

Prayer . . . When Words Won't Come

When we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit . . . expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words.

Romans 8:26, *The Jerusalem Bible*

I don't know what to say, Lord.
My usually facile tongue
races ahead,
lags behind,
entangles itself
in the winding roads of your in-breaking.

You are too much for me!
too vast and too personal,
too profound a proclamation.
too silent a whisper.
How may I speak the unspeakable?
How name the One who has no name?
How read between the lines
of your brilliant, hidden face?
Simplify, Lord.
Simplify me.

Silence the chatter I make to entrap you.
Edit the complicated structures
in which I've enclosed you.

Grant me
a newer syntax,
a mightier metaphor,
a more-than-active verb.

And when I don't know what to say,
keep me quiet, Lord,
and let your Spirit do the talking.

Amen.

Student's Name _____ Date _____

Praying People

Circle one: Male Female

Age: _____

I spend most of my day at: Home Work School

My favorite prayer is _____.

I was _____ years old when I first learned this prayer.

I think that _____ is the person who taught me the most about prayer.

I find that the best time for me to pray is _____.

Things that I use (rosary, Bible, cross, candle, etc.) to help me pray include _____.

I find that my favorite prayer place is _____.

My favorite position/posture for praying is _____.

I pray with other people when _____.

Put a † (small cross) beside any of the following statements that are true for you.

I pray . . .

_____ when tragedy enters my life

_____ when I want something for myself

_____ with my family

_____ with my friends

_____ when I'm thankful

_____ when I want to understand what God wants of me

_____ when I'm happy

_____ when the world seems beautiful to me

_____ for family and friends

_____ at odd moments during the day

_____ for my enemies

_____ only when I'm at church

_____ for anonymous people

_____ simply to praise God

What advice could you offer someone about prayer?

Prayer: Keeping It Simple, Persistent, and Faith-Full

I just do what children have to do before they've learnt to read, I tell God what I want quite simply, without any splendid turns of phrase, and somehow he always manages to understand me.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux *

A Somali family of Mom, Dad, a teen, and a five- or six-year-old boy were standing in a supermarket checkout lane. The parents were conversing in their native language. The little boy was pointing to a shelf full of candy and trying to get his dad's attention. For at least a full minute or maybe two, the little boy kept tugging at his father's pants leg and saying, over and over again in Somali, "Abba, Abba, Abba, Abba!" Finally, "Daddy" turned to his son. The little fellow made it clear that he wanted all the candy on the shelf. His father wisely allowed him to choose one.

When I think about trusting in God and what that means, I think about my dad.

When I was about five years old, my dad and mom took us kids swimming in a deep, clear creek that ran in the valley near our home. My dad took me for a ride on his back. He dog-paddled downstream over deep water where the cold fish swam. Ribbons of water rippled around us, and his strong, even kick sent us gliding over the darkest water I had ever seen. But I wasn't at all afraid, not for a minute.

**The Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux.* John Clarke, O.C.D. (trans.). Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1976, p. 192.

St. Francis of Assisi on the Lord's Prayer

OUR FATHER

most holy, our Creator and Redeemer,
our Savior and our Comforter.

WHO ART IN HEAVEN

in the angels and the saints,
giving them light to know you,
since you, Lord, are light;
setting them afire to love you,
since you, Lord, are love;
dwelling in them
and giving them fullness of joy,
since you, Lord,
are the supreme, eternal good,
and all good comes from you.

HALLOWED BE THY NAME

may we grow to know you better and better
and so appreciate the extent of your favors,
the scope of your promises,
the sublimity of your majesty,
and the profundity of your judgments.

THY KINGDOM COME

so that you may reign in us by your grace,
and bring us to your kingdom,
where we shall see you clearly,
love you perfectly, and,
happy in your company, enjoy you forever.

THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

so that we may love you with all our heart,
by always having you in mind;
with all our soul,
by always longing for you;
with all our mind,
by determining to seek your glory in everything;
and with all our strength,
of body and soul,
by lovingly serving you alone.
May we love our neighbors as ourselves,
and encourage them all to love you,
by bearing our share
in the joys and sorrows of others,
while giving offense to no one.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
so that we may remember and appreciate
how much he loved us
and everything he said and did and suffered.

AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES

in your immeasurable mercy,
by virtue of the passion of your Son,
and through the intercession of Mary,
and all your saints.

AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US

and if we do not forgive perfectly,
Lord, make us forgive perfectly,
so that, for love of you,
we may really forgive our enemies,
and fervently pray to you for them,
returning no one evil for evil,
but trying to serve you in everyone.

AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

be it hidden or obvious,
sudden or persistent.

BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL

past, present or future,
Amen.



Larks or Owls?



Are you a lark or an owl? Larks are best in the morning. When the alarm sounds, they're raring to go. Toward sundown, they're beginning to fade. Owls can barely see straight in the morning. They have to be dragged out of bed, and they wander about dazed for a bit. By nightfall, however, owls are at their sharpest.

Knowing whether you're a lark or an owl can help you plan your day, based on your personal rhythms. It can also help you choose your optimal times for praying. Use the columns below to learn about your best time and the way you most like to pray. In each column, check which item best fits you. Then describe the kind of pray-er you are.



<i>Prayer Place</i>	<i>Prayer Time</i>	<i>Prayer Posture</i>	<i>Prayer Aid</i>	<i>Prayer Beginnings</i>
_____ Bedroom	_____ Early morning	_____ Kneeling	_____ Cross/ crucifix	_____ Being quiet
_____ Church	_____ After breakfast	_____ Standing	_____ Statue	_____ Favorite prayer
_____ Kitchen	_____ Afternoon	_____ Jogging	_____ Song/ Music	_____ Bible verse
_____ Outdoors	_____ Early evening	_____ Sitting	_____ Bible	_____ Praying with own words
_____ Living room	_____ Just before bed	_____ Walking	_____ Journal	
_____ Other	_____ Other	_____ Other	_____ Other	_____ Other
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

I'm a pray-er who . . . _____

Expressing Myself in Prayer

Step 1: Get Ready.

Remember, prayer is a response. So, begin by quieting yourself and listening. Think about what you'd like to say to God. Take a minute to close your eyes and listen with your heart to what God is saying to you. Only then are you ready to respond.

Step 2: Get in Touch with Yourself.

Ask yourself questions like the following:

- What inside me would I like to share with God?
- Is there something for which I'd like to give thanks?
- What would I like to praise God for?
- Are there any changes I'd like God's help in order to make?
- Is there someone or some needs I'd like to bring to God in prayer?

Step 3: Check Out What's Going on Around You.

Ask yourself questions like the following:

- What situations that make me feel happy or sad would I like to tell God about?
- What situations that make me feel angry or moved to help others would I like to share with God?
- What situations confound me and move me to ask God for help in understanding what I must do?

Step 4: Speak to God.

Tell God about yourself and your needs, your family and its needs, your friends and their needs, your community and Church and their needs, and people who are suffering and their needs.

Step 5: Thank God for Listening.

God is always present. Not only does God hear our prayers, but he also knows our thoughts and deepest feelings—even those we don't know ourselves. God is always listening, ever attentive. So, say thank-you to God.

Step 6: Listen as God Thanks You.

God not only listens, God responds. God answers our prayers in many ways. Perhaps not always in ways we expect or hope for, but always in our best interests.