

Lesson 6: Prayer (Communication with God)



If you want to get to know someone, what must you do? First, we must spend time with that person. Second, we must have conversations with them. As we know, there are two parts to any conversation: speaking and listening. If either of these two parts are missing then a one-sided conversation is developed. If we want to get to know God better and to understand what His will is for us, then we must be willing to spend time with Him in prayer.

Prayer is communication with God. Prayer is a dialogue with God in which we must speak and listen. Through prayer, we develop and deepen our relationship with God. Through prayer, we are able to cope with the situations in our lives, no matter how difficult they may be. Through prayer, we begin to understand what God's will is for us and how we can grow in holiness while becoming the people God wants us to be.

Prayer is an essential part of our daily spiritual life. Jesus always prayed to the Father before he went to do anything. If prayer is important to Jesus, then it should also be important to us. Prayer gives us the strength, courage, grace, and guidance to live our lives to the fullest.

Prayer involves turning our heart to God. When a person prays, he enters into a living relationship with God. Prayer is the great gate leading into faith. Someone who prays no longer lives on his own, for himself, and by his own strength. He knows there is a God to whom he can talk. People who pray entrust themselves more and more to God.

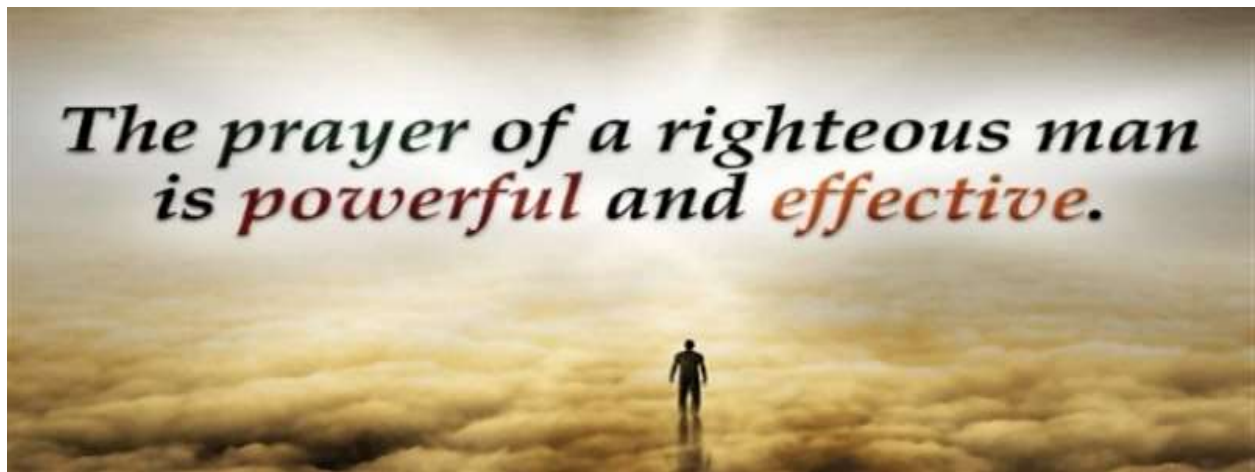
There are **four main types of prayer** sometimes referred to by the acronym word "**ACTS**":

1. **Adoration**: Prayer that acknowledges God as God; prayers that give praise to God.
2. **Contrition**: Prayer that acknowledges that we are sinners in need of God's mercy; prayers that express sorrow for our shortcomings.
3. **Thanksgiving**: Prayers that acknowledge God's many gifts to us; prayers that give thanks to God.
4. **Supplication**: Prayer that acknowledges our need for God's help; prayers that ask God to grant a request.

Why should we pray?

There are several reasons why we need to pray, but the main ones are listed below:

1. We need God's help.
2. We should give God the thanks and praise that He deserves.
3. We need to understand what God's will is for us.
4. We greatly benefit from our time with God.
5. We can focus on what is truly important in life which is our relationship with God.
6. We can assist others with our prayers.



Styles of Prayer

There is no wrong way to pray. However, most people get comfortable with one or two styles of prayer. The key to a successful prayer life is not found in which styles you decide to use but rather in setting aside a time for prayer that works for you.

