer is unheard. If what we're praying for is not helpful to the salvation of our soul, then God would not give us that. If it is beneficial to our soul, then God would grant us that; if it's His holy will, of course. Sometimes you have people say, "I'm praying to win the lottery." You hear this a lot. Maybe if the person won the lottery, they could lose their soul. Maybe those millions of dollars would corrupt them, destroy their marriage, destroy their family. They might wind up in hell if they did win the lottery. But, there's others that will win the lottery and become better people. They'll give a lot to God, a lot to the poor, a lot to the Church. The woman up in Baltimore who won 70 million dollars in the last couple years was able to help rebuild some churches and do a lot of good. So, sometimes God will allow things like that in our life, but if it's to our spiritual benefit. The best way to pray is you can pray really for whatever you want, but in the end say, "Lord, only if it's Your will." Prayer is tough, because sometimes you're praying for a sick child, and say, "Lord, please help my child to recover." And of course, that certainly would seem to be what God would want, and that's what we pray for. It's much harder for the parents to say, "Lord, please heal my child, but Lord, Thy will be done. You know what's best. You know what's best for me. You know what's best for the family." It takes a very mature Christian to be able to pray, "Lord, thy will be done," and to say, "Lord, don't do my will, I want to do Your will."

What's interesting is that usually when God doesn't answer our prayers right away, it's really for our benefit. St. Monica never would have become St. Monica if Augustine had been converted right away. If Augustine had been converted

after six months of prayer, she never would have become the great saint that she was. She's the one who developed an incredible prayer life, because she prayed for her son Augustine for 20 years. She became a great saint because of that as well. Just keep that in mind. You might say, "Well why have I been praying for something for so long?" Realize that God is working on you as well when you're praying. God is very sneaky that way, isn't He, because when people ask you to pray for them, they themselves are being brought closer to God. Think of the tragedies of something like September 11th, and other things where so many people prayed because of that – how God can bring good and does bring good out of every situation. At least hopefully, it brought our nation to its knees in prayer and petition, and in praying for peace, and for justice.

Where *is the best place to pray?* You know obviously, you can pray anywhere – you can pray at home; you can pray in the car (but just don't close your eyes, you know, when you're driving). You can pray out in the woods as you're taking a hike. See, you can really pray anywhere, because as you know, we're always in the presence of God. Even if somebody is hiking up a beautiful mountain, God is there. Or, if they're sitting on the beach, obviously they're always in the presence of God. Where is the best place to pray? Of course, the best place is the House of God, which is the Church, especially before the Blessed Sacrament (the Tabernacle). Now, we haven't gotten into the teachings yet on the Eucharist, but I'll just summarize, saying that since the Eucharist is truly the Real Presence of Jesus (Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity), when you pray before the Tabernacle (which is the gold box in which the Lord resides in Holy Communion), that's the best place to pray – is to go before Jesus in Holy Communion in Eucharistic Adoration, and pray before the Lord. There's no better place to pray than kneeling down before the Blessed Sacrament, before the Lord in Holy Communion. What a wonderful thing that is to pray, before the Tabernacle, Christ Himself.

Now, *what are the different forms of prayer?* There are really three different forms of prayer: *vocal, mental, and contemplation*. Vocal prayer is prayers of the lips: praying Our Father's, Hail Mary's, Glory Be's. These are what we would call *formal prayers* or *formalized prayers* (praying in the words of other people). *Mental prayer* (also called *meditation*), and by meditation we don't mean, let's say, just sitting down in the lotus position humming, or like other, maybe Eastern religions would do, when you think of meditation, you might think of that kind of prayer. But meditation and mental prayer in a Christian standpoint means reflecting on the truths of God. It might mean taking a passage from the Bible and then meditating on it, reflecting on it, thinking about it. Mental prayer really is thinking in the presence of God, and talking to God in your own words, and communicating with Him – let's say, reading a passage about the Prodigal Son, and then you meditate upon that, and you think about that, and to apply it to your own life. Did any of you bring your Catechism tonight (the paperback Catechism)? You might want to write down paragraph 2700 through 2715. There's a whole section in the back of The Catechism called the "Expressions of

Prayer.” In the first part it says is Vocal Prayer, such as the Our Father, and then Meditation, it says the way to meditate in The Catechism, is to use books - for example, the Bible, especially the Gospels, other writings of the Church Fathers, Spirituality. What we do then, it says, we read a few sentences from there, and then we reflect upon it, think about it, and apply it to our own life. That’s called meditation.

