

The Stages of Prayer

A guide to understanding where you are,
and what you can do to improve your prayer life.

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart;
and you will find rest for your selves.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”
(Matthew 11:28-30)

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All Scripture quotes from this document are from the New American Bible.
Scripture quotations contained in quotes from Catechism of the Catholic Church, are adapted
from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, and the New Revised Standard Version.

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Forward

Prayer. The mere word conjures up a variety of images. Oftentimes, I think, the word makes something that is simple sound more complex than it really is. Prayer simply means being in conversation with God – talking to Him and listening to Him, and He *does* speak, in a multitude of ways.

Prayer is the means by which we begin, develop and maintain a relationship with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And, by and large, we establish a relationship with God the same way we establish a friendship with any other person. How does one get a friendship with someone else? Some basic rules apply, to be sure. First and foremost, we spend time with that person. We listen. We talk. We share common likes and dislikes. And, of course, we might ask for help from that person. But if all we ever do with that person is ask for help, than it isn't much of a friendship, or even a relationship. So it is with God. While Jesus asks us to ask, seek, and knock, He doesn't mean that we only come to God when we're in trouble or need. He desires more. Think of that: *God desires a friendship with you!*

You and I were created to know God. At a very precise moment in time, even before time, God, out of His great goodness and sheer generosity, decided to create you and me out of nothing. We need not exist. We exist, quite simply, because He wants us to be. And He wants us to be because He wants us to know Him. This is the ultimate end of life. Jesus says this quite clearly in John 17:3: “*And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.*” In other words, eternal life, the fullness of life, comes from a relationship with God who loves us more than we could ever dare to imagine, as is proven not only by the fact that we are reading this right now, but by the fact that out of His love for us He has become one of us and suffered, died and risen *for us*. And a relationship needs communication. And in the Christian life we call that communication with God “prayer.”

Thus, this great little book by Tony. It is intended to help anyone either begin, or develop, or maintain a deeper friendship with God. In the pages that follow are some very practical tips, great devotions that have helped people pray for centuries, and resources to keep us occupied for the rest of our lives. I'm sure you will find what Tony has compiled and written to be helpful for your life, because it points us to the reason for your life to begin with: God.

Fr. John Riccardo
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August 2009

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Preface

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

"Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples." (Luke 11:1)

The idea for this guide came to me after I had evolved in my own prayer life. Over a period of many years, I had progressed through many of these stages. Then (after praying) I was inspired to **analyze the stages of prayer** and the different methods and options of prayer. Then came the task of documenting these stages in order to help people learn and develop what John Paul the Great has called "The Art of Prayer".

This guide presents to the reader different prayer options in a step-by-step guide that includes both traditional print media, and new electronic media (Internet, pod casts, electronic documents). Consideration for cost is also been made, as the options presented start at free. The target audience of this guide is people at any stage of prayer, including the Deep stage, because they may have forgotten (or never understood) how they got to be at the Deep stage.

I quote extensively from the Catechism of the Catholic Church because I will not attempt to restate or redefine in any way the official teaching of the Church. The Catechism does not offer a methodology for catechesis (teaching) or impose a single learning pattern. The Catechism tells the "what" we are to believe; it communicates the content of the Catholic faith. This document offers a method ("The Stages of Prayer") on "how" to achieve or understand the "what". My research also revealed that John Paul The Great had written extensively on prayer, and I have included many of his quotes.

An important question for you: How many times have you prayed the "Our Father"?
"...**your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**" (Matthew 6:10)

What does this mean: "**your will be done**"? I propose the idea to you that the first meaning for this is that we pray more. Who among us could argue against the idea that part of God's will is that we pray more? For it is in praying more that we exercise the ability to find out what the rest of the will of God is.

This document lists many types of prayer. Do not think you have to do all of them. You may wish to try most or all of them to find out which ones you like. Each of us can make a commitment to do a little more than we are doing now. Read through this guide and see what stage you are at. Learn more about the different stages and make a commitment to increase your prayer, not by just doing more of what you are currently doing, but by adding another stage (or level) of prayer to your life.

"**Peace be with you.**" (John 20: 19, 21, 26)

Tony Hangartner

August 2009

The Stages of Prayer Introduction

For a person of the Christian faith, belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God is our starting place. This is also what the Bible teaches us as necessary for salvation (see John 3:16). But there is much more spiritually that is available to those who wish to increase and improve their relationship with God. The use of God here means all Three of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, because a complete prayer life will involve praying to all of the Trinity.

God is calling you to pray more. If you have heard him calling, now is the time to respond. If you have not heard this on your own, then read it now in these words. This document was written to help you pray more.

“The celebration of the Eucharist is the greatest and most exalted form of prayer and is the center and source from which the other forms receive their 'lifeblood': the Liturgy of the Hours, Eucharistic adoration, 'Lectio Divina', the Holy Rosary and meditation...” (Pope Benedict XVI Homily Sunday, May 3, 2009) Note: the mass as prayer is not covered in this document, however **any prayer program must start with Sunday Mass**. Just praying “at home” without the Mass is not enough. Next, what are you doing about your relationship with God on Tuesday? or Wednesday or Thursday? These days of the week, in between the Sunday Mass, are days we can strengthen and grow our relationship with God through a vibrant and active prayer life. God calls us to a life of grace through the seven sacraments and daily prayer. “One can and must pray in many different ways, as the Bible teaches through a multitude of examples.” (Crossing the Threshold of Hope, Pope John Paul II, page 17.)

Private and Public Prayer

Any of the suggested prayer stages and levels can be done in private, or public. The Bible gives us guidance on both public and private prayer:

"Again, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father.

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them."

(Matthew 18:19-20)

Before Raising Lazarus, Jesus prayed out loud:

"So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised his eyes and said,

"Father, I thank you for hearing me.

I know that you always hear me; but because of the crowd here,

I have said this, that they may believe that you sent me."

(John 12:41-42)

"But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. Do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them.

Your Father knows what you need before you ask him."

(Matthew 6:6-8)

How much should we pray?

"Then he told them a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary." (Luke 18:1)

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St. Paul, First Letter to the Thessalonians 5:17 "Pray without ceasing".

The Gospel gives us so many examples of prayer and Jesus talking about prayer:

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find;
knock and the door will be opened to you.
For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds;
and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”
(Matthew 7:7-8).

“This is how you are to pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name...”
(Matthew 6:9)

“Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, had he said to his disciples,
“Sit here while I go over there and pray.””
(Matthew 26:36)

The entire chapter 17 in the Gospel of John is prayer from Jesus to the Father,

Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, January 6, 2001
(The number in parentheses is the paragraph the quote comes from.)

(31) It is also clear however that the paths to holiness are personal and call for a genuine "training in holiness", adapted to people's needs.

(32) This training in holiness calls for a Christian life distinguished above all in the art of prayer. ... But we well know that prayer cannot be taken for granted. We have to learn to pray: as it were learning this art ever anew from the lips of the Divine Master himself, like the first disciples: "Lord, teach us to pray!" (Luke 11:1). Prayer develops that conversation with Christ which makes us his intimate friends: "Abide in me and I in you" (John 15:4). This reciprocity is the very substance and soul of the Christian life, and the condition of all true pastoral life. Wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, this reciprocity opens us, through Christ and in Christ, to contemplation of the Father's face. Learning this Trinitarian shape of Christian prayer and living it fully, above all in the liturgy, the summit and source of the Church's life, but also in personal experience, is the secret of a truly vital Christianity, which has no reason to fear the future, because it returns continually to the sources and finds in them new life.

(33) Yes, dear brothers and sisters, our Christian communities must become genuine "schools" of prayer, where the meeting with Christ is expressed not just in imploring help but also in thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening and ardent devotion, until the heart truly "falls in love". Intense prayer, yes, but it does not distract us from our commitment to history: by opening our heart to the love of God it also opens it to the love of our brothers and sisters, and makes us capable of shaping history according to God's plan.

(38) As this millennium begins, allow the Successor of Peter to invite the whole Church to make this act of faith, which expresses itself in a renewed commitment to prayer. (End quotes)

My summary of the letter: Our Christian communities must become schools that train people in holiness through the art of prayer.

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Chapter 1 – The Casual (or Beginning) Stage

Level 1 – The Basic Prayers

This consists typically of saying the basic prayers before going to sleep at night. The basic prayers would consist of: The Glory Be, The Lord's Prayer, and Hail Mary. For parents this is the level where their children are introduced to prayer. For some people their prayer life never improves beyond this level. At this level a person is typically spending one or two minutes of praying each day.

Level 2 – More than Once a day

This level consists of saying the basic prayers multiple times per day: for instance upon awaking, before sleep and a grace before one or more meals. Also included may be the Apostles Creed, or repeating the Hail Mary multiple times. At this level an Act of Contrition may be prayed at some frequency, perhaps once a month. At this level a person may pray about four to five minutes each day.

Level 3 – Free Format Prayers

At this level a person is communicating *to* God with many if not all of the types of prayer. These are "free format" prayers that allow a person to grow in a relationship with God, by the inclusion of personal words and thoughts that are specific to that person's place in life. This is typically a one-way communication. The time spent praying at this level is typically still brief; however if some time is spent trying to listen, God will ask for more prayer.

