

5 ways to pray: A balanced Catholic prayer diet

Jesus is the greatest example of living a faithful life dedicated to God. He learned to pray at home from his parents, particularly from his mother, Mary. She prayerfully listened and pondered in her heart every encounter, teaching and lesson of her faith. We learn to pray in our families, through religious education and at Mass. Thinking of prayer in terms of a “prayer diet” is a fun way to teach kids the different ways to pray. Traditionally, Catholic prayer includes blessing and adoration, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise. Use the printable at the end of this article to encourage kids to think about what kinds of prayers they pray.

Blessing and adoration

Prayers of adoration, like those seen in the Scriptures with the visit of the shepherds and wise men to the infant Jesus, teach us to worship. Worship is a fitting response to believing in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. We adore Jesus in word, song, silence and even action, especially in the Mass.

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits . . . who satisfies you with good as long as you live” (Psalm 103:2, 5).

- Sing or pray the psalms.
- Practice [Eucharistic Adoration](#).

Petition or Contrition

Contrition means to be sorry for things we did or failed to do that have hurt our relationship with God. If you have ever had someone offer you a sincere apology for hurting you, the power of this type of prayer probably hits home. Acknowledging you

have made a poor or wrong choice takes courage and, therefore, very much pleases Jesus. Forgiveness is the heart of Jesus' teaching, making this a very special prayer for us to offer.

"Forgiveness, the quest for the Kingdom, and every true need are objects of the prayer of petition" (CCC, 2646).

- Pray the Our Father, which contains the fundamental elements of petitionary prayer in its requests for the coming of God's kingdom, our daily needs, and the forgiveness of our sins.
- Do an [Examination of Conscience](#), and then offer a general prayer asking God's forgiveness.
- Encourage kids to write prayers in a prayer journal.

Intercession

Another way of understanding intercession is that it is simply asking. This type of prayer compels a person to put aside their desires and trust in the goodness of the Lord. There are many things we probably wish God would give or do for our families, or ourselves, because God loves us; he allows us to come to him and ask, to petition in prayer these requests. Supplication requires humility, which means that, no matter what we are asking, we remember the answer is always up to God, who is all-knowing and will assure we get what is best for us.

- Keep a list of your prayer intentions on the refrigerator, or in some other public place.
- Pray intercessory prayers in the responsorial style used during Mass: "For (intention), let us pray to the Lord; Lord, hear our prayer" (or another suitable response).
- Try to think of a broad range of intercessory prayers: for members of your family, friends and neighbors, community members, the sick and poor and lonely, those affected by conflict or unjust situations, the Church,

and political leaders.

Thanksgiving

Blessed Solanus Casey, a humble Capuchin priest, used to advise people to “thank God ahead of time,” whatever their prayer might be. He knew that God would answer every prayer, even if God’s answer was different than the one for which the person had prayed for. Blessed Solanus understood God’s great love for us, especially as our Father, and how thankful we should be at the excellent care he provides each of us. How often do we remember to thank God for not only the special blessings we receive but also for the daily care he provides.

Prayer of thanksgiving flows from the recognition that everything is a gift from God. Nurturing an “attitude of gratitude” helps us see everything as gift—even our sorrows and suffering (see CCC, 2648).

- Try praying a family litany of thanks.
- Keep a gratitude journal (or a wall poster for posting “thankful thoughts”).
- Practice a [Daily Examen](#) in order to better recognize and name God’s gifts.

Praise

Praise is a movement of the heart that lauds God for who he is and not for what he does for us. God, by his very nature, is always worthy of our praise. Prayers of praise are an excellent remedy to a grumpy mood, as it shares in the blessed happiness of God. We can praise by simply lifting our eyes toward heaven and smiling at how truly good God is.

“Prayer of praise is entirely disinterested and rises to God, lauds him, and gives him glory for his own sake, quite beyond what he has done, but simply because HE IS” (CCC, 2649).

- Sing a song of praise.
- Practice praising God spontaneously; invoke the help of

the Holy Spirit to speak through your prayer.

- You can also listen to songs of praise while in the car or even around the house, letting your spirit silently join the words of the singer.

Activity: What does your “prayer plate” look like?

You can help your kids think about the five forms of prayer with this simple activity.

- Download our [worksheet](#).
- Talk about how you might “balance out” your family prayer style this week.
- At the end of the week, revisit the plate. How have the “portions” changed in the past week?

Learn more

[Catechism of the Catholic Church #2626–2649](#)