

## Why pray?

The answer to this question "What does God desire for me?" is also the answer to the question "Why pray?"

God desires to be in relationship with each of us. For each of us we can choose to respond to this invitation, to be in right relationship with ourselves, our God, each other and all of creation or we can choose to reject this profound invitation. The choice is ours. If our response is "yes" then we need to ask what makes a relationship strong, healthy and real?

Usually a good relationship is based on people who are willing to "work at it". People need to give time to develop connections, to listen to each other, to share with each other, to be at ease with each other, to sit in comfortable silence with each other, to allow themselves to be vulnerable with each other, to be honest with each other, to be in dialogue with each other. A relationship is based on trust and mutuality.

In our relationship with God then, prayer is the key that unlocks the door to our relationship with God and each other.

There are many ways to pray. The challenge for each of us is to find the style of prayer that enables us to grow in an ever increasing awareness that God desires our response in love. When we come to know that we are loved by God then we can never be the same again. If our relationship with God is strong our focus is directed outwards to the world. If we allow ourselves to be open to the transformative power of prayer then we will always be focused on God's mission in the world.

Why do we pray? We pray to keep our balance, to keep our focus firmly on God, to know that what ever happens God journeys with us. Without prayer we can lose our focus, our direction, our sense of working with God.

To nurture our relationship with God we simply must be people who pray.

## How to pray

Here is a simple template for prayer using the headings *You - Who - Do - Through*. It can be used for any occasion to develop personal or shared prayer.

- You* we begin by naming and addressing God. e.g. 'Loving God', 'God of wisdom and compassion', 'Merciful Father'.
- Who* we recognise who God is for us; an act or quality of God. We recognise the relationship that exists between God and ourselves. e.g. 'Model of forgiveness', 'You guide and protect your people', 'Our strength', 'You are our shepherd'.
- Do* we name what it is that we are asking God to do. e.g. 'Bless us as we...', 'Give comfort to...', 'Give us your strength and courage to...', 'Help us to...'.
- Through* we address our prayers to God through Christ. e.g. 'We ask this through Christ our Lord', 'In the name of Jesus, your Son', 'In Jesus' name', 'Through Jesus, our brother'.

Regular use of this template can make prayer easier and can assist in developing a regular prayer routine. Two examples are listed.

Example 1:

- YOU: God our Father,  
WHO: you have promised to remain forever  
with those who do what is right and just.  
DO: Help us to live in your presence.

THROUGH: We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*(Opening Prayer, 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time, A)*

Example 2 (an on-the-spot grace):

YOU: Gracious God,

WHO: all that we have is your gift to us.

DO: Bless this food that we will share together and those who have prepared it for our enjoyment.

THROUGH: We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Take some time now to create your own prayer using this template. You might like to write a prayer for your family or asking God's blessing on your pilgrimage to WYD08.

You \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Who \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Do \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Through \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Regular prayer is an important part of your preparation in the lead up to World Youth Day. Take time personally and in your community to utilise the prayers you have written to connect with God on your spiritual journey.

*"Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."  
Luke 11:1*

## How to use the Bible to pray?

Using the bible to pray can be a great way to connect with the messages in the Scriptures. This requires reading and re-reading of scripture passages and spending time in reflection and prayer. The outline of a short process for this reflection follows. You may like to use some of the scripture references throughout this book, or use some of your own to practise this reflective process.

### **PREPARE**

**Step 1.** What do you need to do?

- Find a quiet place
- Have the passage of Scripture at hand
- Listen to music if you would like
- Settle in a comfortable space / chair

**Step 2** Place yourself in a comfortable position; either lying on the floor or sitting with your feet on the floor, your back straight and your hands in your lap.

### **RELAX**

**Step 3** As you begin in an attitude of quietness, let the events of the day pass through your mind. Don't hold onto them. You can deal with them later. Listen to the sounds around you. Identify them and again let them go. Don't get "stuck" on them. Don't let them take over your consciousness.

**Step 4** Feel your breathing. Feel your body rising and falling as you draw in fresh breaths of air. Listen to your breathing. Feel yourself slow down and concentrate on your breath. Get used to the rhythmic rising and falling of your chest. Be conscious of your next breath. Be still.

### **READ & LISTEN**

**Step 5** As you begin, ask God for the grace you need this day.

**Step 6** In this stillness, read the words of Scripture quietly.  
Don't stop.  
Then read the words through again slowly.  
What words or images capture you or draw you?  
Sit with these images or phrases. Allow them to speak to you.

### **PRAY**

**Step 7** What is your response? What did you feel or experience? Don't fill the silence with words. Let the words speak to you ... then speak to God in this stillness. What do you want to say to God? Ask now for what you need or desire.

**Step 8** When you feel ready bring your meditation to a close. Finish with a simple prayer, eg the Glory be ... or a similar prayer.  
Allow yourself time to sit for a few minutes in silence.

### **REFLECT**

**Step 9** Engage in a simple review and record your responses in a journal, eg:

- What time did you begin and finish?
- What passage did you use?
- How did you begin?
- What did you understand? What struck you? Where did you stay?
- What was your main attitude ... feeling ... experience (joy, contentment, struggle, etc.)
- Were you distracted? What did you do with the distraction?
- How did you finish?

*Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.  
Colossians 3:16*

Archdiocese of Brisbane 'Faith and Life'

<http://www.bne.catholic.net.au/asp/index.asp?pgid=10643>