The types of Prayer

Here is a brief summary of the type of prayer from the "Catechism of the Catholic Church":

2626 ... blessing is man's response to God's gifts: because God blesses, the human heart can in return bless the One who is the source of every blessing.

2628 Adoration ... exalts the greatness of the Lord who made us.

2629 (Petition) The vocabulary of supplication in the New Testament is rich in shades of meaning: ask, beseech, plead, invoke, entreat, cry out, even "struggle in prayer.

2634 Intercession is a prayer of petition which leads us to pray as Jesus did.

2637 Thanksgiving characterizes the prayer of the Church which, in celebrating the Eucharist, reveals and becomes more fully what she is.

2639 (Praise) It lauds God for his own sake and gives him glory, quite beyond what he does, but simply because HE IS.

[The Catechism of the Catholic Church has an entire section of the book dedicated to prayer.](#)

See Appendix 4 for details on the book.

On the next page is a sample personal prayer program for the Casual stage:

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A sample personal prayer program (small)

Lord, open my lips and my mouth will proclaim your praise. (Psalm 51)

God come to my assistance; Lord make haste to help me.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Alleluia.

For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of Your love.
Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created. And You will renew the face of the earth.
Let us pray. O God, Who did instruct the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit,
grant us in the same Spirit to be truly wise, and ever to rejoice in His consolation.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen

Psalm 23 The Divine Shepherd - A Psalm of David.

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lay down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.
He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil;
For you are with me; your rod and your staff – they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
And I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long. *

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you!
Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

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.

Sacred Heart of Jesus make me love you more and more.

May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

Protect us Lord, as we stay awake; watch over us as we sleep, that awake, we may keep watch
with Christ, and asleep, rest in his peace.

* Psalm 23 – From the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) Bible

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Chapter 2 – The Comfortable Stage

The main characteristic of what is termed the "Comfortable" stage of praying is the use of more than just the few basic prayers that have been memorized. The number of prayers at this stage has increased to such a level that the use of books or other sources is necessary.

Level 1 – Music, Television, Radio, and Singing

Listening to Christian Music is perhaps on the easiest ways to improve your prayer life. Music has been a part of human communication for thousands of years. Music that is classified as Christian spans many categories: Classical, Country, Gospel Music, Contemporary Christian, Christian Rock, and more. This music can be found on radio stations specifically classified as Christian and on standard stations, including FM, AM and satellite radio. The variety and choices available make it impossible compose a list. The important point here is that if you start listening to this music you will hear people praying. This will in turn inspire you to pray more.

Christian television and radio is also available almost everywhere. The Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) started in August 1981, and has become the largest religious media network in the world, transmitting programming 24 hours a day to more than 148 million homes in 140 countries. The ministry of EWTN covers television, radio, and Internet. While much of the programming and content is of an educational / faith enrichment nature, there are specific programs dedicated to prayer, including: Morning Mass, Stations of the Cross, The Rosary, and Devotions, and The Liturgy of the Hours. For people that spend long (or short) persons of time commuting to work or school, participating in a prayer program on the radio could turn the "commute time" into time spent with God praying.

Singing has a special part in the prayer life of people of God. The Bible has this to say about it:

“It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praise to your name, Most High,
To proclaim your love in the morning, your faithfulness in the night,
With the ten-stringed harp, with melody upon the lyre.”
(Psalm 92:2-4)

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.”
[\(Colossians 3:16\)](#)

St. Augustine, the great fifth century Doctor of the Church said this about singing:
"Those who sing well pray twice."

Pope Benedict XVI speaks of the bond between singing and participation in the Mass:
“Mere words do not suffice when man praises God. Discourse with God goes beyond the boundaries of human speech. Hence by its very nature the liturgy has everywhere called upon the help of music, of singing, and of the voices of creation in the sounds of instruments. The praise of God, after all, does not involve only man. To worship God means to join in that of which all creatures speak.” *Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger November 17, 1985*

If God gifted you with a nice voice, give serious consideration to joining the choir at your local parish. In addition to increasing your prayer, your life will be enriched with the fellowship from the other members of the choir.

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Level 2 – Prayer Books and Magazines

Someone seeking to move to this level probably has a desire or need for more prayer than can be done with the few basic prayers that are memorized. They may be looking for variety or to start a new season of growth in their spiritual life. If your prayer life is at the beginning stage but you do not know how to take the next step, books and magazines are a great solution.

These prayer books and magazines typically contain examples of prayer from the Saints. Think about this: these people became Saints for any number of reasons. One of the most important reasons is that they communicated so effectively with God. As part of their carrying out the will of God, some of them wrote down their prayers. These men and women, who we can think of as experts at communication with God, have given us examples of their work to follow. The words these prayer experts used to become the holy people of God, are available to us to use also! If you really want to learn how to pray, read their prayers. Important: the prayers of the saints are not just stepping stones to help you until you learn to say “better” prayers.

A typical prayer book may contain 100 to 400 or more prayers. These books start at a cost below \$10 and may go as high as \$40. These books cover an introduction about the types of prayers and have sections or chapters for different prayer themes: Prayers to God the Father, The Son, The Holy Spirit, Prayers for Holy Communion, before and after the Sacrament of Reconciliation, prayers for the dying and the dead, morning prayers, night prayers, all the basic prayers, some of the popular devotions. For an example of what the professionals are praying with, “Manual of Prayers” is used by priests and seminarians at the North American College in Rome. There are quite a number of free, Catholic sites on the Internet that have many prayers listed for free.

Prayer books are available for all ages. For teenage/ young adults, a small but profound book by Pope John Paul II can help your children grow in prayer: “My Dear Young Friends: Pope John Paul II speaks to Teens on Life, Love and Courage”. For younger children, near the age of first Communion: “For the Children: Words of Love and Inspiration from His Holiness Pope John II”.

While there are dozens of Catholic magazines that cover many different area of the faith, there are a few monthly magazines that can help you with your prayer and spiritual life: *Magnificat*, *Liguorian Magazine*, and *The Word Among Us* are a few of the most popular.

Prayers to honor the Saints and of intercession to the Saints (including our Blessed Mother Mary), and our Guardian Angel, are also of value. We pray to honor them, and for the intercession of the saints because they are alive:

“... , have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God told him, 'I am the God of Abraham, (the) God of Isaac, and (the) God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead but of the living.”

(Mark 12:26-27)

See Appendix 1 for full details on all the books and magazines listed in this chapter.

As an example of what you can expect from a prayer book, I include two significant prayers from St. Thomas Aquinas: one before and one after Holy Communion.

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Two prayers from St. Thomas Aquinas

Prayer before Holy Communion:

Almighty and ever-living God, I approach the sacrament of your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. I come sick to the doctor of life, unclean to the fountain of mercy, blind to the radiance of eternal light, and poor and needy to the Lord of heaven and earth. Lord, in your great generosity, heal my sickness, wash away my defilement, enlighten my blindness, enrich my poverty, and clothe my nakedness.

May I receive the bread of angels, the King of kings and Lord of lords, with humble reverence, with the purity and faith, the repentance and love, and the determined purpose that will help to bring me to salvation. May I receive the sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood, and its reality and power.

Kind God, may I receive the Body of your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, born from the womb of the Virgin Mary, and so be received into His mystical Body and numbered among his members. Loving Father, as on my earthly pilgrimage I now receive your beloved Son, under the veil of a sacrament, may I one day see Him Face to face in glory, who lives and reigns with You for ever. Amen.

Prayer after Holy Communion:

I give you thanks, Lord, Holy Father, everlasting God.
In your great mercy, and not because of my own merits, you have fed me, a sinner and your unworthy servant, with the precious Body and Blood of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that this Holy Communion may not serve as my judgment and condemnation but as my forgiveness and salvation.

May It be my armor of faith and a shield of good purpose.
May It root out in me all vice and evil desires, increase my love and patience, humility and obedience, and every virtue.

Make it a firm defense against the wiles of all my enemies, seen and unseen, while restraining all evil impulses of flesh and spirit.
May it help me to cleave to you, the one true God, and bring me a blessed death when you call.

I pray that You will lead me, a sinner, to that glorious feast where with your Son and Holy Spirit, you are the true light of your holy ones, their flawless blessedness, everlasting joy, and perfect happiness.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Both prayers from: The Catholic Prayer Book, see Appendix 1 for details.)

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Level 3 – Devotions

Devotions are a method of focusing prayer, typically on Jesus. For an example the praying of the "Stations of the Cross" focuses on the events immediately before and during the crucifixion. This focusing brings about a familiarity, and builds or deepens a personal relationship with the object of the prayers (typically Jesus). Would you like to deepen and grow your personal relationship with Jesus? You can practice your devotion once a day or once a week, the frequency is up to you. Many devotions are listed, pick just one to start with.