But the highest form of prayer is *contemplation*. This is paragraph 2709. St. Teresa of Avila says, “Contemplation is, in my opinion, nothing else than a close sharing between friends. It means taking time frequently to be alone with Him, who we know loves us.” There was an example of this in the life of St. John Vianney. He walked into his church, and everyday he saw a man sitting before the Tabernacle, before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and he asked this elderly man, “What does he say when he talks to Jesus?” And the man says, “I just look at Jesus, and Jesus looks at me.” What’s so interesting about that is that’s contemplative prayer- it sort of goes beyond words. It’s not just a vocal prayer, or thinking about and meditating, and reflecting. Contemplation really is just being in the presence of God – and you might pass beyond thought. You might just be in the loving presence of God, gazing at the Tabernacle and Jesus, looking at Him, and Him looking at you. That’s contemplation. There’s a book about this called The Cloud of Unknowing. Some of you who are interested in prayer might want to read that, how God leads us from vocal prayer, through mental prayer, to contemplation, which is the highest form of prayer.

Even higher really is *infused contemplation*. This is when some of the saints could just be praying, and they’ll be taken up into ecstasy, and they’ll just be in the presence of God, completely filled with peace and happiness. They might not be saying anything, just like you can be with your spouse, and you’re just sitting next to each other, looking at a beautiful sunset. You don’t have to say anything, but your presence, just being in the presence of each other, it goes beyond words, and you love each other; you’re just in each other’s company, holding hands, and really that’s what contemplation is – it’s like holding hands with God, even without having to think about anything or say anything, you’re just gazing upon the beauty of God, and that’s contemplation. The Catechism talks about that. The whole purpose, again, of prayer, is to grow in union with God, to become one with the Lord, and to be united with God for all eternity. And the way we get to Heaven is through prayer. The more we pray here, the easier it will be to be with the Lord for all eternity.

In prayer, we also have, besides vocal prayer, which is, I guess, we would call formal prayers. The formal prayers would be using other people’s words when we pray, like the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be. We should also pray, obviously, from the heart, and make up our own prayers. And I would say that both of these are valid and necessary. It’s good to pray, memorize prayers, standard prayers, because sometimes the psalmist, and people who write these prayers from Scripture, like Psalm 51, and Psalm 23, for example, “The Lord is

my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.” We should pray those prayers too, but don’t neglect praying in your own words as well. It’s one nice thing, getting a Hallmark card, right, from somebody, which has beautiful sentiment. It’s another thing, when they write their own words on it, and both are good, and both are valid; but if all you gave God were Hallmark cards, you’d be missing something. And if all you gave Him was your own message, well you might not be able to say it as well as the Hallmark card or as the saints have said it. So pray with both. Use formal prayers, prayers of other people, but don’t neglect to write your own words and talk to God heart-to-heart.

Tonight we’ll finish up by talking about how to pray the *Rosary*, which is the *Prayer of the Gospel*. The Rosary really is a way to meditate upon the life of Christ. And always remember that the Rosary is a Christ-centered prayer. Jesus is the very focus of the whole Rosary. Even the Hail Mary, at the very heart of the Hail Mary, is the word Jesus. “Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.” He’s right at the heart. “Holy Mary, mother of God,” (which is again, mother of Jesus), “pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.”

The way to pray the Rosary is very easy. It’s primarily an Our Father, 10 Hail Mary’s, and a Glory Be. Now, at the first part of the Rosary, we actually say the Apostle’s Creed. You make the Sign of the Cross – “In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” and it’s customary, many people, you know, will kiss the Crucifix. You hold the Crucifix, and you say the Apostle’s Creed – “I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth,” etc. This next bead is the Our Father bead, and then three Hail Mary’s. We usually say these three for an increase in Faith, Hope, and Charity. And then this next bead is the Glory Be. All of you hopefully have the pamphlet. That will take you step-by-step.

After that, we announce the *First Mystery*. There are currently four sets of Mysteries – *the Joyful Mysteries*, *the Luminous Mysteries*, *the Sorrowful Mysteries*, and *the Glorious Mysteries*. For example, take a look at your sheet, and you’ll see, let’s say, the fifth Sorrowful Mystery, is the Crucifixion. What we would do then is we try to mediate and think about the Crucifixion. You picture it in your mind. You think about Mary standing at the foot of Jesus’ Cross. You think about John the Evangelist next to her, and you see Jesus on the Cross in your mind. If you saw the movie [The Passion](#), it will really bring the Rosary alive for you. You’ll think that you see the two thieves, the one thief on the one side, the one thief on the other, and then you see Jesus on the Cross, dying for our sins, and blood dripping down from Him. And what you do then, is as you are thinking about that, picturing that in your mind, you then say the Our Father, the 10 Hail Mary’s, and the Glory Be. That’s called a Mystery, or an event, in the Life of Christ.

