

## Prayer, Part 5

Last week's article, in this series on prayer, emphasized prayer before our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament – stopping by the church to pay Him a visit. There is a real person, the person of Jesus, sitting in the tabernacle and He sits there and waits for you to come. Before continuing on with how to pray, or ways to pray, or forms of prayer, this might be a good place to say a quick word about the term “adoration.” Sometimes people call Exposition or visits to the Blessed Sacrament adoration – taking that as *the* meaning of adoration. There's nothing wrong with using the word adoration in that very particular way, it's very common, and I will probably often do the same. But in the Church, the word adoration does have a broader meaning. Adoration is more of a “mindset” in prayer, similar to the humility spoken of before. Briefly, it means acknowledging God as God and my dependence on Him. Thus, ‘adoration,’ in this fuller sense of the word, is a necessary part of all prayer.

It is not at all uncommon to think that prayer means vocal prayer, formulary prayers, prayers with set words; it's not uncommon for people to think that they're not praying unless they are using vocal prayers. Without setting aside “vocal prayer,” one thing that will need some emphasis is mental prayer and especially what is often called meditation. However, since vocal prayer is good, is an indispensable aid in prayer, and is so common, before coming to these other aspects of prayer or types of prayer, it might be helpful to say a few more words about some specific vocal prayers.

Let us start with something very basic, namely meal prayers. Do you pray before you eat? If not, start – today. While this is for everybody, it is especially true for families. It is one of the ways families need to pray together. And do it always – including in public. If you go to a restaurant, pray before you eat – regardless of who you are with but especially if you are with your family. You don't need to put on a show, just do it – simply, humbly, matter-of-factly and then eat, period, that's it – pray and then eat, nothing out of the ordinary. Are you afraid? Well, would you be ashamed to acknowledge your mom or dad or son or daughter in public? If so, that's a problem that needs to be overcome. Do you really want to deny our Lord because of what somebody else might think? How long must we be controlled by this demon of human respect? Do you think so little of your own well-being that you'll give such control of yourself over to others? We cannot get to Heaven without fortitude. It's a good opportunity to exercise (and thus strengthen) that virtue. If somebody looks at you funny or turns their nose up at you, so be it, that's not your problem it's theirs. Bear it for the sake of the Beloved, without anger, shame, or fear. Our good Lord bore with much more for our sake. Pray before you eat. Don't make it optional, don't make it a big deal, don't pat yourself on the back for it, and don't be ashamed. Just speak to the Lord, giving Him genuine thanks, and that's it.

No discussion of vocal prayer would be complete without mentioning the holy Rosary. Whole chapters of books or even whole books could be, and have been, dedicated to the Holy Rosary. We cannot do it justice here but perhaps a few things can be mentioned here. St Louis de Montfort, a French priest from the late 1600's and early 1700's and a great Marian theologian, stated that the Holy Rosary is second only to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in terms of its efficacy (or “effectiveness”). This should not be surprising since our Holy Mother is the greatest of all creatures and thus the greatest intercessor. It is the joy of the saint to intercede for others and so our Lord grants this favor to His friends. Some time ago one of the bulletin articles presented the 15 Promises of the Rosary. I like to reread these at times. These came through some of Dominican saints & mystics of the Church and are approved by the Church. They are inspiring. They can inspire a person to really pray the Rosary and thus also help get rid of pesky distractions. But they do more than that. These promises can inspire a person to really follow the Lord with their whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. They can reorient a person's thinking. It's so easy to get drug into an earthbound way of thinking. These great promises remind us of the *true* purpose of this life. They lead me to say things like: you are a good Lord, please Lord, please Holy Mother, help me; please place in me a great love of our Lord and an unrelenting desire to do His will. There are cards with these promises on them and I hope, at some point, to keep them stocked in the back of each church. In the meantime, you can find them on the internet and/or order some of your own. Much of what has been said here is addressing the question of: why pray the Rosary. It is not a bad question, but we have not yet given the main reason, and that reason is simply: because our Lord, often through His Mother, has