The Rosary

Perhaps the most popular of all the devotions is the praying of the Rosary. The Rosary is listed at the Comfortable stage because of what it represents on its surface: a devotion to Jesus through His Mother and because the individual prayers that comprise the reciting are the basic prayers we probably learned as children. In first sentence of the Hail Mary we repeat the words of the Arch-Angel Gabriel: "Hail Mary full of grace. The Lord is with you." (Luke 1:28) Next we repeat the greeting of Elisabeth, the mother of John the Baptist: "Blessed is the fruit of your womb" (Luke 1:42). At this stage, what is necessary is a memorization of the individual prayers and to learn the prayer sequence. Also needed is a basic understanding of the four categories of the mysteries of the life Jesus: Joyful, Sorrowful, Luminous and Glorious.

Note: Although this prayer is now classified at the Comfortable stage, we will revisit this special prayer again at the Deep stage!

In my research about the Rosary, I found a tremendous source of knowledge and wisdom in the writings of Pope John Paul The Great. The following two quotes are from his Apostolic Letter "ROSARIUM VIRGINIS MARIAE" "On The Most Holy Rosary" October 16, 2002 (The number in parentheses is the paragraph in which the quote can be found.)

(1) The Rosary of the Virgin Mary, which gradually took form in the second millennium under the guidance of the Spirit of God, is a prayer loved by countless Saints and encouraged by the Magisterium. Simple yet profound, it still remains, at the dawn of this third millennium, a prayer of great significance, destined to bring forth a harvest of holiness. It blends easily into the spiritual journey of the Christian life, which, after two thousand years, has lost none of the freshness of its beginnings and feels drawn by the Spirit of God to "set out into the deep" (*duc in altum!*) in order once more to proclaim, and even cry out, before the world that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, "the way, and the truth and the life" (*John 14:6*), "the goal of human history and the point on which the desires of history and civilization turn".

(43) A prayer so easy and yet so rich truly deserves to be rediscovered by the Christian community.

The EWTN web site has a comprehensive web site on The Blessed Virgin Mary. For prayer specifics see the page on Marian Devotions and Apparitions.

Novenas are a prayer that is said for nine consecutive days. A Novena can be done private or in public and is prayed to obtain a special favor from Heaven. (See appendix 2 for links.)

Ten Devotions to Jesus

The Roman Catholic tradition includes a number of devotions to Jesus Christ. Like all Catholic devotions, these prayer forms are not part of the official public Liturgy of the Church but are based on the popular spiritual practices of Catholics. Many are officially approved by the Holy See as suitable for spiritual growth but not necessary for salvation.

Some devotions arise from private revelations, or personal religious experiences of saints. Often an approved devotion of the Church has a particular prayer form, an image and sometimes-specific promises for those who follow the devotion.

Why choose a devotion? A devotion can grow your relationship with Jesus Christ from one of belief in him as the Son of God, to a personal relationship of friendship, with a deep love for the person who is Jesus. Consider giving Jesus the gift of devotion...

Space constraints permit only a brief overview of ten common devotions. (Devotion information from Wikipedia, see Appendix 2 for details.)

1. Sacred Heart

Formal references to this devotion began to first appear in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. After many years of review and discussion within the Holy See, on June 11, 1899 Pope Leo XIII solemnly consecrated all mankind to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Feast of the Sacred Heart is now a holy day in the Roman Catholic liturgical calendar, and is celebrated 19 days after Pentecost. Three popes wrote four encyclical letters on this devotion.

2. Divine Mercy

The Chaplet of the Divine Mercy is often said as a rosary-based prayer with the same set of rosary beads used for reciting the Holy Rosary or the Chaplet of Holy Wounds. The chaplet's prayers for mercy are threefold: to obtain mercy, to trust in Christ's mercy, and to show mercy to others. Pope John Paul II was instrumental in the formal establishment of the Divine Mercy devotion. It is a simple prayer to say, it takes less than 15 minutes (see Appendix 2 for full details), the main prayer that is repeated on the 10 Hail Mary Beads is: "For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world."

3. Holy Face

This devotion dates back to Sister Marie of St. Peter, a Carmelite nun in Tours France who in 1843 reported visions of Jesus and Mary in which she was urged to spread the devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus, in reparation for the many insults Jesus suffered in His Passion. In 1958, Pope Pius XII approved of the devotion and the Holy Face medal and confirmed the Feast of the Holy Face of Jesus as Shrove Tuesday (the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday) for all Roman Catholics.

4. Eucharistic adoration

One of the early references to reserving the Blessed Sacrament for adoration is found in a life of St. Basil (who died in 379). The Franciscan archives credit Saint Francis of Assisi (who died in 1226) for starting Eucharistic Adoration in Italy. The lay practice of adoration formally began in Avignon, France on September 11, 1226. The Venerable Leo Dupont initiated the nightly adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in Tours in 1849, from where it spread within France.

5. Stations of the Cross

This refers to the depiction of the final hours (or Passion) of Jesus, and the devotion commemorating the Passion. The object of the Stations is to help the faithful to make a spiritual pilgrimage of prayer, through meditating upon the chief scenes of Christ's sufferings and death. It has become one of the most popular devotions for Roman Catholics.

6. Holy Name - IHS or JHS monogram of the name of Jesus

The greatest promoters of this devotion were St. Bernardino of Siena and his follower St. John Capistrano. "They carried with them on their missions in the turbulent cities of Italy a copy of the monogram of the Holy Name, surrounded by rays, painted on a wooden tablet, wherewith they blessed the sick and wrought great miracles. At the close of their sermons they exhibited this emblem to the faithful and asked them to prostrate themselves, to adore the Redeemer of mankind." The practice of showing the monogram of Jesus over gates and above doors largely begins with their exhortations.

7. Holy Wounds

The five Holy Wounds of Christ were the five piercing wounds inflicted upon Jesus during his crucifixion. Two of the wounds were either through the hands or the lower wrists, two were through the feet, and the final wound was in the side of Jesus' chest, his body was pierced by a lance. The Gospel of John states that blood and water poured out of this wound (John 19:34). In the course of his Passion, Jesus suffered other wounds as well, such as those from the crown of thorns and from the flagellation.

8. Rosary of the Holy Wounds

The Rosary of the Holy Wounds was first introduced at the beginning of the 20th century by the Venerable Sister Mary Martha Chambon. She is currently awaiting beatification. She reported that Jesus told her: "When you offer My Holy Wounds for sinners, you must not forget to do so for the souls in Purgatory, as there are but few who think of their relief ... The Holy Wounds are the treasure of treasures for the souls in Purgatory."

9. Precious Blood

Devotion to the Precious Blood of Jesus is one of the oldest devotions in the Church. After the Passion and death of her beloved Son, Our Sorrowful Mother walked the Via Dolorosa again and again consoling her Son in his bitter sacrifice and adoring His Precious Blood poured out willingly with such great love amidst such violence and hatred in order to save us all. Pope John XXIII stated, "... Devotion to the Precious Blood is the devotion of our time...It is devotion for all souls, for the whole world."

10. Shoulder Wound

According to St. Bernard, he asked Jesus which was His greatest unrecorded suffering and the wound that inflicted the most pain on Him in Calvary and Jesus answered: "I had on My Shoulder, while I bore My Cross on the Way of Sorrows, a grievous Wound which was more painful than the others and which is not recorded by men. Honor this Wound with thy devotion and I will grant thee whatsoever thou dost ask through its virtue and merit."

Many of the devotions have prayers written in the form of a Litany. The next page has a sample prayer from the Sacred Heart devotion. There is a lot more to this devotion, but this prayer will give you an idea what the devotion is about.

The Stages of Prayer
[Litany of the Sacred Heart]

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.
Christ, graciously hear us.
God, the Father of Heaven, have mercy on us.
God, the Son, Redeemer of the World, have mercy on us.
God, the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us.
Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, Son of the Eternal Father, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, formed in the womb of the Virgin Mother by the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, united substantially with the word of God, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, of infinite majesty, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, holy temple of God, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, tabernacle of the Most High, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, house of God and gate of heaven, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, burning furnace of charity, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, vessel of justice and love, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, full of goodness and love, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, never-ending source of all virtues, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, worthy of all praise, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, king and center of all hearts, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, in who are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, in who dwells all the fullness of the Divinity, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, in who the Father is well pleased, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, of whose fullness we have all received, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, desire of the everlasting hills, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, patient and rich in mercy, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, generous to all who call upon You, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, fount of life and holiness, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, atonement for our sins, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, which suffered rejection for our sake, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, bruised for our sins, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, made obedient unto death, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, pierced with a lance, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, source of all consolation, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, our life and resurrection, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, our peace and reconciliation, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, victim for our sins, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, salvation of those who hope in You, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, hope of those who die in You, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, delight of all saints, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world, spare us, O Lord.
Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world, graciously hear us, O Lord,
Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Jesus, meek and humble of Heart. Make our hearts like unto Yours.

Let us pray,

Almighty and everlasting God, look upon the Heart of Your well-beloved Son and upon the acts of praise and satisfaction which He offers You in the name of sinners; and in Your great goodness, grant pardon to those who seek Your mercy, in the name of the Your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You, world without end.

The Stages of Prayer

Chapter 3 – The Committed Stage

This stage is based upon the inspired words of the Holy Spirit, in two levels. The first is the reading of the Bible. This is considered prayer because we are reading the word of God. Prayer is a two-way communication with God, and reading the Bible is the easiest way to receive communication from God. The second is the reading (and praying with) the prayers that are in the Bible.

