



## *A Compassionate Heart:*

*Session 2*

# *Living a Life of Presence Through Prayer*

In the life of faith there are always two movements: God in search of us and we in search of God.

*United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, p. 109*

## *Gathering* (15 minutes)

### *Welcome and Greeting*

Group Members Share:

- One word that describes me today is...
- What did I commit to in Session 1?
- How did I follow through with my commitment?

## *Praying* (15 minutes)

### *Songs*

Traditional songs to sing/play or select a contemporary personal favorite

Companions on the Journey, Carey Landry  
The Summons, John L. Bell  
Taste and See, James E. Moore, Jr.  
This Alone, Tim Manion  
To You Oh Lord I Life Up My Soul, Bob Hurd  
You Are Near, Dan Schutte

## *Quotation for Silent Reflection*

Consider a word or phrase for possible sharing.

Prayer is visitation and transformation. It is a time of rest and nourishment in God's embrace. In the presence of the Divine, the disciple gets in touch with his or her true self and can give recognition to their God-given potential. God's power and optimism are at work and transformation takes place.

*Loving in the Master's Footsteps:  
God's Dream for Us, Michael Fonseca*

## *Scripture for Inspiration*

**Luke 5:16**

## *Question for Group Reflection*

- Words or verses that spoke to me are?



## *Prayer Conclusion* (Together)

Good and gracious God, You promised that you answer every prayer, but sometimes we are confused when our prayers seem to be unanswered. Strengthen our trust in you so that we might reach out to our brothers and sisters with confidence at the moments when they feel most abandoned. Guide our actions and our words so that they may know your love through our care and concern. We ask this with hope and gratitude in the name of our brother and savior, Jesus. Amen.

The function of prayer is not to influence God, but rather to change the nature of the one who prays.

*Søren Kierkegaard, philosopher and theologian*

*Consider This:* (38 minutes - If participants have not read content prior to gathering, please take a moment to read aloud, rotating willing members.)



## *Jesus, Faith-Filled Prayer*

Jesus took his prayer life very seriously often removing himself from the busyness of the day to be alone in the presence of his Father. People followed Jesus everywhere seeking miracles, understanding, and forgiveness. The crowds must have been overwhelming at times, the suffering unbearable, and the needs of the people never ending. We can only imagine the peace and comfort Jesus sought in prayer. Jesus loved people beyond anything that we can imagine, but he always found time to be alone in prayer.

In our daily lives, we sometimes feel overwhelmed and that we are not up to the tasks of the day. At these moments, we can bring ourselves to God in prayer to be strengthened and renewed. We can move into sacred space anytime placing our fears, vulnerabilities, joys, gratefulness, and concerns into the hands of God. Prayer centers us and brings us into a deeper understanding of who we are. The more we know and understand ourselves, the more present we can be to others.

God is always with us but prayer makes us more aware of our connection with God. Prayer sustains us and invites us into a deeper relationship with God and one another. For many of us, our relationship with others is also one of service: visiting the sick, the elderly, or those on the margin.

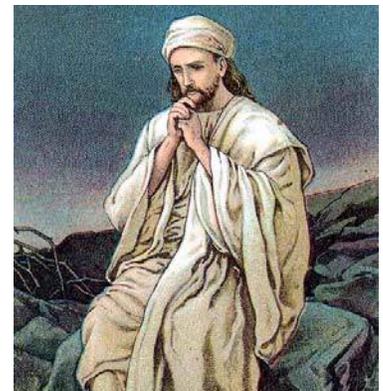
There are many ways to pray and each of us has to find our own path to enter into the presence of God. The church teaches us four basic forms of prayer. Blessing and adoration - praising God. Prayers of petition - asking for what we need. Prayers of intercession - asking for the needs of others. Prayers of thanksgiving in gratitude for all that God has done for us. Thomas Merton in his beautiful prayer of abandonment, assures us that through our desire to please God and our hope that we are following God's ways, God will lead us down the right path.

Some people pray before the Blessed Sacrament, others have a special room or chair in their homes where they pray, others prefer being in a chapel or church, and many find praying with others is especially meaningful for them. Where and how we meet God in prayer is up to each of us. A designated space and time for daily prayer can yield blessings beyond our imagination. Prayer unites us with God's spirit of peace and moves us beyond ourselves into the mystery of compassionate love.

### *Quotation for Reflection*

For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy."

*St. Therese de Lisieux*



Everyone of us needs half an hour of prayer each day except when we are busy—then we need an hour.

