

Prayer 101 – Session 1. Prayer as a Cry of Recognition and Love

Prayer Prompts based on Session 1

Each day we will have a quotation from the Catechism, Scripture, a Church document or a saint to pray with and reflect on. After reflecting on each of the bullet points, you may wish to see what prayer is prompted in you. It could be a prayer of thanksgiving, or repentance, a prayer of adoration and praise, or a prayer of petition. It could also be a prayer expressing your disappointment or anger or grief. Whatever comes to you, give it to God. He already knows what you are thinking and feeling. Let Him come into every aspect of your life.

Day 1

Pray with the following quotation from St. Thérèse of Lisieux:

“For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 2558)

- If someone asked you to describe prayer in a couple of lines, how would you express what prayer is for you?
- Prayer is a cry of recognition and of love for St. Thérèse. Spend some time reflecting on what it means to be known and loved by God.
- Prayer embraces both trial and joy. Have you experienced this in your own life?

Day 2

Pray with Psalm 139:

“¹ O LORD, you know me: you have scrutinised me. ² You know when I sit and when I rise; beforehand, you discern my thoughts. ³ You observe my activities and times of rest; you are familiar with all my ways. ⁴ Before a word is formed in my mouth, you know what it is all about, O LORD. ⁵ From front to back you hedge me round, shielding me with your protecting hand. ⁶ Your knowledge leaves me astounded; it is too high for me to reach.” (Psalm 139:1-6)

- Spend some time reflecting on the fact that God knows everything about you. Your hopes, fears, dreams, worries, sufferings, joys, thoughts etc.
- The Lord guards you shields you with His protecting hand. Where have you seen evidence of this in your life?
- When the mystery of God leaves you astounded or full of awe, how do you pray to God?

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Day 3

We continue praying with Psalm 139:

“⁷ Where else could I go from your Spirit? Where could I flee from your presence? ⁸ You are there, if I ascend the heavens; you are there, if I descend to the depths. ⁹ If I ride on the wings of the dawn, and settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰ even there, your hand shall guide me, and your right hand shall hold me safely. ¹¹ Shall I say, “Let darkness hide me, I prefer the night as my light?” ¹² But darkness, for you, is not dark; and night, for you, shines as the day.” (Psalm 139:7-12)

- Have you ever tried to run from God? Did you feel His presence even when you tried to hide from Him?
- Are there areas of darkness in your life or in your heart that you would rather not give to God? Do you ever think that God tolerates you or loves you because He has to, but He doesn't really love you personally because you have sinned too much? God's mercy and love reaches into the depths of our hearts and enlightens our darkness. He already knows you; let Him love you.
- God guides us throughout every moment of our day. Spend a short time throughout this day, turning to God and praying. It could be as simple as saying the Holy Name of 'Jesus' before turning to a task or meeting someone etc.

Day 4

We continue praying with Psalm 139:

“¹³ It was you who formed my inmost part and knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I thank you for these wonders you have done, and my heart praises you, for your marvellous deeds. ¹⁵ Even my bones were known to you when I was being formed in secret, fashioned in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶ Your eyes saw the course of my days.” (Psalm 139:13-16)

- So often in life we are so busy with our petitions for God's help that we forget to thank and praise God. Spend some time thanking God and praising Him for your creation. Thank God for your life. Spend some time thanking God for everything in your life: e.g. Thank you God that I woke up this morning. Thank you that I could get out of bed. Thank you that my hip pain is not too bad etc.
- Thank God for your parents. Each soul is created directly by God, but your parents participated in your creation with our Creator.
- God sees the course of your days. Entrust your life to Him and hand over any need to control the future.

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Day 5

Pray with Jesus' words in the Gospel according to St. John:

“³ For this is eternal life: to know you, the only true God, and the One you sent, Jesus Christ.” (John 17:3)

- How can you come to know God the Father better?
- How can you come to know Jesus, the Son of God better?
- How can you come to know the Holy Spirit better?

Day 6

Pray with these two quotations from the Gospel according to St. Matthew:

“²³ The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and he will be called Emmanuel, which means: God-with-us.” (Matthew 1:23)

“²⁰ I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” (Matthew 28:20)

- Jesus is God-with-us. Do you trust in God's presence in your daily life?
- Look back on the week so far. Where have you seen God active in your life this week?
- Jesus promises to be with us always. How can you increase your trust in His promise?

Day 7

Look back on the quotations you have been praying with this week.

- What quotation spoke most strongly to you?
- What is the abiding thought or over-arching theme to your prayer this week?
- What do you sense the Lord is teaching you through this?

Scripture quotations are taken from the Christian Community Bible – Catholic Pastoral Edition.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church is available online at:
<https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/INDEX.HTM>