Level 1 – Reading the Bible

If you are new to reading the Bible and are seeking a recommendation on where to start: a good approach would be to read or re-read the three Bible readings from Sunday's Mass (or a daily Mass you have attended). This provides repetition of God's word from three parts of the Bible: Old and New Testaments, and the Gospel. This approach can consist of reading any one or all of the three readings before attending Mass, and/or after attending Mass. A list of the Bible reading used at Mass can be found in a number of places. Your parish bulletin will probably list the weekly Mass readings.

For a sample of resources that list the weekly and daily Mass Readings in both print and electronic format, please see Appendix 5.

Choosing to read and study one specific book of the Bible can focus your study. This also sets a definitive goal that is easily achievable, which in turn will provide confidence for you to read more books in the Bible. The Gospel readings for Sundays are organized on a three-year cycle. Each year is based on one of the three "Synoptic" Gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke. The Gospel of John is used on special occasions. Choosing to read the book of the Gospel that is currently in use for Sunday readings will provide repetition and familiarity that will help bring success to your Bible study program. The Gospel of John is not part of the three-year cycle, but many Bible scholars suggest this Gospel to start with because of the way this specific Gospel was written.

The Bible was written some 2000 years ago, and while it is the written word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, it can be difficult to properly understand some parts in it. This issue of properly understanding the Bible can be addressed in two ways. One way is the use what is called a "Study Bible" or a "Bible Commentary". The second way to learn the Bible is to attend a Bible study class at a local parish.

Study Bibles / Bible Commentary books

The various Study Bibles/ Bible Commentaries contain any number of additions to the text of the standard Bible: a reading guide, Glossary, concordance, charts, diagrams and maps, commentary by theologians and biblical scholars, comments on history and culture, questions for discussion or reflection.

Attend a Bible Study class at your local Parish.

These classes are typically taught by the parish Pastor, Priest or Deacon, (your local bible expert). Call local parishes to see if a class is starting soon, or if a class is currently in progress.

The Stages of Prayer

Both Study Bibles/ Bible Commentaries provide a great help in learning. However the trade off is the increase in size of the resulting "book". The book publishers address this issue in a few ways. One way is they create a separate book that contains all of the additional material. This allows you to continue using the bible you already own. The learning process is composed of two books: the Bible and the study Book. This approach could have one possible problem: your Bible and the study book may be based on different Bible translations.

A second way the publishers handle the size issue is by creating the study/commentary only for the New Testament. The other way the size issue is addressed is the book publishers create small, separate publications for the different books of the Bible; this is also typically done only for the books of the New Testament. These small books may range in size from 80 to 100 pages and cost from \$7 to \$10. A good place to start is with one book of the Gospel; these books contain the Bible text and commentary on the same page, which makes the reading and understanding convenient.

Note: When purchasing a Study/Commentary book look for the Nihil Obstat (No Obstacle) and Imprimatur (Let it Printed) This will help ensure that the commentary follows official church teaching.

What bible should I buy/read? The proper question here is: Which *translation* should I buy/read? There are four main (modern or recent) translations of the Catholic Bible.

#1 The New American Bible (1970-1983).

The New American Bible is the official English-language Catholic translation for the United States (This translation is used at Catholic Mass). It is the first English Bible from the Catholic Church translated from the original texts. It is written at the eleventh grade reading level and is direct in style. [The New American Bible](#) is available to read for free on the Internet, at the web site of the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops:

#2 The New Jerusalem Bible (1985).

This is the update of the 1966 Jerusalem Bible based on the 1973 French Edition with revised footnotes, updated text, and inclusive language.

#3 The New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition (1989).

This translation uses gender-inclusive language..

#4 The Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition,

1st edition (1966), widely used by conservative Catholic scholars and theologians, and is accepted as one of the most accurate and literary Bible translations suitable for Catholic use.

2nd Edition (2006) Does not use archaic language in references to God (thee, thou, thy, art, hast...). Gender-inclusive language is not used.

There is also a good section of [Frequently Asked Questions](#) on the USCC Bishops' web site. The web site [Catholic Online](#), provides free online reading of [The New Jerusalem Bible](#) (NJB). The Bible is also available on hand held electronic devices: Pocket PC, PDA, and iPhone...

Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*

The primacy of grace

38. If in the planning that awaits us we commit ourselves more confidently to a pastoral activity that gives personal and communal prayer its proper place, we shall be observing an essential principle of the Christian view of life: the primacy of grace. There is a temptation which perennially besets every spiritual journey and pastoral work: that of thinking that the results depend on our ability to act and to plan. God of course asks us really to cooperate with his grace, and therefore invites us to invest all our resources of intelligence and energy in serving the cause of the Kingdom. But it is fatal to forget that "without Christ we can do nothing" (cf. Jn 15:5).

It is prayer which roots us in this truth. It constantly reminds us of the primacy of Christ and, in union with him, the primacy of the interior life and of holiness. When this principle is not respected, is it any wonder that pastoral plans come to nothing and leave us with a disheartening sense of frustration? We then share the experience of the disciples in the Gospel story of the miraculous catch of fish: "We have toiled all night and caught nothing" (Lk 5:5). This is the moment of faith, of prayer, of conversation with God, in order to open our hearts to the tide of grace and allow the word of Christ to pass through us in all its power: *Duc in altum!* On that occasion, it was Peter who spoke the word of faith: "At your word I will let down the nets" (ibid.). As this millennium begins, allow the Successor of Peter to invite the whole Church to make this act of faith, which expresses itself in a renewed commitment to prayer.

Listening to the Word

(39) There is no doubt that this primacy of holiness and prayer is inconceivable without a renewed listening to the word of God. Ever since the Second Vatican Council underlined the pre-eminent role of the word of God in the life of the Church, great progress has certainly been made in devout listening to Sacred Scripture and attentive study of it. Scripture has its rightful place of honour in the public prayer of the Church. Individuals and communities now make extensive use of the Bible, and among lay people there are many who devote themselves to Scripture with the valuable help of theological and biblical studies. But it is above all the work of evangelization and catechesis which is drawing new life from attentiveness to the word of God. Dear brothers and sisters, this development needs to be consolidated and deepened, also by making sure that every family has a Bible. It is especially necessary that listening to the word of God should become a life-giving encounter, in the ancient and ever valid tradition of *lectio divina*, which draws from the biblical text the living word which questions, directs and shapes our lives. (end quote)

The Stages of Prayer

Level 2 - The Liturgy of the Hours

"Seven times a day I praise you..."
(Psalm 119:164)

The Catholic Church has two official prayers: 1. The Prayer of the Mass, 2. The Liturgy of the Hours. Note: Priests, Deacons, and members of some religious orders are required to pray the Liturgy of the Hours every day.

Level 2 is the reading of the prayers that are in the Bible. Specifically the Book of Psalms, a collection of 150 prayers to God attributed to King David, along with a few others, The Lord's Prayer, the canticles of Mary (Luke 1:46-55), Zechariah (Luke 1:68-79), and Simeon (Luke 2: 29-32). A canticle is a Latin word for "little song". Also included in this prayer form are selected readings from the New Testament and the Gospel. This form of prayer is known by a few different names, The Liturgy of the Hours, Divine Office, and Breviary.

The Liturgy of the Hours can be prayed with books of three different lengths: Shorter Christian Prayer, Christian Prayer (one volume) and Christian Prayer (four volume). They are different in size because they contain a different variety of prayers for the different Liturgical seasons (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Ordinary Time), and the celebration of Saint's feast days. Check with your local parish to see what version they use in their prayer group. Even if you want to pray alone (in your "inner room"), it will be easier if you need help, if you have the same version that your parish uses.

The Shorter Christian Prayer is small and light weight, it is very convenient to bring with you: taking on vacation, reading while waiting at the doctor's office, commuting by bus or train to work. Because of its lightweight is easy to hold up if you like to read in bed before going to sleep.

Praying the Liturgy of the Hours involves some learning about the different sections of the prayer program and flipping back and forth between these sections. This is because different seasons of the "liturgical calendar" (Advent, Lent, Easter, Ordinary Time) and Saints feast days having different prayers associated with them. This page flipping is typically done once at the point in program where the reading from the New Testament or the Gospel occurs. There are a few books that explain this page flipping and the entire Liturgy of the Hours prayer program.

1. "Lord, Open My Lips: The Liturgy of the Hours As Daily Prayer"
2. "The Divine Office for Dodos: A Step-By-Step Guide to Praying the Liturgy of the Hours"

The Internet is also home to resources about The Liturgy of the Hours. There are web sites where you can pray the Hours for free. A few publishers have produced programs that allow you to use portable electronic devices to pray the Liturgy of the Hours.

Please see Appendix 3 for more details.

How long does this form of prayer take? Vespers (Latin: evening prayer) and it can take from 8 to 10 minutes to complete, depending on how fast one reads. Evening Prayer is about six pages in the book. Compline (night prayer) takes about 4 to 5 minutes; it is about two and a half to three pages. Morning Prayer may take about 10 minutes.