The Rosary is 20 events in the life of Jesus and his Mother that we meditate upon. The Rosary is the way to really get into the Scriptures, to picture that scene in your mind. Take a look at the third Joyful Mystery, the Nativity. When you picture that in your mind, sometimes it does help to look at the photograph of it, or the picture of it. You think of the baby Jesus, and them trying to find a place for Him to be born. They finally find the cave. There's animals in the cave. They place the baby Jesus in the manger. And it really takes ten Hail Mary's to reflect upon what it was like to see Jesus in that cold, damp stable, and the fact that He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, wrapped in rags, and you see Joseph and the Blessed Mother kneeling by His side, and then the Angels are outside singing Hosanna to the Highest, and the shepherds come, and the Wise Men come, and so it takes ten Hail Mary's to get into that. See, the Rosary has two parts – it has a body and a soul. The body of the Rosary is the prayers (the Our Father's, the Hail Mary's), but the soul of the Rosary, the really heart of the Rosary, is the meditating upon the Mysteries.

Let me just spend a few more minutes explaining a little bit about the history of the Rosary, and how we can pray it well. Originally the Rosary had 150 Hail Mary's, and that was based upon the 150 Psalms in the Old Testament. There was a time when a lot of people obviously were illiterate (they could not read the Psalms), and so what they would do is they would make beads, and for every Psalm that would be read to them, they would listen, and maybe move their fingers, and then go through the Psalms, 150 of them. For the last almost 800 years, there were 15 Mysteries in the Rosary – the Joyful Mysteries, the Sorrowful Mysteries, and the Glorious Mysteries. See, each of the sets of Mysteries has 50 Hail Mary's, so the 15 was 150. Now, Pope John Paul II, I believe under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, added five more Mysteries to the Rosary, giving us another 50 Hail Mary's. Now we have 200 Hail Mary's in the entire Rosary. And, if you take a look at the handout, you'll see that it's the whole life of Christ. If a person were to pray the whole Rosary every day, they would get the entire life of Christ that they would be reflecting upon and thinking about. Notice that the Rosary really is Christo-centric; Christ is the very heart and soul of the Rosary, because the Rosary really is the Gospel. And what is the Gospel? The Gospel's not a something; the Gospel is a someone. The Gospel is Christ. By praying the Rosary, we're praying the life of Christ, which is praying Christ Himself. And as we begin to pray the Rosary more and more, we begin to get to know Jesus better, because we're praying Jesus, and He is becoming really part of our heart and part of our soul, and we begin to interiorize the life of Christ within us.

When we look at the Joyful Mysteries, we see that they're focused upon how Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit; when Mary went to visit her cousin Elizabeth, and John the Baptist was sanctified; and the birth of Jesus; His Presentation in the Temple; and the finding of Jesus in the Temple. One of the secrets to praying the Joyful Mysteries is ask Mary, "Mary, how did it feel? What was it like when the angel Gabriel came to you and asked

you to become the Mother of God? Mary, what was it like to visit your cousin Elizabeth? Mary, how did it feel to give birth to Jesus, in a cave in Bethlehem? Mary, what was it like when Simeon took the baby Jesus and said, 'Now I can die in peace.' Mary, what was going on in your heart when you lost Jesus for three days in the Temple? Mary, what was it like to lose Jesus for three days?" Imagine that. In each of these Mysteries, in the Joyful Mysteries we ask Mary what was it like, how did it feel?

In the Luminous and Sorrowful Mysteries, we ask Jesus, "Jesus, what was it like to be baptized in the Jordan by John? To change water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana? To be transfigured to institute the Eucharist? Jesus, what was it like to sweat blood in the Agony in the Garden, to have all the sins of the world come down upon You? Jesus, what was it like, how did it feel to be scourged at the pillar, to be crowned with thorns, to carry the Cross, to be crucified?" See, the Rosary really is, what I call the Summary of the Gospels. It's our New Testament Cliff Notes. You remember back in college, you used Cliff Notes to give you the gist of the book. The Rosary is the gist of the New Testament – it's the heart and soul of the Gospels.

