

# Prayer - Handouts



## RCIA Handouts:

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# Prayer: The Stairway to Heaven

“He dreamed that a stairway was set up on the ground with its top reaching to heaven; angels of God were ascending and descending on it.” Gen. 28:12-13

## Definition of Prayer:

Lifting our hearts and minds to God. Prayer is conversation with God.

“Prayer is the key of Heaven.” – St. Augustine

“Prayer is a royal gate through which we enter into the heart of God.”

- Ven. Louis of Granada

“Prayer is union with God.” – St. John Vianney

## The Four Main Purposes of Prayer:

1. Adoration: Proper worship of God due to Him as our creator, redeemer, and sanctifier.
2. Thanksgiving: Gratefulness to God for His spiritual and material gifts to us. Thus, in prayer we thank God for our life, our faith, our family, etc.
3. Reparation: To obtain pardon for our sins and remission of their punishment. In prayer we remember that we are sinners, we are sorry for our sins and ask forgiveness, and we seek to do penance for our sins through prayer. St. Ambrose says: “When prayer is poured forth, sins are covered.”
4. Petition: In prayer we can ask God for what we need, both for our body and for our soul, for spiritual and material goods, for ourselves and for others.

## The Seven Main Qualities of Prayer are:

1. Devotion: Putting our hearts into our prayers. “These people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.” (Matthew 15:8)
2. Fervor: An intense desire to serve and love God through our prayer. “And falling into agony He prayed the more earnestly. And His sweat became as drops of blood running down upon the ground.” (Luke 22:43, 44)
3. Perseverance: We need to persevere in our prayer and not give up prayer so quickly. We need to continue to pray everyday. Christ says: “Which of you shall have a friend and shall go to him in the middle of the night and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves’ ... I say to you, although he will not get up and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him all he needs.” (Luke 11:5-10/See also: Luke 18:1-8, Matt. 24:13)  
“The deceiver knows that if a soul perseveres in practicing prayer it will be lost to him.” - St. Teresa of Avila

“By humble and faithful prayer, the soul acquires, with time and perseverance, every virtue.” - St. Catherine of Sienna

We should pray at least 15 minutes everyday otherwise our relationship with God would not develop. Since God is the most important Person in our life we should speak to Him everyday. We spend far more time each day simply eating or in recreation and entertainment. Our soul is more important than our body. And God is certainly more important than anyone or anything else in our life, so He deserves to be a priority. Concerning how often we should pray scripture says: - pray always (Luke 18:1) – pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17) – pray at all times. (Eph. 6:18 and Acts 6:4)

4. Humility: “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” (James 4:6. See also: Matt. 6:1-6, Luke 18:9-14)
5. Attention: How can we expect God to listen to our prayer if we are not paying attention to it? (See: Matt. 6:7, 8) Some degree of involuntary distraction in prayer is inevitable, but we should try to minimize it. St. Edmund says: “It is better to say one Our Father fervently and devoutly than a thousand with no devotion and full of distraction.”
6. Faith: “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” (Hebrews 11:6) “Those who trust in you cannot be put to shame.” (Daniel 3:40) “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” (Matt. 19:26)
7. Right Priority: When we pray we need to have the right priority, namely that of God’s will over ours. Jesus prayed: “Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not as I will, but as you will.” (Lk. 22:42) Does God always answer our prayers? **Yes**. There are three answers to prayer – yes, no, and wait. No prayer is unanswered, and no prayer is unheard. St. Thomas teaches that God does not give us what we ask for in prayer if it is not favorable to our salvation. We must ask for what is in keeping with God’s will for us. Christ teaches:

“... Do not be anxious, saying, ‘what shall we eat? or, ‘what are we to wear?’ (for after all these things the unbelievers seek); for your Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be given you besides.” (Matt. 6:31-33) “For what does it profit a man if he gain the whole world, but suffer the loss of his own soul?” (Matt. 16:26)

We must trust in God's wisdom, and not in our own foolishness. St. Augustine says: “We ought to be persuaded that what God refuses to our prayer, He grants to our salvation. So we should understand that though God gives not what we wish, he gives what is for our good. When you are ill, you may ask for something that is bad for you, which the physician knows to be so. Suppose you ask for cold water: if it is good for you, the doctor will give it at once; if it is not, he will refuse it, but that does not mean that he does not hearken.