The Stages of Prayer

Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter Spiritus Et Sponsa

(14) The Church's teaching must be able to "dare". It is important to introduce the faithful to the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours "which, as the public prayer of the Church, is a source of piety and nourishment for personal prayer". It is an action that is neither individual nor "private, but is proper to the entire Body of the Church.... Thus, if the faithful are summoned for the Liturgy of the Hours and gather together, joining heart and voice, they make manifest the Church, which celebrates the mystery of Christ". Priority attention to liturgical prayer does not vie with personal prayer but indeed implies and demands it, and harmonizes well with other forms of community prayer, especially when it is recognized and recommended by the ecclesiastic Authority. (end quote)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Liturgy of the Hours

1174 The mystery of Christ, his Incarnation and Passover, which we celebrate in the Eucharist especially at the Sunday assembly, permeates and transfigures the time of each day, through the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, "the divine office."

This celebration, faithful to the apostolic exhortations to "pray constantly," is "so devised that the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praise of God."

In this "public prayer of the Church," the faithful (clergy, religious, and lay people) exercise the royal priesthood of the baptized. Celebrated in "the form approved" by the Church, the Liturgy of the Hours "is truly the voice of the Bride herself addressed to her Bridegroom. It is the very prayer which Christ himself together with his Body addresses to the Father.

1175 The Liturgy of the Hours is intended to become the prayer of the whole People of God. In it Christ himself "continues his priestly work through his Church." His members participate according to their own place in the Church and the circumstances of their lives: priests devoted to the pastoral ministry, because they are called to remain diligent in prayer and the service of the word; religious, by the charism of their consecrated lives; all the faithful as much as possible: "Pastors of souls should see to it that the principal hours, especially Vespers, are celebrated in common in church on Sundays and on the more solemn feasts. The laity, too, are encouraged to recite the divine office, either with the priests, or among themselves, or even individually."

1176 The celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours demands not only harmonizing the voice with the praying heart, but also a deeper "understanding of the liturgy and of the Bible, especially of the Psalms."

1178 The Liturgy of the Hours, which is like an extension of the Eucharistic celebration, does not exclude but rather in a complementary way calls forth the various devotions of the People of God, especially adoration and worship of the Blessed Sacrament.

The Stages of Prayer

Chapter 4 – The Deep Stage

After I got to the stage of praying the Liturgy of the Hours, I wondered: what comes next? What other form or method or type of prayer is left for me to learn? The answer is in not what we are praying but HOW we are praying. The answer to the HOW question reveals itself in the Bible in a few places.

“And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.”
(Luke 2:19)

“He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them;
and his mother kept all these things in her heart.”
(Luke 2:51)

“My eyes greet the night watches as I meditate on your promise.”
(Psalm 119:148)

“Give me insight to observe your teaching, to keep it with all my heart.”
(Psalm 119:34)

[Catechism of the Catholic Church - Part 4, Section 1, Chapter 3](#)

CHAPTER THREE THE LIFE OF PRAYER

II. Meditation

2705

Meditation is above all a quest. The mind seeks to understand the why and how of the Christian life, in order to adhere and respond to what the Lord is asking. The required attentiveness is difficult to sustain. We are usually helped by books, and Christians do not want for them: the Sacred Scriptures, particularly the Gospels, holy icons, liturgical texts of the day or season, writings of the spiritual fathers, works of spirituality, the great book of creation, and that of history—the page on which the "today" of God is written.

2706

To meditate on what we read helps us to make it our own by confronting it with ourselves. Here, another book is opened: the book of life. We pass from thoughts to reality. To the extent that we are humble and faithful, we discover in meditation the movements that stir the heart and we are able to discern them. It is a question of acting truthfully in order to come into the light: "Lord, what do you want me to do?"

2707

There are as many and varied methods of meditation as there are spiritual masters. Christians owe it to themselves to develop the desire to meditate regularly, lest they come to resemble the three first kinds of soil in the parable of the sower. But a method is only a guide; the important thing is to advance, with the Holy Spirit, along the one way of prayer: Christ Jesus.

2708

Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. This mobilization of faculties is necessary in order to deepen our convictions of faith, prompt the conversion of our heart, and strengthen our will to follow Christ. Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ, as in *lectio divina* or the rosary. This form of prayerful reflection is of great value, but Christian prayer should go further: to the knowledge of the love of the Lord Jesus, to union with him.

III. Contemplative Prayer

2709

What is contemplative prayer? St. Teresa answers: "Contemplative prayer [oración mental] in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us." Contemplative prayer seeks him "whom my soul loves."⁷ It is Jesus, and in him, the Father. We seek him, because to desire him is always the beginning of love, and we seek him in that pure faith which causes us to be born of him and to live in him. In this inner prayer we can still meditate, but our attention is fixed on the Lord himself.

2710

The choice of the time and duration of the prayer arises from a determined will, revealing the secrets of the heart. One does not undertake contemplative prayer only when one has the time: one makes time for the Lord, with the firm determination not to give up, no matter what trials and dryness one may encounter. One cannot always meditate, but one can always enter into inner prayer, independently of the conditions of health, work, or emotional state. The heart is the place of this quest and encounter, in poverty and in faith.

2711

Entering into contemplative prayer is like entering into the Eucharistic liturgy: we "gather up" the heart, recollect our whole being under the prompting of the Holy Spirit, abide in the dwelling place of the Lord which we are, awaken our faith in order to enter into the presence of him who awaits us. We let our masks fall and turn our hearts back to the Lord who loves us, so as to hand ourselves over to him as an offering to be purified and transformed.

2712

Contemplative prayer is the prayer of the child of God, of the forgiven sinner who agrees to welcome the love by which he is loved and who wants to respond to it by loving even more. But he knows that the love he is returning is poured out by the Spirit in his heart, for everything is grace from God. Contemplative prayer is the poor and humble surrender to the loving will of the Father in ever deeper union with his beloved Son.

The Stages of Prayer

2713

Contemplative prayer is the simplest expression of the mystery of prayer. It is a gift, a grace; it can be accepted only in humility and poverty. Contemplative prayer is a covenant relationship established by God within our hearts. Contemplative prayer is a communion in which the Holy Trinity conforms man, the image of God, "to his likeness."

2714

Contemplative prayer is also the pre-eminently intense time of prayer. In it the Father strengthens our inner being with power through his Spirit "that Christ may dwell in [our] hearts through faith" and we may be "grounded in love."

2715

Contemplation is a gaze of faith, fixed on Jesus. "I look at him and he looks at me": this is what a certain peasant of Ars in the time of his holy curé used to say while praying before the tabernacle. This focus on Jesus is a renunciation of self. His gaze purifies our heart; the light of the countenance of Jesus illumines the eyes of our heart and teaches us to see everything in the light of his truth and his compassion for all men. Contemplation also turns its gaze on the mysteries of the life of Christ. Thus it learns the "interior knowledge of our Lord," the more to love him and follow him.

2716

Contemplative prayer is hearing the Word of God. Far from being passive, such attentiveness is the obedience of faith, the unconditional acceptance of a servant, and the loving commitment of a child. It participates in the "Yes" of the Son become servant and the Fiat of God's lowly handmaid.

2717

Contemplative prayer is silence, the "symbol of the world to come" or "silent love." Words in this kind of prayer are not speeches; they are like kindling that feeds the fire of love. In this silence, unbearable to the "outer" man, the Father speaks to us his incarnate Word, who suffered, died, and rose; in this silence the Spirit of adoption enables us to share in the prayer of Jesus.

2718

Contemplative prayer is a union with the prayer of Christ insofar as it makes us participate in his mystery. The mystery of Christ is celebrated by the Church in the Eucharist, and the Holy Spirit makes it come alive in contemplative prayer so that our charity will manifest it in our acts.

Contemplative Prayer is not something that can be taught in a few pages. This paper can only provide an overview. My research has found an expert on contemplative prayer: Fr. Thomas Dubay has written many books on prayer and spirituality. He has hosted five different TV series on these two topics. Appendix 5 contains information about him and two of his bestselling books.

The Stages of Prayer

Level 1 – Meditation and Contemplation

Alternative "A": The Rosary

This prayer was first classified at the Comfortable level, how could this prayer now be at the Deep level?

Pope John Paul II Apostolic Letter "ROSARIUM VIRGINIS MARIAE" "On The Most Holy Rosary" (The number in parentheses is the paragraph in which the quote can be found.)

(12) The Rosary, a contemplative prayer...

(2) Against the background of the words Ave Maria the principal events of the life of Jesus Christ pass before the eyes of the soul. They take shape in the complete series of the joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries, and they put us in living communion with Jesus through – we might say – the heart of his Mother.

(5) But the most important reason for strongly encouraging the practice of the Rosary is that it represents a most effective means of fostering among the faithful that commitment to the contemplation of the Christian mystery which I have proposed in the Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte as a genuine “training in holiness”...

(24) The cycles of meditation proposed by the Holy Rosary are by no means exhaustive, but they do bring to mind what is essential and they awaken in the soul a thirst for a knowledge of Christ continually nourished by the pure source of the Gospel.

(26) Meditation on the mysteries of Christ is proposed in the Rosary by means of a method designed to assist in their assimilation. It is a method based on repetition. This applies above all to the Hail Mary, repeated ten times in each mystery. If this repetition is considered superficially, there could be a temptation to see the Rosary as a dry and boring exercise.