The various styles of prayer are:

1. Formal Prayer

These are standard prayers that are written out and recited, such as the "Our Father" and the "Hail Mary."

2. Meditation

Reflective prayer. It is that form of mental prayer in which the mind, in God's presence, thinks about God and divine (*heavenly*) things.

3. Silence

Time spent in quite listening to God with the ear of your heart.

4. Eucharistic Adoration

Sitting in the presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

5. Reading Sacred Scripture

Taking time to read from the Bible and reflecting on what God might be saying to you.

6. Lectio Divina (*Latin expression meaning "Divine Reading"*)

Taking a portion of the Scriptures, reading it thoroughly, then placing yourself in the story as one of the characters, and reflecting on what God might be telling you through that character.

7. Open Conversation from the Heart

Talking to God using your own words to express yourself.

8. Breviary

Book of Prayers that are recited five times throughout the day. Deacons, Priests, and Bishops are required to say these prayers daily. The Laity (*people who have not received the sacrament of Holy Orders*) are invited to say these prayers as well.

9. Work

Our work can be prayer when we dedicate it (*or a portion of it*) for the intention of someone and/or something.

10. Devotions

Catholic devotions have various forms, ranging from formalized, multi-day prayers such as novenas to activities which do not involve any prayers, such as the wearing of scapulars and the veneration of the saints. The Rosary is the most popular devotion in the Church.



The Our Father

*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.*

The most popular prayer is the “Our Father.” It is also known as “The Lord’s Prayer” since Jesus taught it to us. The Our Father prayer is comprised of seven petitions. Like the Ten Commandments, these seven petitions are divided into two parts. The first three petitions lead us toward God and they are identified by the word “**thy**.” The first three petitions are:

1. **Hallowed be **thy** name**
This petition allows us to recognize the power and holiness of God’s Name.
2. ****Thy** kingdom come**
This petition allows the Church to look forward to Christ’s final coming and the growth of His kingdom on earth.
3. ****Thy** will be done on earth as it is in heaven**
This petition unites our will to that of the Son to fulfill God’s plan of salvation for us.

The final four petitions of the Our Father prayer offer up our expectations and focus on the mercy of God. These petitions sum up our wants to God and they are identified by the use of the word "**us**." These four petitions are as follows:

1. Give **us** this day our daily bread

This petition asks God to meet our earthly and spiritual needs each day.

2. And forgive **us** our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us

This petition asks God for His mercy through forgiveness. It reminds us of our duty to forgive others for their offenses since God forgives us.

3. And lead **us** not into temptation

This petition asks God to help us avoid the paths that will lead us to sin.

4. But deliver **us** from evil

In this petition, we pray to God with the Church to show forth the victory already won by Christ over Satan.

All prayers end with the word "**Amen**." Amen means "so be it" or "I believe." Therefore, it is an expression of our faith. What we pray is what we believe. By saying "Amen" we are in essence making a verbal contract with God because we are agreeing with everything stated.

The Hail Mary

The first part of the Hail Mary Prayer combines two Scripture verses from the Gospel of Luke while the second portion asks for Mary's intercession or assistance.

In Luke 1:28, the archangel Gabriel appears to Mary and greets her with the expression, "*Hail, Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with you.*" After this greeting, Gabriel presents God's plan of salvation to her and asks if she is willing to be the Mother of God. After this encounter with Gabriel, Mary makes haste to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist. Upon Mary's arrival, Elizabeth greets her with the following words: "*Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb*" (Luke 1:42).

In the final portion of the Hail Mary, we acknowledge that Mary is the Mother of God and we ask for her prayers. We recognized that we are sinners and in need of God's forgiveness. We also ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to pray for us at the hour of our death so that she can help us fight against the devil. The last hours of our earthly existence is the time when Satan works his hardest to pull us away from God. However, when Mary enters the picture, Satan runs in fear. Mary is a very powerful intercessor for us, after all she is the one who got the Lord to perform his first miracle at the wedding feast of Cana. What son would deny his mother's request?



