

# **My Catholic Worship! Study Group**

## **Session 8 - Prayer**

### **Pre-meeting Prep**

Participants should be asked to read Chapters Ten and Eleven of the *My Catholic Worship!* book prior to this meeting.

### **5 minutes - Gather**

Snacks and informal social time as people arrive. Try to be punctual and gather everyone together no longer than 5 minutes after the scheduled starting time.

### **5-10 minutes - Opening prayer and Scripture**

Everyone sits quietly as the leader begins with the Sign of the Cross and then invites a period of silence in the following way:

***"Let us quiet ourselves as we begin this study of our glorious Catholic worship together. 'Lord, as we sit here for a minute in silence, help each one of us to bring our own questions, concerns, fears, and joys to You. Help us, in this moment of silence, to be attentive to Your gentle voice speaking to us, directing us, and calling us to a deeper faith.'"***

Take about a minute in silence with eyes closed so that each person can speak to our Lord about their own particular cares and concerns.

Leader reads the following invitation:

***Let us ponder the Word of God. Let us reflect upon our own faith journey with the following questions: Do I believe? How deep is my faith? Am I open to letting God speak to me? Am I open to the Word of God and willing to let God's truth sink in more deeply? Am I willing to let this new faith change my life?***

The leader of the session prayerfully reads the following Scriptures, one at a time, pausing for about 30 seconds between each verse:

Luke 18:9-13: [Jesus] then addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else. "Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, 'O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity - greedy, dishonest, adulterous - or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.' But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner'.

Luke 1:38: Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."

Luke 1:46-55: And Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Matthew 6:5-13: When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. 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. In praying, 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. "This is how you are to pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and do not subject us to the final test, but deliver us from the evil one.

Leader then says: ***Let us take a moment in silence to reflect upon these words.*** (a minute of silence)

The Leader invites everyone to pray silently as the leader prays the following prayer out loud:

***Lord, please teach us to pray. Teach us the meaning of prayer and how best to pray each and every day. Guide us in our life of prayer so that we can enter into a deeper relationship with You.***

***Lord, as we learn to pray and enter into prayer, help us to meet You and to be consumed by Your presence. May we enter into a deep and personal relationship with You in our life of prayer. May our prayer encompass every part of our day.***

The prayer time concludes with everyone professing 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 rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence 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.***

#### **45-50 minutes - Discussion questions**

Each person should be invited to share something or ask a question if he/she chooses to regarding the questions/discussion starters below. Go through one question at a time, and give each person an opportunity to say something if he/she chooses. Avoid having one or two persons dominate the discussion. Go around the circle and do not be afraid to share! Your insights might assist someone else in their understanding of the topics. Your question might very well be the same question someone else has. Some of the questions below will invite a personal sharing; other questions will invite you to share with others what you read in the chapter for this discussion. The goal is to share personally and to make sure that the faith of our Church is clearly expressed and understood by all.

1. Humility is the foundation of prayer. Discuss why that is. How does humility help increase the power of one's prayer?
2. Our Blessed Mother is the perfect model of prayer. This is especially seen in her fiat. She prayed, "Let it be done to me according to Your will." Discuss Mary's fiat as the perfect model of prayer.
3. Why did Jesus pray? He was God, so why did He need to pray? Discuss His prayer life as seen in the Scripture.
4. Briefly discuss the three basic forms of prayer: vocal, meditation, and contemplation. How do they differ? What is unique to each form? What's the ideal form of prayer and why?
5. Many people struggle with prayer. Some of the most common struggles with prayer are distraction, dryness, lack of faith, filial trust, and praying consistently. Discuss these difficulties and share your own experience with prayer.
6. The Lord's Prayer is a summary of the whole Gospel and the perfect model of prayer. Discuss the following in regard to the Lord's Prayer:
  1. What does it mean to call God "Father?"
  2. Why do we call God's name "hallowed?"
  3. What do we mean when we pray that His "kingdom come?"
  4. When we pray, "Thy will be done..." we pray a deep prayer of surrender. Discuss what would happen if we truly meant this prayer 100%.
  5. What does "Our daily bread" refer to?

6. Discuss how forgiveness of others directly relates to God forgiving us.
7. “Lead us not into temptation” can be confusing. God does not “lead us” into temptation. This especially means “Let us not be led into temptation.” Discuss the greatest temptations of our day and age.
8. The evil one is real. We pray that God will deliver us from the evil one. Discuss demonic activity in our day and age and the best way to combat it.

### **20 minutes - Final Reflections and sharing**

Go around and give each person an opportunity to share what might have stood out the most to them from the discussion or what left them the most confused, so as to gain further clarity or insight from others.

### **5 minutes - Closing prayer**

Leader begins with the Sign of the Cross and invites a minute of silence with all eyes closed. Each person should reflect upon what was discussed, especially what stood out to him/her the most.

Leader then prays the following prayer:

***Lord, You taught Your apostles to pray when they asked. Help us to now pray Your perfect prayer from our hearts: (Pray the “Our Father” prayer three times as a group, pausing briefly between each time. Try to truly pray it, and not just say it.)***

Leader then invites everyone present to offer their own prayer in the following way (Note: This can be done out loud, but it might be preferable if it's done in silence at the discretion of the leader):

***Let us now each bring our own personal concerns before our Lord, trusting that He hears us and knows all we need. Let us entrust these prayers to Him with full confidence that He desires to take control.***

(Take a minute of silence for each person to speak to God about their own personal needs).

Leader then invites everyone to close with the Hail Mary and Glory Be.