(28) In effect, the Rosary is simply a method of contemplation. As a method, it serves as a means to an end and cannot become an end in itself. All the same, as the fruit of centuries of experience, this method should not be undervalued.

(39) What has been said so far makes abundantly clear the richness of this traditional prayer, which has the simplicity of a popular devotion but also the theological depth of a prayer suited to those who feel the need for deeper contemplation. (End of Quotes.)

How is the Deep stage achieved? Through the meditation and contemplation on the mysteries of the life Jesus: Joyful, Sorrowful, Luminous, and Glorious. At the previous level the recommendation was for a reading/ studying of the four books of the Bible that comprise The Gospel. Now we put that knowledge and experience to use.

A key point to enable meditation and contemplation while praying the Rosary is the ability to "Visualize" each of the Mysteries as it becomes current in the prayer sequence. For example: If you are able to "picture" in your mind a scene from the movie "The Passion of the Christ" while saying the Sorrowful Mysteries, that will go a long way to developing meditation and contemplation.

The Stages of Prayer

Alternative "B": Using Music

In the same way the Rosary was used to meditate on the mysteries of Jesus in alternative "A", music can be used to focus the mind to meditate on other parts of your prayer life. The music can eliminate outside distractions, and calm the mind. Use whatever music you think will be effective for you, if you find yourself focused on the music then try some thing else. Remember the music is a method to help you contemplate. So what to contemplate? If you are thinking about Jesus while saying the Rosary, then the next step is praying to the rest of the Trinity: The Father and Holy Spirit.

"He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him"
(John 14:21).

What will you be contemplating? For someone new to this stage I suggest the use of prayers we found at a previous stage: The Psalms. There are 150 Psalms to choose from. Choose some that are special to you. If you need a suggestion, start with the 23rd psalm. While listening to the appropriate music, repeat the entire psalm over and over (ten times at least?) in the same way the Hail Mary was repeated. As an alternative repeat each line of the psalm 10 times before moving to the next line.

Alternative "C": Breathing Exercises

The Jesus Prayer is also know as "the breath prayer" since it is prayed in rhythm with one's breathing: inhale while saying, "Lord Jesus Christ," then pause the breathing while saying "Son of the Living God," and then exhale saying, "have mercy on me, a sinner." For variety, substitute other one-line prayers: something from your devotion: (in breath) Sacred Heart of Jesus, (out breath) make me love you more and more.

See Appendix 5 for more information on meditation and contemplation.

Level 2 - Writing your own prayers

Prayer in a deep relationship is prayer that needs to be written down and remembered, so that it can be repeated again and again. This level is different than every thing we have done before. For the most part up until now, we have been reading and saying the prayers that other people have written. By now you have seen numerous examples of prayers. So it is now time to write your own. I do mean write, put your words to paper. Lets review the Casual stage and the types of prayer: petition, thanksgiving, contrition, praise. Throughout your prayer life you probably have prayed the spontaneous thoughts that came to your mind: "Please Lord, help me in my sickness.", "Thank you God for my new job.", "Jesus, I am sorry for my sins", "Dear Father in Heaven, I love you.". If your spontaneous prayers are simple like the above examples or if you repeat them every night (and morning), something special will happen when you take the time to record the prayers by writing them on paper (with pencil and paper or into a computer's word processing program). Remember the saints from the Comfortable Stage? They wrote down their prayers. Now you will write your prayers also.

Writing down your prayers is like writing a love letter to God.

When you write the prayers down, there is a process of growth in holiness in you.

Write your own prayer book, and while you may share the prayers with others, you really only need to share this book with God.

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A easy way to start writing your own prayers is to take an existing prayer and modify it. Personalize it and make it your own.

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

All my love to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

I loved you in the beginning, I love you now, and I will love you forever.

- Example from the Hail Mary: “pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death” insert for example, “pray for *name* now and at the hour of his/her death.”.
- Customizing the Divine Mercy chaplet: “For the sake of His sorrowful passion, have mercy on *name* and the whole world. One by one, substitute all the names of your family.

Next, I share a prayer I composed to help me write this prayer guide. The purpose of including this prayer, and the process I followed to write it, is to show that **you can do this** also.

[From Your Blood, Gifts]

(short version)

Your Blood, my wisdom
Your Blood, my understanding
Your Blood, my counsel
Your Blood, my fortitude
Your Blood, my knowledge
Your Blood, my piety
Your Blood, my fear

(long version)

From Your Precious Blood, flows my wisdom
From Your Precious Blood, flows my understanding
From Your Precious Blood, flows my counsel
From Your Precious Blood, flows my fortitude
From Your Precious Blood, flows my knowledge
From Your Precious Blood, flows my piety
From Your Precious Blood, flows my fear

This Prayer takes the form of a Litany. You probably learned about this prayer form in the prayer book you bought, or from one of the online sights. Many of the devotions use the Litany prayer form. Next, lets analyze what I did to write this. After receiving the sacrament of Holy Communion, I prayed to God for inspiration and help to write a prayer. I wanted something small that I could memorize. I then had the idea to combine two elements, the Sacrament of Holy Communion (Precious Blood) with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Now you can write a prayer using the fruits of the Holy Spirit. ([Galatians 5:22-23](#))

Advancing through the stages of prayer will hopefully give you the gifts and experience necessary for you to be successful at writing your own prayers. Please keep in mind that all of us have different talents and abilities. (Read [St. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians](#).) What is important to God is that you wrote the prayer(s). If you are lacking in creativity, pray for help and inspiration. Keep a pen and notebook next to your bed. When some inspiring words come to your mind, write them down. Follow the form or subject from any of the prayers you have read. Contemplate a favorite passage from the Bible and write down your thoughts.

Now that you have written your prayer and contemplated it and edited and re-written the prayer, what do you do with it? You may have written 20 prayers or spent all your time on just one. Select your favorite prayer you wrote. Remember the list of prayers we developed back in the beginning stage? The prayers you say before going to sleep and /or upon awaking. Add the prayer you wrote to that list. Fit it into the prayer order somewhere, and start saying it every day.

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Level 3 - Lectio Divina (Divine Reading)

Every stage that has gone before has lead up to this last level. I will attempt to summarize this four-step process, for more details, please see the links in Appendix 4. The formal application of this type of prayer takes one hour. If all you have time for is 5-7 minutes for each step (20 to 30 minutes total), then still participate. Once this method of prayer is learned, you will benefit from it, no matter how much time is spent on it.

Before starting there are a few items to take care of. Bring a pencil and paper, your Bible, and a find a quiet place to pray. Then select a scripture passage to use. Finally, say a small prayer to quiet your mind and focus on God.

The Four Steps

1. Reading

This first step is reading the scriptural passage slowly and attentively. Re-read the passage several times. If you wish, write down the words that grab your attention. Hopefully one sentence will stick out from the rest. If you were reading a schoolbook, this would be the sentence (or part of) that you would mark with a yellow highlighter.

2. Meditation

The second step is to meditate on this passage, or sentence or even one word, thinking in God's presence about the text.

3. Praying

Pray to the Holy Spirit to help you understand this passage. Remember prayer is a two-way dialog with God. Listen to what God is telling you about this passage.

4. Contemplation

Finally, you become silent and still. Let the results of the praying fall deep into your heart.

See appendix 5 for more information on Lectio Divina.

An example of how this works can be helpful. Start with the "Wedding Feast at Cana" (John 2:1-11) After reading the entire chapter 2, I went back to focus on just the wedding. It is only eleven sentences. And after reading a few times one part stood out:

"Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come."

(John 2:4)

What did this mean? Chapter two of the Gospel of John is the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus. After meditating on the reply "**My hour has not yet come.**" I understood that Jesus had a plan on what date he would start to reveal himself as the Son of God. The reply of Mary is one of trust. (His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you.") After praying about this the answer was clear: Jesus then changes his plan! Why? "Honor your mother and father." Recognize this? The fourth commandment. Jesus does not "talk" about honoring his mother; He shows us that He follows the commandment. Contemplation: if Jesus so honored His Mother Mary, by changing his plans, we should honor her also.

Jesus next makes approximately 150 gallons of wine, I leave it to you as a home work assignment to use Lectio Divina determine why he made so much.

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Chapter 5 – Some Final Thoughts

So a question you may be asking yourself is: Can I achieve the Deep Stage of prayer? How long will it take? Yes you can. The four descriptions of Casual, Comfortable, Committed, and Deep are used to categorize and order the stages. The specific names are used to inspire you to move out of the Casual stage, and want to improve your prayer life. If it takes six weeks, six months or six years to move from Casual to Deep, the time depends on you and the effort you put into this. Just keep trying. You need to have a goal; hopefully this guide provides that goal. I can not put into words what you will experience when you develop your prayer to its fullest.

A few other notes: There is no bad way to pray. Just do it. Everyone has their own unique spirituality, effort and learning are needed to improve ones prayer life.