In denying you your wish, he has hearkened to you for your health. So let charity, brethren, be in you: let charity be in you, and you need have no care. Even when your request is not granted, you are heard, though you know it not. He who faithfully prays to God for the necessities of this life is both mercifully heard, and mercifully not heard. For the physician knows better than the sick man what is good for the disease."

### **Prayer before the Blessed Sacrament:**

Among the best places to pray is in a church where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in the tabernacle. Praying in the presence of Christ Himself helps set our hearts on fire with the love of God. (See Matt. 26:40, 41)

### **The Benefits of Prayer:**

Increased union with God, grace, faith, love, and help to resist temptation and keep the commandments. "Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation." (Matt. 26:41) Prayer is opposed to sin. It is virtually impossible to persevere in habitual mortal sin and persevere in prayer. One must cancel out the other, either you will persevere in prayer, or you will persevere in sin. You cannot persevere in both.

### **Concerning the Power of Prayer the Scripture teaches:**

"The fervent petition of a holy man is powerful indeed." (James 5:16-18. See also: 2 Kings 20:1-6, Joshua 10:12-14, Daniel 6) Elijah was only a man like us, yet he prayed earnestly that it would not rain and no rain fell on the land for three years and six months. When he prayed again, the sky burst forth with rain and the land produced its crop.

### **Concerning the Power of Prayer the Saints teach:**

"God governs the world, but prayer governs God Himself!" – St. John Chrysostom

"I know something stronger than God: the man who prays. He makes God say: 'Yes,' when He had said 'No!'" – St. John Vianney

"He who prays, is saved; he who prays not, is damned!" – St. Alphonsus

"As our body – cannot live without nourishment, so our soul cannot spiritually be kept alive without prayer." - St. Augustine

"The Rosary is the most divine of prayers after the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass." – St. Charles of Borromeo

(Written by Rev. H.T. Burke)

# Why Pray the Rosary?

**What is prayer?** Talking to God; lifting our hearts and minds to God. “Prayer is the key of Heaven.” - St. Augustine

**Why do we pray?** So we can go to Heaven. St. Augustine says: “As our body cannot live without nourishment, so our soul cannot spiritually be kept alive without prayer.” St. Alphonsus says: “He who prays, is saved; he who prays not, is damned!” Prayer is powerful. (Jam. 5:16-18, 2 Kings 20:1-6)

**Who prays?** People who want to be happy forever with God in Heaven.

**When do we pray?** Anytime day or night.

**Where do we pray?** At home in our room (Mt. 6:1-6), at Church with our family (Mt. 21:13) or anywhere. Through prayer we can sanctify idle moments, we can pray while walking in a park, riding in a car or bus and give that extra free time to God.

**Does God always answer our prayers?** Yes. There are three answers to prayer – yes, no, and wait. No prayer is unanswered, and no prayer is unheard. St. Thomas: “God does not give us what we ask for in prayer if it is not favorable to our salvation.” We must ask for what is in keeping with God’s will for us. “But seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be given you besides.” (Mt. 6:31-33) “For what does it profit a man, if he gains the whole world, but suffers the loss of his own soul?” (Mt. 16:26) God takes care of our needs, but not our greeds.

**What are the qualities of good prayer?** Attention (Mt. 6:7, 8), Faith (Heb. 11:6), Humility (Jam. 4:6, Mt. 6:1-6, Lk. 18:9-14), Right Priority (Lk. 22:42), Devotion (Mt. 15:8), Fervor (Lk. 22:43, 44), Perseverance (Lk. 11:5-10, Lk. 18:1-8, Mt. 24:13), and Frequency. We should pray at least 15 minutes everyday. In this life we prepare to be with God for eternity. Since God is the most important Person in our life we should speak to Him everyday. We spend far more time each day simply eating or in recreation and entertainment. Our soul is more important than our body. And God is certainly more important than anyone or anything else in our life, so He deserves a priority of time. Concerning how often we should pray, scripture says: pray always. (Lk. 18:1, 1 Thess. 5:17, Eph. 6:18, Acts 6:4)

**Why does God wish us to pray to Mary?** We pray to Mary because she is the Mother of God and her prayers are very powerful. (Jn. 2:1-11) When we pray the Hail Mary we combine worship of God and honor of Mary. We combine both our prayers to God and her prayers to God. We do not worship Mary, we only worship God. When we pray to Mary we honor her as the Mother of God, and as

our Spiritual Mother. (Rev. 12:17, Jn. 19:26, 27) When we need help most we not only go directly to God by ourselves, we ask others to pray for us and with us. When we pray the Rosary we have Mary, the Holy Mother of God, pray to God and for us and with us. God wishes us to honor Mary because of her special role in God's plan of salvation. He wished her to contribute to the redemption of man, just as much as Eve contributed to the fall of man. As a father is filled with joy at the love and respect others give to his children, so too is God the Father overjoyed and seeks for us to honor His daughter Mary, the mother of His Son Jesus.