And then in the Glorious Mysteries, you ask the early Christians what was it like. "Early Christians, what was it like to have Jesus risen from the dead, and to see Him ascend to Heaven, and to have the Holy Spirit come down upon you, and to know that Mary was taken up into Heaven, and that she's crowned as Queen of Heaven and Earth?"

All the Mysteries of the Rosary are found in the Bible. Of course, all of them are very easy to find in the Bible. Sometimes the last two, the Assumption, and the Coronation, you have to go to other passages. For example, the Book of Revelation, Chapter 12, when John sees the woman clothed with the crown of 12 stars. That would be the Assumption and Coronation of Mary. That's not directly mentioned in Scripture, but it can be induced and inferred from Scripture, based upon the Book of Revelation, in the vision that John has.

The whole Gospel really is the life of Christ, and as we meditate upon it, we get to know Jesus better. So many times we read the Bible, but do we pray the Bible? This is how you pray the Bible. This is how you pray the life of Christ. It's one thing to open your Bible and to read about "Jesus carries the Cross." It's another thing to take a couple of minutes and try to picture Jesus carrying the Cross, and Simon helping Him, and Jesus falls the first time, and Jesus falls again. The Rosary is so transforming; it's so powerful, because you are meditating and thinking and dwelling upon the Word of God, which is the inspired Word of the Holy Spirit. The Bible is the inspired Word of God, and the Rosary is powerful because you're meditating upon the inspired Word of God, and at the same time, you're saying these inspired prayers – the Our Father, and the Hail Mary.

Take a look at the very back page of this insert, and you'll see the Pope's reflections upon Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries, and these are the prayers that make up the Rosary: the Sign of the Cross, the Apostle's Creed, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be, and the Hail Holy Queen. The Our Father is the most perfect prayer ever written, because who invented the Our Father? It was Christ. And He said, "When you pray, pray Abba (Daddy), who art in Heaven, hallowed be Your name." In other words, may we hold Your name sacred and holy, that we never use it in vain, lightly, or carelessly. "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us each day our daily bread." And then we pray, "Forgive me my sins, as I'm willing to forgive those who sin against me, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

The Our Father is said five times during the praying of the Mysteries, and again the Mysteries are divided up into four sets of five Mysteries. How long does it take to pray the Rosary? About 15 minutes. If you said the whole Rosary, you're talking about an hour. The Pope prays the whole Rosary every day. He prays all 200 Hail Mary's, all the Mysteries of the Rosary. And again, the Our Father's and the Hail Mary's, they're like the background music. You know, if you're watching a movie, you have the soundtrack in the back, but you're looking at the scene; the Our Father's and the Hail Mary's are like the background music, and the heart of the Mysteries is thinking about it, and picturing it in your mind. That's where it's the most powerful. Now, is it okay just to pray the Rosary, and just say the Our Father's and the Hail Mary's? Sure, you can just focus on the Our Father's and the Hail Mary's, but you'd be missing the best part of the Rosary, which is trying to picture the scene. Think about the Agony in the Garden. Think about the Crucifixion. Think about the Resurrection.

Then the prayer, the Hail Mary. The first part of the Hail Mary comes from the angel Gabriel, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women." Which is amazing, out of all the billions of women ever created, Mary is the most blessed. "And blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, Jesus." Again, Jesus is the heart of the Hail Mary, and the Rosary. "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners." When? Right now, and at the hour of our death. The two times we need prayer – right now, and at the hour of our death. When we say one Rosary, we're storing up for ourselves 50 prayers at the hour of our death. Yes, we're praying right now 50 times for Mary to pray for us. Is it okay to ask Mary to pray for us? Of course – just as I can pray for you, and you can pray for me, right? And you can meet somebody, and say "Oh, please pray for me; pray for my son; pray for my daughter." Just as you ask people to pray for you, so we're asking Mary to pray for us. We don't worship Mary; we don't adore Mary. We're asking her to pray for us, and to go to Jesus with us, and for us, just as she did at the wedding feast of Cana. And she said, "Jesus, they have no more wine." Jesus worked His first miracle, because Mary asked Him to. But, we'll get into the topic of Mary in a whole class coming up next month. Suffice it to say, we say, "Mary, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death." Fifty times we're saying,

“Mary, pray for me now”; but also 50 times we’re asking her to pray for us, at the hour of our death, which is when we need prayers especially, as we’re passing from this world into the next world.