When I started putting together this guide, I envisioned the prayer stages being like a stairway. One would go up and up until they got to the top. Now that I have had time to contemplate the process, a more proper analogy is the stages of prayer are like a pyramid. Each stage is dependent upon the stages before it. One cannot get to the top stage, and write/say your own prayers and give up saying the basic prayers like the Our Father and the Hail Mary. So my counsel is for you to keep building upon the foundation of prayer you have. Success at the later stages of prayer is based upon the experience and knowledge that is gained at earlier stages.

A final question for you; there is no right or wrong answer, so answer truthfully to yourself:
What is your favorite time of the day?

While working on this guide, I found that my answer was: the time I spent praying. My challenge for you, is that you put forth the commitment to increase your prayer life a few levels or a stage or two and then after some period of time, ask yourself this question again, and see if your answer changes.

**“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart;
and you will find rest for your selves.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”**
(Matthew 11:28-30)

**Jesus invites all of us to a deeper, more personal relationship with him,
and one of the best ways to do that, is to spend time praying.**

I do sincerely hope and pray that this guide has been and will continue to be of value while you learn “the art of prayer”.

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Praying as a couple:

A special note for those who are married: Improving your prayer life is something you can do together. My wife and I have attended this, and we recommend it for any couple.

"Together with Jesus Couple Prayer Series" The "life-changing series for marriages" promising significantly greater intimacy, faith and joy in your relationship simply by learning -- in a few safe and entirely supportive steps – how you can begin praying together as a couple closely, comfortably, lovingly and often. And keep on praying together for a lifetime.

<http://www.coupleprayer.org>

As an example of the type of praying you will learn in the Couple Prayer Series I have included one of the exercises: first pray Psalm 23 the way it appears in the Bible.

Psalm 23 The Divine Shepherd A Psalm of David.

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lay down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.
He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil;
For you are with me; your rod and your staff - they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
And I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

Next change the wording, and say the prayer together:

The LORD is our shepherd, we shall not want.
He makes us lay down in green pastures; He leads us beside still waters; He restores our souls.
He leads us in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.
Even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we fear no evil;
For you are with us; your rod and your staff - they comfort us.
You prepare a table before us in the presence of our enemies;
You anoint our heads with oil; our cups overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives,
And we shall dwell in the house of the LORD our whole life long.

Next change the words and say as a “blessing prayer” over your spouse:

The LORD is your shepherd, you shall not want.
He makes you lay down in green pastures; he leads you beside still waters; he restores your soul.
He leads you in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Even though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you fear no evil;
For He is with you; His rod and His staff - they comfort you.
He prepares a table before you in the presence of your enemies;
He anoints your head with oil; your cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life,
And you shall dwell in the house of the LORD your whole life long.

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Appendix 1 – Prayer Books and Magazines

The Catholic Prayer Book

[Servant Publications](#) (January 1986)
Paperback: 273 pages (\$10-12)
ISBN-13: 978-0892832835

The Essential Catholic Prayer Book: A Collection of Private and Community Prayers

[Liguori Publications](#) (November 1999)
Paperback: 285 pages (\$12-14)
ISBN-13: 978-0764804885

My Dear Young Friends: Pope John Paul II speaks to Teens on Life, Love and Courage

[Saint Mary's Press](#) (September 2001)
Paperback: 136 pages
ISBN-13: 978-0884897248
Reading level: Young Adult

For the Children: Words of Love and Inspiration from His Holiness Pope John II

Reading level: Ages 9-12
Hardcover: 32 pages (\$17)
Publisher: Scholastic Press; 1st edition
(March 1, 2000)
ISBN-13: 978-0439149020

[Manual of Prayers](#)

Rev. James D. Watkins (Compiler)
[Our Sunday Visitor](#); 3 edition (September 1998)
Leather Bound: 446 pages (\$32-40)
ISBN-13: 978-0879736415
(available in Burgundy, Black and White)
Used by priests and seminarians at the North American College in Rome, this prayer book contains a wealth of prayers, litanies, novenas, and meditations.

[Handbook of Prayers](#)

Rev. James Socias
[Our Sunday Visitor](#) (November 2006)
Paperback: 608 pages (\$16-18)
ISBN-13: 978-0879735791
A compilation of the most loved prayers, devotions, and blessings of the Catholic Faith.
A rich design, with a deep burgundy and gold cover, 30 full-page illustrations, and convenient 4 x 6-3/8 inch size.

[Liguorian Magazine](#)

“For over 94 years, Liguorian has been a favorite companion of Catholics everywhere. Reinforcing spiritual beliefs with inspiration and insight, Liguorian provides a fresh perspective on faith to give subscribers what they want most from a Catholic magazine. Inspiring feature stories and a colorful, eye-catching design make Liguorian an indispensable part of your spiritual life in today’s fast-paced world.” (from the web site) 20 issues for \$35.00
Liguori Publications 1 Liguori Drive Liguori, MO 63057 Toll-Free 800-325-9521

[Magnificat is a monthly magazine](#) that is written as a spiritual guide that will help you:

1. Develop your prayer life
2. Grow in your spiritual life
3. Find a way to a more profound love for Our Blessed Savior
4. Participate in the holy Mass with greater fervor

A one year subscription is \$45.

[the WORD among us](#) A Catholic Devotional Magazine based on the Daily Mass Readings. They have a “Prayer Center” with many articles and recommended books.

The web site [Catholic Online has a free online prayer area.](#)

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Appendix 2 – Resources for Devotions

Overview: [Vatican's Directory on Popular Piety, Liturgy, Principles, Guidelines](#)
Article on Devotions: [New Advent Encyclopedia](#)

See Wikipedia for [Roman Catholic devotions to Jesus Christ](#)

Some Popular Devotions to Jesus

Sacred Heart: [Sisters of Carmel](#) [My document on the Sacred Heart](#)

Divine Mercy: [EWTN](#) <http://www.catholic.org/prayers/chaplet.php>

Holy Face: [HolyFace.org](#)

Eucharistic Adoration: [The Real Presence](#) [EWTN](#)

Stations of the Cross: [Domestic Church](#)

Holy Name: [Fish Eaters](#)

Holy Wound: [New Advent Encyclopedia](#) [Holy Wounds Apostolate](#)

Precious Blood: [Papal Encyclicals](#) [Precious Blood International](#)

Shoulder Wound: [Jesus I Am](#) [Catholic.org](#)

Rosary of the Holy Wounds: [Prayerbook.com](#)

Holy Spirit Devotions

[Apostles of the Holy Spirit](#)
[Prayerbook.com](#)

Some Popular Marian Devotions

General information on Blessed Mary: [EWTN](#)

The Rosary: [The Rosary Center](#)

Immaculate Heart Devotion: [Fish Eaters](#)

Our Lady of Perpetual Help: [Catholic Tradition](#)

Seven Sorrows: [Catholic Prayer Traditions](#)

Our Lady of Sorrows: [Women for Faith and Family](#)

Our Lady of Fatima: [Fatima.org](#)

Novenas

[EWTN has 50 Novenas on its web site.](#)

[The Catholic Doors Ministry has 182 Novena prayers.](#)

(Some sites have information on multiple devotions others specialize in only one.
The above have been selected to provide variety.)

Appendix 3 – Study Bibles and Bible Commentary Books

[New Collegeville Bible Commentary Series](#)

Gospel According to John And the Johannine Letters

Publisher: Liturgical Press (November 29, 2005)

ISBN-13: 978-0814628638

Paperback: 141 pages

New Collegeville Bible Commentary

Concise and accessible, this one-volume edition of the New Collegeville Bible Commentary: New Testament - This allows readers to explore any or all of the books with just one resource alongside their Bibles.

ISBN: 978-0-8146-3260-4

Price: \$29.95

Publication Date: January 2009

The complete text of each New Testament book is given, with the commentary on the same or facing page. Review aids and discussion topics make the series eminently practical and useful for individual or group Bible study.

Books are paperback, 6 x 9,

ISBN: 978-0-8146-3157-7

Price: \$75.00

The Catholic Bible, Personal Study Edition: New American Bible (Paperback)

Paperback: 2304 pages (\$32 - \$40)

Publisher: Oxford University Press, USA; 2nd edition (February 9, 2007)

ISBN-13: 978-0195289251

Good article ["Approaching the Sacred Scriptures" By Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch](#)

[Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: John](#)

Published by [Ignatius Press](#)

Paperback: 71 pages (\$10)

ISBN: 9780898708202

Jesus of Nazareth

by Pope Benedict XVI (Author)

Hardcover, Softcover, Audio CD : 400 pages (\$10 - 25)

Publisher: Doubleday (May 15, 2007)

ISBN-13: 978-0385523417

Think of this is a gospel commentary/ study book by the chief theologian of the Catholic Church.

These books and others mentioned in this document are available from the publisher, your local bookstore, or from a few online booksellers.

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Appendix 4 – Resources for The Liturgy of the Hours

Shorter Christian Prayer (leather bound \$15-\$18)

Publisher: [Catholic Book Publishing Company](#) (July 1999)

ISBN-13: 978-0899424231

(This title is produced in both paperback and leather, I recommend the leather for a few more \$.)