**Why should we pray the Rosary?** Because it has been used and encouraged for centuries by the greatest saints and Popes, and because of its good effects – like a good tree it bears good fruit. (Mt. 7:17) Also, because of the 15 Promises of Mary to Christians who pray it (see below) and because she appeared at Lourdes and Fatima to ask us to pray the Rosary. The Rosary has helped and changed thousands of lives, why not give it a chance to help yours?

**How do we pray the Rosary?** By meditating on the 15 mysteries, by praying ten Hail Mary's on the beads, and one Our Father and the Glory Be at each mystery.

**How do we meditate on the Mysteries of the Rosary?** By using our imagination to picture the mystery occurring right in front to us. Then we keep this image fresh in our minds as we say the Hail Mary prayers. As we meditate we repeat our prayers, as Jesus did. (Mt. 26:44) In the Rosary we basically say, "Jesus and Mary, I love you" over again and again. As we do, we grow in our love of God. Saying, "I love you" never grows old. When we truly love, it just grows deeper.

**How should we start to pray the Rosary on a daily basis?** By praying just a decade, one mystery with 10 Hail Mary's each day until we feel we want to pray more.

(Written by Rev. H.T. Burke)



# The Fifteen Promises of Mary to Christians Who Recite the Rosary

1. Whoever shall faithfully serve me by the recitation of the Rosary shall receive special graces.
2. I promise my special protection and the greatest graces to all those who shall recite the Rosary.
3. The Rosary will be a powerful armor against hell. It will destroy vice, decrease sin and defeat heresies.
4. The Rosary will cause virtue and good works to flourish and will obtain the abundant mercy of God. It will withdraw the hearts of individuals from the love of the world and its vanities. The Rosary will lift them to the desire of eternal things. Oh, that people sanctify themselves by this means.
5. Those who recommend themselves to me by the recitation of the Rosary shall not perish.
6. Those who recite the Rosary devoutly, applying themselves to the consideration of the mysteries, shall never be conquered by misfortune. God will not chastise them in His justice; they shall not perish by an unprovided death. If they are just, they shall remain in the grace of God and become worthy of eternal life.
7. Whoever shall have a true devotion for the Rosary shall not die without the sacraments of the Church.
8. Those who faithfully recite the Rosary shall have during their life and at their death, the light of God and the plenitude of His graces. At the moment of death, they shall participate in the merits of the saints in paradise.
9. I shall deliver from purgatory those who have been devoted to the Rosary.
10. Faithful devotees of the Rosary shall merit a high degree of glory in heaven.
11. You shall obtain all you ask of me by recitation of the Rosary.
12. All those who propagate the holy Rosary shall be aided by me in their necessities.
13. I have obtained from my divine Son that all the advocates of the Rosary shall have for intercessors, the entire celestial court during their life and at the hour of death.
14. All who recite the Rosary are my children, and brothers and sisters of my only Son, Jesus Christ.
15. Devotion to my Rosary is a great sign of predestination