I like to consider the Rosary like David’s sling in the Old Testament. Many of you are familiar with the story of David and Goliath. Goliath was huge, with armor, and shield, and sword. All David had was a slingshot. He had picked up five stones from the creek – sort of reminds us of the five decades of the Rosary. In fact, each of these is called a decade (for the 10 Hail Mary’s). A Rosary has five decades. The entire Rosary has 20 decades. David picked up these five stones, and with one of them he was able to kill Goliath. Now, we have Goliaths in our modern society. We have terrorism. We have all sorts of crime, and immorality. What can we do to fight against all the evils of the world? Right here – the prayer of the Rosary. The Our Father’s, the Hail Mary’s, and then meditating upon the Bible. I highly recommend that you begin by praying the Rosary as you begin this journey to the Lord, to get closer to Jesus, and to the Heavenly Father.

If you don’t have enough time to pray the whole five decades every day, start out with a decade a day. “A decade a day keeps the devil away, as I always say.” Pray a decade. It’ll take you about two minutes, probably three minutes, to pray a decade, which is one Our Father, 10 Hail Mary’s, and the Glory Be. If you can, do it with the family. Right after dinner say, “Let’s pray a decade of the Rosary.” And then, you can just go through this entire booklet, and say, “Tonight, let’s think about the Agony in the Garden,” and you say the Our Father, 10 Hail Mary’s, and Glory Be. The next day, think about the Scourging at the Pillar; the next day, the Crowning with Thorns; the next day, the Carrying of the Cross. The way it’s recommended is that on Mondays we say the Joyful Mysteries, on Tuesdays the Sorrowful Mysteries, Wednesday the Glorious Mysteries, Thursday the Luminous Mysteries, Friday the Sorrowful Mysteries (because of Good Friday), Saturday the Joyful Mysteries, and then Sunday, the Glorious Mysteries again. But, during Lent, I like to say the Sorrowful Mysteries every day. During Advent, I say the Joyful Mysteries every day. During the Easter season, I say the Glorious Mysteries every single day.

One thing it will do, it will solve all your problems – did you know that? See, prayer will solve all your problems. Whatever problems you have – financial problems, job problems, relationship problems, marriage problems, whatever problems you have, God can solve your problems through the power of prayer. And really, the greatest prayers we have in the Church, the most important prayer we have in the Church, is the Mass. When you come to Mass on Sundays, or on weekdays, the Mass is the greatest prayer. If somebody says, “Well, what’s the most important prayer in the Church?, it’s the Mass; because the Mass is Jesus offering Himself to the Father – it’s when we receive Jesus in Holy Communion.

The second greatest prayer in the Church is called the *Liturgy of the Hours*. The Liturgy of the Hours is also called the *Divine Office*, hours referring to the different hours of the day: morning prayer, daytime prayer, evening prayer or night prayer. Every priest prays this every single day; every nun prays this every day. You pray five times a day. You pray morning prayer, daytime prayer, evening prayer, night prayer, and the Office of Readings. These prayers are divided up. They're really the Psalms from the Old Testament, and then other prayers, and it's divided up. The Pope prays this every day. It takes about 45 minutes to an hour every day to pray these prayers, and every priest and every nun has to pray these prayers every day. So, we read the Bible for at least 45 minutes each day, which is what it takes to pray. But you can divide it up. Morning prayer takes 10 or 15 minutes. Evening prayer takes 10 or 15 minutes. Daytime and night prayer take about 5 minutes. Office of Readings takes about 10 to 15 minutes. This is called the Official Prayer of the Church, and if you really wanted to again deepen your prayer life you might want to consider learning more about the Liturgy of the Hours, and to pray those Psalms from the Old Testament. After that, comes the Rosary. But I think the reason why we focus on the Rosary so much is because it's primarily just the priests and the nuns who pray the Liturgy of the Hours, because it takes, you know, 45 minutes or so to pray every day, even though a lot of lay people are also praying the Liturgy of the Hours. I would recommend it if you could get a copy of this and learn how to pray that.

The reason why we focus on the Rosary is because it's something very quick, and very easy to learn. You can actually say it in your car when you're driving. Again, just don't close your eyes and don't meditate too much, you know. Well actually, one of the things you could do is you could get the tapes or CD's with the Rosary on them, and you can actually listen to it, and say the prayers along with it. We actually have copies of the CD out there if any of you want to pick that up.

Begin to pray the Rosary every day, and hopefully at Easter somebody will give you a really nice Rosary as a gift. But in the meantime, you can use these sort of, handmade, inexpensive ones. You will find it just an incredibly beautiful prayer. Tonight, let us together pray the Hail Mary, as we ask our Blessed Mother to lead each one of you closer to her Son, Jesus, and to have a more intimate relationship with the Lord.