Christian Prayer: The Liturgy of the Hours (Leather Bound - one volume book \$29-\$36)

Publisher: [Catholic Book Publishing Company](#) (December 1999)

ISBN-13: 978-0899424064

Christian Prayer (complete four volume series \$144-\$169)

Publisher: [Catholic Book Publishing Company](#) (July 1999)

ISBN-13: 978-0899424118

A few books to help understand how to pray the Liturgy of the Hours:

Lord, Open My Lips: The Liturgy of the Hours As Daily Prayer

Publisher: North Bay Books (August 2004) (Paperback \$10-\$12)

ISBN-13: 978-0972520089

The Divine Office for Dodos: A Step-By-Step Guide to Praying the Liturgy of the Hours

Publisher: [Catholic Book Publishing Corporation](#) (July 2008) (Paperback \$9)

ISBN-13: 978-0899424828

Saint Joseph Guide for the Liturgy of the Hours

Publisher: [Catholic Book Publishing Corporation](#), Paperback \$2.75

This small pamphlet has the page numbers for each day's prayers. A new guide is produced for every year. The Christian Prayer book ships with the current year's copy of this guide.

Shorter Christian Prayer does not have a guide, because it works on a simple four-week cycle.

The [St. Thomas More House of Prayer](#) is dedicated to the mission of praying and promoting the Liturgy of the Hours. They have a well-organized web site that includes a listing of which prayers (by page number) to say for both the single volume and the 4 volume books. Free

[The eBrevary website](#) offers daily Liturgy of the Hours prayers, including Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer, in Adobe PDF formats. Some is free and some is by subscription.

[Universalis Publishing Ltd.](#) has a web site dedicated to The Liturgy of the Hours on the new electronic media. The Liturgy of the Hours is readable on the Internet, downloadable to your PC, cell Phone, Pocket PC and Apple iPhone / iTouch. (Some free, some pay)

iBreviary for iPhone and iTouch is available in the Apple App Store \$0.99. The application stores one day's worth of prayers, so each day the data needs to be refreshed.

See this link for a short article on [the Liturgy of the Hours](#) .

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Appendix 5 – Additional Resources

Catechism of the Catholic Church: Second Edition

Hardcover: 825 pages (\$10 to \$15)

Publisher: Doubleday (March 4, 2003)

ISBN-13: 978-0385508193

The book is available online to read for free at the [US Conference Catholic Bishops web site](#).

Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) <http://www.ewtn.com/>

A nice list of [popular prayers](#) is available for free on the web site:

Some inspiration to help you reach the next stage of Prayer:

[Prayer - Quality Time With Your Father Podcast by Fr. John Riccardo](#)

[I thirst – Podcast by Fr. John Riccardo, Prayer Series, part 1](#)

[Why does God Say No – Podcast by Fr. John Riccardo, Prayer Series, part 3](#)

[The Lord's Prayer - Podcast by Fr. John Riccardo, Prayer Series, part 4](#)

A few resources for the listing of weekly and daily mass readings:

The [monthly print magazine Magnificat](#) will have them.

The [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops web site](#) lists all Mass readings.

Daily Mass Readings are also [available in Podcast form](#) from the USCCB.

Apostolic Letters from Pope John Paul II

[Novo Millennio Ineunte](#), “At the Beginning of the New Millennium”, January 6, 2001

[Spiritus Et Sponsa](#), “Spirit and Bride”, December 4, 2003

[Rosarium Virginis Mariae](#), "The Rosary of the Virgin Mary", October 16, 2002

Resources for mediation and contemplation:

Prayer Primer : Igniting a Fire Within

By: Fr. Thomas Dubay, S.M.

Paperback: 188 pages (\$9 - \$11)

Publisher: Charis Books (April 2002)

ISBN-13: 978-1569553398

Fire Within: St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, and the Gospel-On Prayer

By: [Fr. Thomas Dubay, S.M.](#)

Paperback: 358 pages (\$14 - \$20)

Publisher: Ignatius Press (September 1989)

ISBN-13: 978-0898702637

The Fulfillment of All Desire

By Ralph Martin

Paperback: 496 pages (\$13 - \$18)

Publisher: Emmaus Road Publishing (2006)

ISBN-13: 978-1931018364

[The Jesus Prayer, an Article by Sr. Ruth Starman, OSB](#)

[A letter on meditation from the Roman Curia](#) by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger Oct 1989

Resources for Lectio Divina:

<http://spiritualorientations.com/intro2lectio.html>

<http://www.fisheaters.com/lectiodivina.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina

[Lecto Divina – Podcast by Fr. John Riccardo, Prayer Series, part 2](#)

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Appendix 6 – Your Personal Prayer Program Part A - Creating Your Personal Prayer List

By the time you are into the Comfortable stage, you should be able to build your personal prayer list. Start by reviewing the sample prayer list that is at the end of the Casual stage (page 8). Create your own list using whatever prayers you wish. When you get to the Committed stage, add more to the list, using your experience with the Bible as an additional source. When you get to the Deep stage, add a prayer you write yourself.

Suggestions on what to include in the list:

- basic prayers
- prayers from your prayer book
- some prayers you saw online
- part or all of a Psalm (one line or a paragraph, or the whole Psalm)
- A prayer or two from your devotion(s), or novena
- A favorite line or two from the Gospel or New Testament Letter
- A daily intentions, a place to say your free format prayers

Think about the order of the prayers. Then write your list down. For prayers you have memorized, just list the title. For the others, write the complete text of the prayer. Pray this list when you get up in the morning, or go to sleep. Need something to do on your lunch hour? Bring this prayer list with you to work. Bring it on paper, or email it to yourself then you can read it on your work computer. Most of the web-based email vendors have a way to save "Notes". Email your prayer list to a friend or relative (along with the link to this web site). Create a morning version and a night version of the list. Create a mid-day version to say at lunch.

Another example of a personal prayer list :

- God come to my assistance, Lord make haste to help me.
- Glory be...
- Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me a sinner.
- For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.
- Act of Contrition
- Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful...
- 23rd Psalm
- Angel of God, my guardian dear,...
- (Write your own prayer and say here)
- Personal intentions...
- Free format prayers
- Our Father...
- Hail Mary...
- Sacred Heart of Jesus, make me love you more and more.
- Anima Christi

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Appendix 6, Part B - Build Your Complete Program

Here are some options on what to spend your prayer time on. Pick from the menu and build your complete program, while keeping in mind how much time you want to spend praying. On different nights, do different prayers. For example: Monday night is Rosary, Wednesday night is Divine Mercy Devotion, Friday night is Sacred Heart devotion. All the other evenings do the Liturgy of the Hours. Get creative, there are plenty of options to have variety. Below are four sample programs for 15, 30, 45, and 60 minutes of length.

"Prayer Menu"	Time	"Prayer Menu"	Time

Basic Prayers	2	Liturgy Hours Morning	10 - 12
Personal Prayer List	2 - 5	Liturgy Hours Evening	8 - 10
Prayer Book	5	Liturgy Hours Night	4 - 5
Free Format	5 - 10	Reading Bible	15 - 30
Devotion	10	Listening to God	5 - 10
Prayers on Radio	10 - 15	Morning Commute	5 - 15
Novena	1 - 2	Evening Commute	5 - 15

* Listening to God is a special form of prayer that can start as early as the late Casual stage. This skill will continue to grow and increase as you advance through the stages. Reading the Bible, meditation and contemplation are activities that will help develop the ability to Listen to God. Praying specifically for the ability to hear God is also recommended, along with praying for the gift of Piety.

Option A - 15 minute	Minutes
Morning prayers Basics	1
Morning Prayers Free Form	1
Lunch time	1
After dinner Devotion	10
Before sleep	2
=====	
TOTAL	15

Option C - 45 minute	Minutes
Personal Prayer List	5
Morning commute - free format	10
After dinner - Devotion	10
Liturgy of the Hours - Evening	8
Before Sleep Bible study	15
=====	
TOTAL	48

Option B - 30 minute	Minutes
Morning Personal Prayer List	2
Lunch time	1
After dinner - Devotion	10
Before Sleep Bible study	15
Night Personal Prayer program	2
=====	
TOTAL	30

Option D - 60 minute	Minutes
Liturgy of the Hours - Morning	10
Morning commute - free format	10
Lunch time - Devotion	5
Evening commute - free format	10
Liturgy of the Hours - Evening	8
Bible reading	15
Personal Prayer List	5
=====	
TOTAL	63

The Stages of Prayer

About The Author

The Sacrament of Marriage has blessed Tony Hangartner for many years along with his wife. They are members of Our Lady of Good Counsel parish in Plymouth, Michigan. He enjoys spending time with his sons in Boy Scouts, where he serves as an Assistant Scout Master. He is also a counselor for the Catholic Boy Scout religious emblem “Ad Altare Dei” (Latin: “To the Altar of God”, from Psalm 43), it is a program based on the Seven Sacraments.

His main devotion is the Sacred Heart of Jesus, his favorite book of the Bible is the Gospel of John, and his favorite prayer is the Anima Christie.

Anima Christie

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, heal me.
Blood of Christ, wash me.
Water from the side of Christ, drench me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
Oh good Jesus, hear me.
Within Your wounds, shelter me
From turning away, keep me.
From the evil one, defend me.
In the hour of my death, call me.
And into Your presence, lead me.
That with all your angels and saints,
I will praise You forever and ever.

(Early 14th century, author unknown)