asked us to. The greatest reason is: because God said so. Is this not enough? Once we know that, do we need to know more if He is truly the Beloved? At all 6 of the apparitions at Fatima, apparitions which were confirmed with a stupendous miracle, our Holy Mother said to the children: pray the Rosary every day. Pray the rosary for the salvation of souls; pray it for my own salvation and those close to me; pray in reparation for my sins and those of the whole world. The request for the Rosary comes from Heaven. Finally, *parents*...if you don't teach your kids to "seek first the Kingdom of Heaven," chances are they will never do it. A great teacher of that very thing would be a family Rosary once a week. Every once in a while, before you start your Rosary, you could review with the kids why you pray the Rosary; you could occasionally review, for example, the 15 promises and point out that one thing they're reminding us of is that getting to Heaven is *the* purpose of this life. Parents, do not be afraid to be parents. Fathers especially, lead your families in the life of faith. It is your God-given right and duty. If you do not protect your kids from the fires of hell, who will?

Continuing on with particular vocal prayers, we have spoken before about the Divine Mercy Chaplet. Briefly, in the early 1900's our Lord appeared to a simple, humble, Polish nun by the name of Sr Faustina – today known as St Faustina. One of the things He imparted to her was the Divine Mercy Chaplet. It is a special appeal to His mercy. As mentioned before, our Lord empowers certain prayers, by His own good will and design, and the Divine Mercy Chaplet is one of those prayers. Our Lord also commended it for those who are dying. As laid out by a number of saints, like St Alphonsus Liguori for example, people experience certain intense temptations during the time of death, meant especially to bring them to despair. Our Lord made special promises that He Himself – the *all*-powerful one – would come to the aid of those who pray this Chaplet, or have it prayed for them by others. If you want to really love your family members, especially in their most difficult time – at the time of their death – learn the Divine Mercy Chaplet. There are plenty of places, on the internet for example, that tell how to pray this Chaplet. Here again I hope, at some point, to keep the back of the churches stocked with Divine Mercy Images that have the prayers of the Chaplet on the back.

If someone goes through their whole life without ever really contemplating the Passion of our Lord, they have wasted their life. Love of God is what gets a person to Heaven and nothing provokes love of our Lord like contemplation of (really pondering) His Passion. One of the Church's great prayers for doing exactly that are the Stations of the Cross. As I have said before, and will continue to say, this great devotional practice is believed to go all the way back to our Holy Mother. It is said that Mary walked the entire path our Lord took to Calvary every day after His Passion, meditating upon this great act of love that He had performed along the whole way. Does someone here know how to pray better than our Holy Mother? Do you know better than Mary what is pleasing to our Lord? If anyone thinks such a thing, they have either slipped and hit their head on something very hard or they have a heart severely hardened by the sin of pride. What a shame and tremendous loss it is that families coming to Stations of the Cross on Fridays during Lent has fallen almost completely by the wayside. Only you can restore it. If you don't do extra things for the faith as a family, you place the eternal life of your kids in great jeopardy. We need to know the invincible love of God, kids need to have it anchored in at a young age, and nothing reveals the love of God for each individual person like the Passion of our Lord.

While we have covered here a few of the more prominent vocal prayers provided by the Church, there are countless others. You might consider purchasing a Daily Roman Missal. In addition to all of the readings and prayers for Mass for every year, it also has a number of very nice prayers and a little bit of instructional material in the back. It would be something nice to familiarize your children with. The little blue booklet: The Catholic Devotional, is also a good source for many more vocal prayers, including many short ones like the Memorare. Don't try to do them all. Pick one or a few and stick with them for a while. Finally, when speaking of "vocal prayers," we must continuously remind ourselves that vocal prayers are not something like magic incantations. Everyone will say, oh well no of course not I know that, and yet all too often when they speak about some of these prayers they indicate otherwise! Nor is vocal prayer just a matter of rattling off words. Remember, especially with vocal prayer, that prayer is raising your mind to God, conversation with God. One Memorare, prayed thoughtfully, simply, sincerely, humbly, with real recollection is worth more than even multiple Rosaries that are just rattled off.

God bless you, Fr Kuhn.