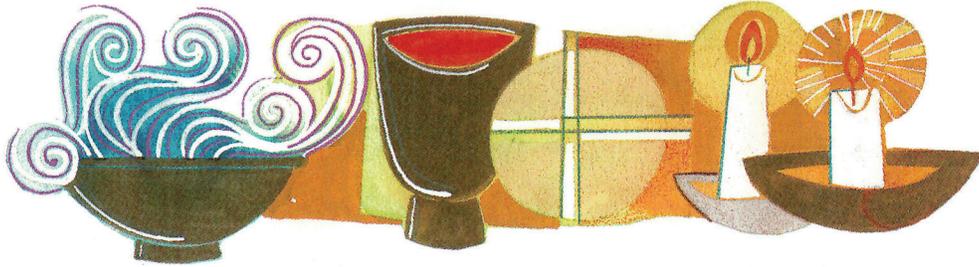


Spirit of Prayer

**1**

Before you begin, please read the introduction on the right to yourself.

Prayer is a very important dimension of living as a Christian. Prayer is both private and communal. Within these two broad categories are a great variety of options. Prayer is our response to God's love in our lives. The communal prayer central to our Catholic beliefs is the sacrament we call the Eucharist.

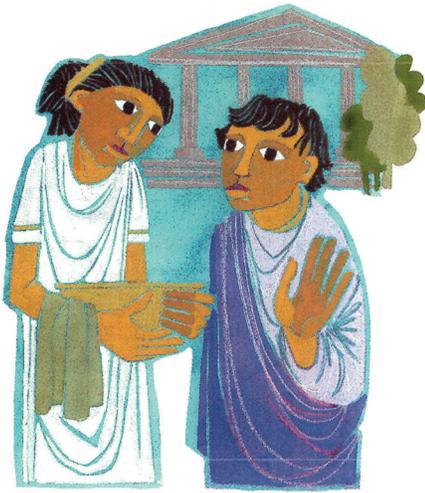
2

With the help of your child, prepare the meeting space. Pull out your Bible, light some candles, and add any other decoration you'd like to make the space beautiful.

Then begin with a prayer.

3

Getting started. There is no right or wrong place to pray. In fact, you can pray anytime, anywhere! Is there someplace where it's easier for you to pray? Why? Is there someplace where it's harder for you to pray? Why?



1

Read the story below out loud. If your child is old enough, he or she can read it to you. Otherwise, read it to your child. Along the way, clarify anything your child might not understand.

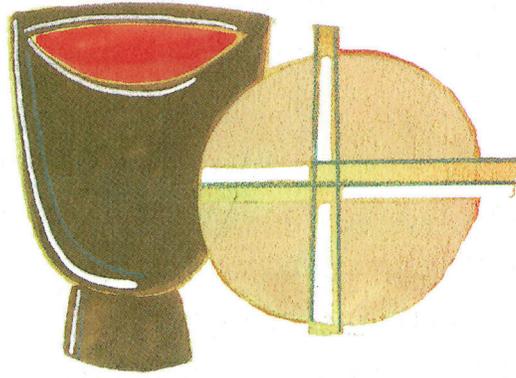
Prayer is spending time with God. When we really like people, we like to be with them. We like to talk to them. We like to go places with them. We even like to watch shows or movies with them. Sometimes we invite them to our house for a sleepover. At a sleepover we can spend lots of time together.

God loves us so much that God is always with us. God talks to us. God goes places with us. God even watches shows and movies with us. God is our very special friend. With God, life is like one big sleepover, because God is always spending time with us. When we spend time with God we call it prayer.

There are all sorts of different ways to pray. When we talk to God about our problems and ask for help, that is prayer. When we thank God for all the good things we have been given, that is prayer. When we do something wrong and tell God we are sorry, that is prayer. When we say “Alleluia! God is good,” that is prayer.

Prayer is when we read stories about Jesus and think about him. Or sometimes we do not have to think or say anything at all. Prayer can just be listening. Sometimes prayer can happen when we are just sitting and watching television after a long day of doing our best. Prayer can be spoken out loud or be just thoughts in our head. Prayer can be straight from our hearts without words or thoughts at all. Prayer can be sung and prayer can be danced. Prayer is any time we spend with God.

Sometimes we pray alone and sometimes we pray with other

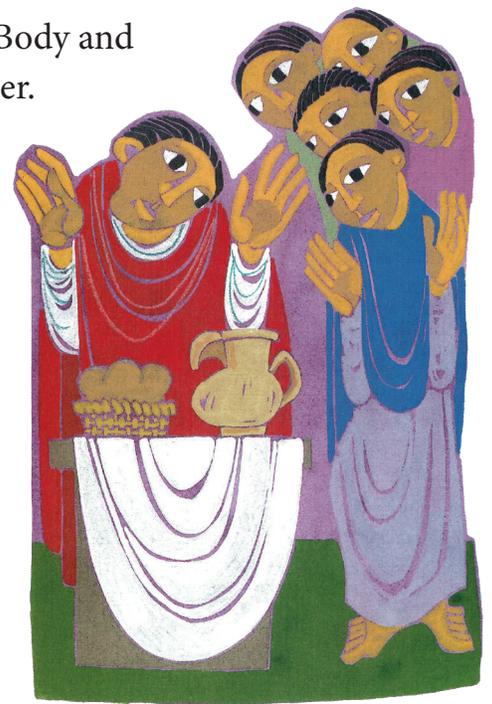


people. Our biggest and best prayer is the Eucharist or the Mass. It is a very special time when God is with us. It is a very special time for us to spend with God.