HAIL, MARY,
FULL OF GRACE,
THE LORD IS WITH THEE;
BLESSED ART THOU
AMONG WOMEN,
AND BLESSED IS THE FRUIT
OF THY WOMB JESUS.

HOLY MARY,
MOTHER OF GOD,
PRAY FOR US SINNERS,
NOW AND AT THE
HOUR OF OUR DEATH.
AMEN.

The Rosary

The Rosary is the most popular of all the devotions in the Catholic Church. It is a great way for us to enter into the mysteries of our faith. There are four sets of mysteries to the Rosary: the Joyful Mysteries; the Luminous Mysteries; the Sorrowful Mysteries; and the Glorious Mysteries. The Rosary is a great way to reflect on the lives of Christ and his mother, Mary. These four sets of mysteries contain a summary of Jesus' life and his supreme role in **Salvation History** (*the history of our Redemption and Salvation won for us by Christ*).

The chart below illustrates the four sets of mysteries contained in the Rosary. It also presents the typical day of the week each mystery is prayed. Please note that each of the four sets of mysteries contains five mysteries upon which to reflect and pray.

The Joyful Mysteries (Mon. & Sat.)	The Sorrowful Mysteries (Tues. & Fri.)	The Glorious Mysteries (Sun. & Wed.)	The Luminous Mysteries (Thurs.)
1. The Annunciation	1. The Agony in the Garden	1. The Resurrection	1. The Baptism in the Jordan
2. The Visitation	2. The Scourging at the Pillar	2. The Ascension of Our Lord	2. The Wedding at Cana
3. The Birth of Our Lord	3. The Crowning with Thorns	3. The Descent of the Holy Spirit	3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God
4. The Presentation in the Temple	4. The Carrying of the Cross	4. The Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven	4. The Transfiguration
5. The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple	5. The Crucifixion	5. The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary	5. The Institution of the Eucharist

Pope John Paul II added The Mysteries of Light, also known as the Luminous Mysteries, in 2002, which consists of the following: The Baptism in the River Jordan (*Matthew 3:13–16*); The Wedding Feast at Cana (*John 2:1–11*); The Preaching of the coming of the Kingdom of God (*Mark 1:14–15*); The Transfiguration (*Matthew 17:1–8*); The Institution of the Holy Eucharist (*Matthew 26*).

The Prayers Needed to Say the Rosary

The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified; died, and was buried. He descended into Hell; the third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven, seated at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from hence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

The Our Father

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.

The Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory Be

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

The Fatima Prayer

O My Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell and lead all souls to heaven, especially those in most need of Thy mercy. Amen.

Hail, Holy Queen

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve, to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us; and after this our exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb Jesus, O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ. O God, whose only-begotten Son, by His life, death, and resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal salvation; grant we beseech Thee, that meditating upon these mysteries of the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