*St. Francis de Sales quoted in the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, p 463*

# *Prayer - Resting in Silence*

## *Prayer The Ultimate Communication*

For many of us as little children, prayer was the last thing that we did before bed. Our parents taught us to pray traditional prayers and prayers of petition for our family, friends, and even the family pet. There was a comfort in knowing that God was listening to us, watching over us and those we love. As we matured a bit, we discovered that we could go to God and share our deepest concerns, joys, and needs. Prayer evolved into inner communication with God, one of listening as well as engaging.

Jesus knew that we would need strength beyond ourselves if we were to live out our lives compassionately serving others. He assured us that God will be with us and promised that He would send the Spirit (John 14: 16-19). God loves us, wants to be with us and desires that we live in prayerful relationship with Him. It takes time and commitment to develop any relationship. We know that relationships of any depth don't just happen, they build on our history of lived experience together. Without conscious effort, our relationships can easily be lost through distractions or just fade away with lack of time spent together.

## *Prayer – A Relationship of Presence*

God yearns to be with us, listening to us and supporting us. He wants us to “sit at his feet” as Mary did ignoring the distractions of the day that can prevent us from being in His presence. We often feel overwhelmed by the many things that crowd into our lives. It is precisely at these moments that we benefit from quieting ourselves in the presence of God. Solid relationships are built on open communication, sharing together the good things as well as those things that weigh heavy on us. Listening to God also strengthens us to listen to one another. God speaks to us often between the lines and shows us his presence in the everyday circumstances in our lives. We encounter others in much the same way, listening between the lines and showing them that we care in the everyday circumstances of their lives. To love our neighbor and ourselves compassionately, we need to spend time being refreshed in daily prayer.

## *Questions for Reflection*

**Can you recall a time when you truly felt the presence of God working in your life? Has this experience strengthened your prayer life? Do you think that prayer challenges us to move beyond ourselves? If so, in what ways are you being called?**

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Pray with great confidence, with confidence based upon the goodness and infinite generosity of God and upon the promises of Jesus Christ. God is a spring of living water which flows unceasingly into the hearts of those who pray.

*St. Louis de Montfort*

## ***Following the Path of Jesus*** (21 minutes)

### *Take Action*

Consider how your prayer, reflection and sharing in Session 2 might have inspired you to serve compassionately this week. Share ideas that reflect your personal situation or consider one of the simple ideas below.

- Reflect on whether prayer might lead you to a deeper love of others. Journal on your insights.
- Prayerfully begin and end each day with an open heart.
- Use the additional Scripture Passages found below for reflection.
- In prayer each day, reflect on your many blessings and create gratitude notes. Share them with family and friends.
- Begin a yearly blessings calendar. Using a blank calendar, write several items in each square at the end of the day. Take a moment in prayer to thank God for each of them.
- Make a list of the people in your life that have been witnesses to the power of prayer. What qualities do they have?
- As a household, plan a time for prayer together.

### *Commitment*

- In light of this, what commitment will I make for the week(s) ahead?

### ***Wrap Up:*** (1 minute)

Date for Session 3 \_\_\_\_\_

### *Closing Prayer (Together)*

God, In prayer we come together to praise you and thank you for Your presence with us. We rest with You knowing that all is well. Deepen our faith and provide us with Your abiding peace that we may share Your peace with everyone we meet. We ask this in the name of your beloved Son, Jesus. Amen.

Strive to imitate our Lord and Savior. Amen.

### ***Additional Resources:***

*All Saints: Daily Reflections on Saints, Prophets, and Witnesses of Our Time*, Robert Ellsberg  
*Fifteen Days of Prayer: Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*,  
Andre Dupleix, OSB  
*God Is Closer Than You Think*, John Ortberg  
*In Silence: Why We Pray*, Donald Spoto  
*Prayer: A Practical Guide*, Martin Pable  
*Prayerfulness*, Robert Wicks  
*Prayers for a Planetary Pilgrim*, Edward Hays  
*To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings*,  
John O Donoghue  
*Pathways to God: Four Weeks on Faith Hope and Charity*,  
Bishop Robert Morneau

### ***Scripture***

#### ***Passages:***

Mark 11:24-26  
Matthew 6:5-15  
Matthew 7:7-11  
Matthew 14:23  
Acts 2:42  
1 Thes 5:17-18  
Romans 8:26-27  
Romans 12:12  
Eph 6:18



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Through prayer, daily life takes on new meaning. It becomes a classroom of communion. In that classroom we learn the truth about who we are - and who we are becoming - in Jesus. Through prayer we receive new glasses through which we see the true landscape of life.

*Deacon Keith Fournier, Editor in Chief, Catholic Online*