- Given by Our Lady to St. Dominic and Blessed Alan

## 6 Steps in Doing a Meditation

1. **Preparation:** Choose a regular time and place to do the meditation. Choose your passage for meditation the night before. Make sure that the passage is not too long or you may end up just “reading” the passage instead of meditating on it.
2. **Recollection:** If you do nothing else before you start the actual meditation, you must do this. Begin with the sign of the cross, and prayer to the Holy Spirit. Then calm your mind. Become still in both mind and body. Quiet your entire being ... remember, you are bringing ALL of yourself to God. Gather the fragmented parts of yourself (the mom, the wife, the teacher, the grocery shopper), go to what Christ calls “your inner room,” and enter the part of yourself that essentially nothing, except in relation to God. Make yourself aware of Christ’s presence. The catechism tells us that we must “gather up the heart, recollect our whole being .... We let our masks fall and turn our hearts back to the Lord who loves us. (2711) When you have become recollected, make acts of faith, hope and love. These can be the formal prayers that you learned in your youth, but it is better if they are the spontaneous prayers of your own heart. “Lord, I believe that you are here with me, help me in my doubt.” “Lord, You are infinitely greater than anything I can imagine, help me to trust in you completely.” “Lord, I love you more than anyone or anything, help me to love others the way you have loved me.” Ask Our Lord to help you to pray well, for the grace to resist distraction and temptation during this time with Him.
3. **Reading:** Slowly read the text you’ve selected. Then read it again, this time stopping at the end of each sentence, trying to enter into the meaning of the passage. If you are using the Gospels, place yourself in the scene with Christ, his disciples, the crowd. Who do you identify with ... the Pharisees? The sick in need of healing? The confused apostles? Ask yourself, “What is Christ saying here? What is He doing? What is the reaction of the people there?” Try to enter into the meaning of the passage. Reflect in this way until something strikes you ...
4. **Dialogue with Christ:** Talk with Christ about the passage; wait in silence to hear what He says to you. Listen for the still, small voice. If you don’t feel like you’re really **talking** to Him, remind yourself that He really is dwelling within you, that he is more real than anything else. Ask Him for the grace to know His presence. What will you feel? What will you hear? It will be as uniquely varied as the people in this room. You may experience joy, remorse, gratitude, love. Or you may not **feel** anything, but experience a movement of the will, a conviction about something. You may be moved interiorly, as the apostles were when they met Christ on the road to Emmaus ... “Were our hearts not burning within us?” This is

how you should feel during our meditation. It may not happen every time, but if it never happens, there is something amiss. The ultimate question of the meditation is “Lord, what do you want me to do?” Ask this question in all humility, and then listen quietly for his answer ... he will not let it go unanswered.

5. **Make a Resolution:** As the meditation ends, you should be changed in some way. You may have encountered a deeper understanding of Christ’s love or his mercy, his teachings or his life; or you may be inspired to change yourself in response to something Christ has revealed to you during the meditation. You may come away from the meditation with a greater realization and understanding of some aspect of the faith. A resolution should naturally occur to you as a result of these changes, so you should make a specific, concrete resolution for the day, based on your lights, insights, or convictions from the meditation. If you got nothing at all from the whole thing, then make a resolution to try it all over again tomorrow, asking the Lord’s help not to become anxious or discouraged.
6. **Thanksgiving:** Lastly, give thanks to the Lord for whatever lights you received during the meditation. Even if you received no insight or joy, rejoice in the fact that God has allowed you to be with Him for a few minutes.

## Spiritual Aspirations

The following brief prayers to be said quickly throughout the day, as you tend to your regular duties. They are a means of keeping in more constant contact with Our Lord. Choose the ones you like, or make up your own, and say them often with tenderness and love.

O God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I adore You with profound reverence.

My God, I love You!

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Holy Father, I love You and I adore You.

Jesus, I love You! Help me to be good.

Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like Yours.

Infant Jesus, meek and mild, make me like a little child.

Holy Spirit, give me Your wisdom and love.

Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You. (John 21:17)

I believe; help my unbelief! (Mk. 9:23)

Jesus, You must increase ... I must decrease. (John 3:30)

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (Phil. 4:13)

My Lord and My God! (John 20:28)

For those who love God, all things work together unto good. (Rom. 3:28)

A clean heart create in me, O God! (Psalms 50:12)

Lord, what do You want me to do? (Acts 9:6)

Jesus, give me Your patience in trials!

Jesus, give me Your peace.

O God, increase my faith, my hope and my love.

My crucified Jesus, help me to crucify myself!

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I love You! Save Souls!

O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to Thee!

Mary, my Mother, I love You! Please pray for me!

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

My Holy Guardian Angel, I love you! Pray for me!

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You; because by Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the whole world.

Memento Mori! (Remember Death)

Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! (Luke 18:38-39)

O my Jesus, forgive us our sins.

Iesus Solus! (Jesus Alone)

Deo Gratias! (Thanks be to God)

Benedictus Deus in Saecula! (Blessed be God Forever)

Into Your hands Lord, I commend my spirit! (Psalms 31:5a)

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, assist me in my last agony.

All for Jesus through Mary! (Say this when suffering)

Jesus, bring all souls to Heaven!

Holy Mary, Saint Joseph, my Guardian Angel, pray for me.

Before receiving Holy Communion:

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the living God, by the will of the Father and the work of the Holy Spirit, Your death brought life to the world. By Your holy body and blood, free me from all my sins and from every evil. Keep me faithful to Your teachings and never let me be departed from You.  
Amen.