How to Pray the Rosary

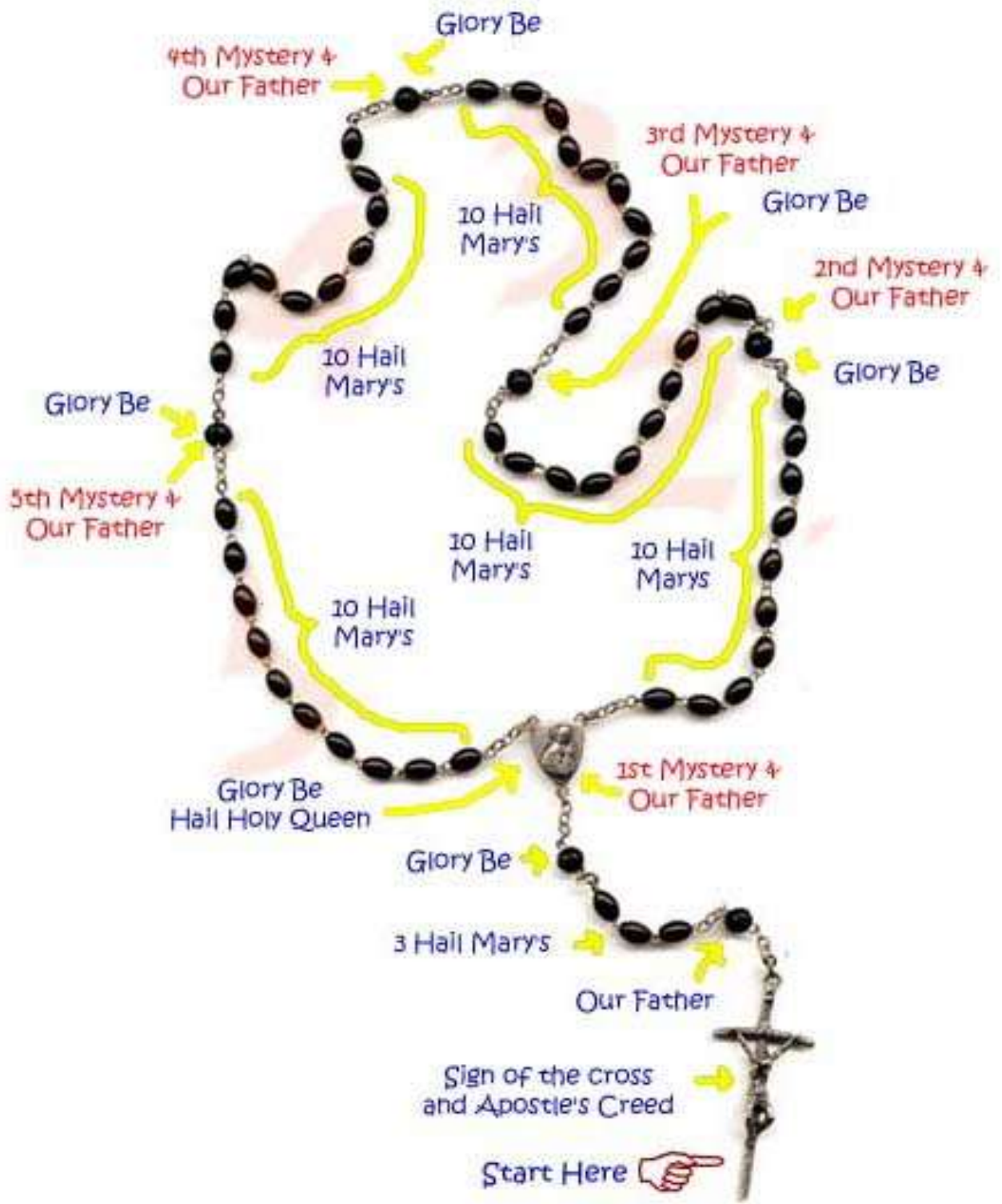
1. On the crucifix, make the sign of the cross and then pray the Apostles' Creed.
2. On the next large bead (*directly above the crucifix*), say the Our Father prayer.
3. On the following three small beads, pray three Hail Marys (*one on each bead: for an increase in **Faith** on the first bead; for an increase in **Hope** on the second bead; and for an increase in **Charity** on the third bead*).
4. On the chain (*after the last of the three Hail Mary beads and before the single large bead*), pray the Glory Be.
5. On the large bead, announce the first mystery and pray the Our Father prayer.
6. Skip the centerpiece medallion, pray one Hail Mary on each of the **ten beads** (*called a "decade"*). After that, pray one Glory Be on the chain before the next large bead.

Although a decade is 10, these 12 prayers (*Our Father, 10 Hail Marys, and the Glory Be*) form a decade of the Rosary. Many Catholics add the Fatima Prayer after the Glory Be and before the next Our Father; however, this is optional.

7. Repeat the process of introducing the Mystery and praying the Our Father on the large, singular bead, one Hail Mary on each of the ten smaller beads, and the Glory Be on the chain for the remaining four decades/mysteries. The Fatima Prayer is optional.
8. At the end of your Rosary, the Hail Holy Queen prayer may be said. This is an optional prayer. End with the sign of the cross.



The following diagram presents a visual version of how to pray the Rosary.





Fall asleep praying the Rosary. It is better than counting sheep.



Say it in moments of sadness or spiritual drought.