During the Mass we get to spend time with God in all the ways we have been talking about. We have time to pray alone. And we have lots of time to pray with others. During the Mass we hear about Jesus and the Good News. We even have quiet time to think about Jesus. During the Mass the bread and wine become Jesus' Body and Blood, and the priest offers Jesus' sacrifice to God the Father. During the Mass there is time just to be quiet and listen. And there is time to pray out loud with our brothers and sisters in our Church family.

During the Mass we tell God we are sorry for the things we have done wrong. We ask God for the things that we need. We say, "God is good!" in lots of different ways. And we say "thank you." Did you know that *Eucharist* is the Greek word for "thank you"?

Prayer is a very important part of a Christian's life. It is how we say yes to God, who is always reaching out to us.



2

Now discuss the reading with your child. Use the following or other questions:

1. Out of all the different ways of praying described here, which do you like the best? Why?
2. Do you ever pray on your own? When?

1

Get your child started on the activity on the next page, making sure they understand the instructions. Start by reading the description in the palm of the hand, then have them read each numbered step in order.

Once they can continue on their own, read your next step below.

2

Just for you: The Sacrament of the Eucharist nourishes our relationship with God. There are many different ways to spend time with God in prayer.

There are many ways to pray, but all of them require intention and awareness. We choose to spend time with God. Learning formal prayers helps us pray with others and to pray when our own words fail us.

Spontaneous prayer, aloud or silent, can open our deepest needs to God's care. Praying in community, especially at the Sunday Eucharist, helps us remember that we are part of a family and can help carry us through times of doubt or confusion. Whatever the type, prayer places us firmly in God's presence.

Five-Finger Prayer

4

Our ring finger is our weakest finger. Pray for those who need the most help, such as those who are sick, poor, or vulnerable. Write down some people you want to pray for.

5

On your smallest finger, pray for your own needs, especially for growth of your mind, body, and spirit. Write down something you want to ask God for below.

3

Our tall finger reminds us to pray for leaders and people in authority, such as political leaders, government workers, and police. Write down some leaders below.

2

Using your pointer finger, pray for people who point the way, such as teachers, church leaders, and other role models. Thank God that these people can guide us. Write the names of one or more people on the pointer finger.

1

Your thumb is closest to you. Pray for people who are close to you, like your friends and family. Also thank God that they are in your life. Write names of one or more people close to you on the thumb above.

One way to pray is to ask God for help. This form of prayer is called *petition*.

The Five-Finger prayer is an easy way to make this kind of prayer. Touch each finger as you pray, using them to remind you of who to pray for.

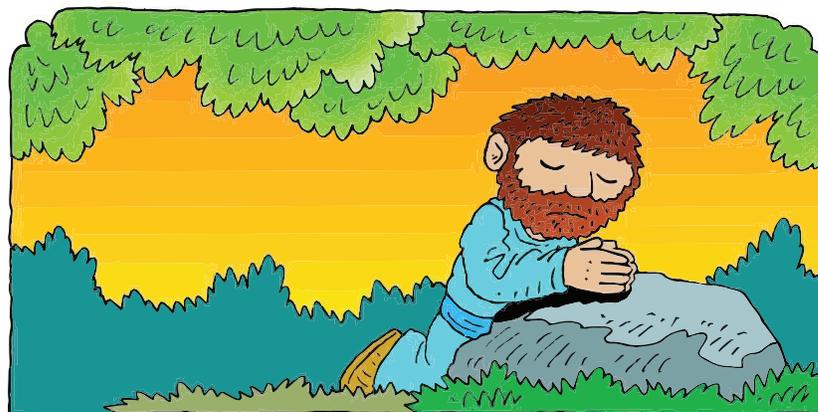
Jesus as Our Model of Prayer

1

In Scripture we see that Jesus prayed in many different ways. Look up the Scripture readings on the next page to see some examples.

2

Next, together list in the left column the ways you notice Jesus praying in those passages. In the right column list the ways you can use Jesus as a model for your own prayer.



Jesus prayed by

We can do this by

Matthew 3:13-17

Matthew 6:5-15

Matthew 14:22-24

Mark 1:35-37

Mark 6:41-44

Luke 4:14-21

Luke 22:39-46

Luke 22:34

Your Prayer Notebook

1

Many prayer books and spiritual resources are available in libraries and bookstores. Start a small notebook with your favorite prayers in it. Ask for a tour of your church so you can see up close the building where the community gathers.



Closing Ritual

2

Eucharist uses the important symbols of bread and wine, which become the Body and Blood of Christ. Place some snack to share between you. Then say whatever form of grace before meals you wish. As you eat, talk about how Jesus ate with his friends, too. Close with the doxology, on the right.

Through Jesus, with Jesus, and in Jesus,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours,
Almighty Father, forever and ever.
Amen.