If you can't pray a whole Rosary at once, break it into parts.



Carry a Rosary in your pocket.



Use each mystery to ask for a particular intention.



Say it while you wait (for example, at the bus stop)



Pray while you walk and think of the people in your life.

TIPS TO PRAY THE ROSARY EVERY DAY



Recite the Rosary while doing chores or while you work out.



Use images and music. The Rosary is a contemplative prayer.



If you're upset, pray for the situation that worries you.



Another popular devotion is the Stations (*or Way*) of the Cross. This is especially popular on Fridays during the Lenten Season. Lent is the 40 day period of preparation for the celebration of Easter. Lent is a time to focus on the sufferings of our Lord. The Stations of the Cross provide a great summary of the events that took place on **Good Friday** (*the day our Lord died on the Cross*). Some of the stations are not found in Scripture, but are rooted in Tradition. **Tradition** refers to all of divine revelation, from the dawn of human history to the end of the apostolic age, as passed on from one generation of believers to the next, and as preserved under divine guidance by the Church established by Christ.

There are many different ways to pray the Stations of the Cross. The standard way is to pray this devotion in a group. A priest or deacon usually introduces each station and recites a brief meditation followed by the crowd praying the second portion of the reflection. There are 14 Stations which provide a reflective journey with the Lord as he makes the ultimate sacrifice for humanity. The 14 Stations of the Cross are as follows:

Jesus is condemned to death

Jesus takes up his Cross

Jesus falls for the first time

The Virgin Mary meets Jesus

Simon of Cyrene is made to help Jesus bear the Cross

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Jesus falls for the second time

Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

Jesus falls for the third time

Jesus is stripped of his garments

Jesus is crucified

Jesus dies on the Cross

Jesus is taken down from the Cross

Jesus is laid in the tomb

The Stations of the Cross

1. Jesus is condemned to death



2. Jesus takes up His cross



3. Jesus falls the first time



4. Jesus meets His mother



5. Simon helps Jesus carry the cross



6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus



7. Jesus falls the second time



8. Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem



9. Jesus falls the third time



10. Jesus is stripped of His clothing



11. Jesus is nailed to the cross



12. Jesus dies on the cross



13. Jesus is taken down from the cross



14. Jesus is buried in the tomb



Sacramentals

Sacramentals are sacred signs instituted by the Church and they prepare us to receive the fruits of the sacraments. They also sanctify various circumstances of our lives. In other words, Sacramentals are sacred signs that bring us closer to God's grace and they help us develop an attitude of prayer, faith, holiness, and devotion.

The word "Sacramental" means "little sacrament." Sacramentals help us to grow in faith and thus increase our love for the sacraments of the Church. They are things set apart and blessed by the Church to excite good thoughts and to increase devotion in those who see and/or use them. The use of sacramentals is like working out with weights, the more we use them the stronger our faith becomes. However, sacramentals are not magic; they are not good luck charms. The purpose of sacramentals is to provide an occasion for a deeper relationship with God.

There are two types or classes of sacramentals: holy actions and holy objects. **Holy Actions** are things we can do. For example, make the sign of the cross, pray, genuflecting, bowing, or a blessing. **Holy Objects** are blessed items such as: rosaries, scapulars, religious medals, crucifixes, bibles, ashes, palms, oils, candles, statues, holy water, and incense.

Below is a list of the most common sacramentals.

Types of sacramentals

- Exorcism
- Holy Water
- Rosaries
- Candles
- Icons
- Holy images
- Holy vessels
- Incense
- Relics
- Blessed Palms
- Bibles
- Scapulars
- Medals
- Crosses
- Bow
- Bells
- Genuflection
- Prayers



Remember, there are many different ways to pray. There is no wrong way to pray, but practice makes perfect. The key to a healthy prayer life is to set aside a standard time for prayer each day. Prayer is conversation with God. The more we talk and listen to God the more we grow to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him. Prayer is to the spiritual life, what air is to our physical life. Without air we cannot live; without prayer, we spiritually die.

Mass is the ultimate form of prayer and worship because it is a re-presentation of the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. The next lesson will cover the Mass and its importance in our spiritual journey.