



The family that Prays together Stays together

Prayer *is* Relationship.

When we study our Catholic Faith, we are learning about Jesus. This naturally leads us to take time each day to talk with and listen to Him so that we come to know Him, in other words, to develop a personal relationship with Him! Prayer is extremely valuable and this is a good time to reflect on our commitment to daily prayer. Let's take a closer look.

"Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God" according to Saint John Damascene. Put more simply, prayer is conversation with Jesus Christ. We have the desire for God written in our heart and most people want to be more faithful to a time of prayer. But life is very busy, and so making a decision about a few details may make it easier.

One essential detail is to have a specific place in our home that we pray. Have a holy picture of Jesus or a Crucifix and a Bible in this place. Looking at a picture or a Crucifix helps us to stay focused with the reality that we are talking with and listening to a Person. Of course, praying in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in a Catholic Church, when possible, is a wonderful option. We do have to be flexible, and at times we may have to make adjustments and change the place where we pray

Another important detail is when we pray. We are creatures of habit and praying at the same time, at least initially, will help to develop this habit. Schedules do change from time to time and so we will want to confirm the night before if the specific time of prayer for the next day will need to be adjusted. It is best to pray when we are the most rested and least distracted. Therefore, it is probably better to pray before watching a video or going out for the evening, otherwise we will be too tired and be tempted not to pray.

It is useful to reflect on what will interfere with our prayer time. Remember, Satan does not want us to pray because prayer always leads us closer to God. The only thing that should interrupt the time of prayer is when the practice of charity is necessary, such as a baby crying, a sick child requiring assistance, a friend in need knocking at the door, etc.

It is spiritual wisdom that we should pray often and spontaneously throughout the day, but growth in our relationship with Jesus truly begins to deepen when we commit to a set-aside time of prayer. We cannot have growth without commitment. If you have not committed to a set amount of prayer time each day, start small, maybe 5 or 10 minutes. Keep in mind that this set-aside time of prayer needs to be practical and appropriate to your state in life. For instance, a retiree is going to have more time for prayer than a person working a full-time job.

Prayer is not about clock watching. Nevertheless, faithfulness to the committed time of prayer is very important and precious to Our Lord, as well as crucial to developing the habit, even when there are not good, devotional feelings involved. What is essential is keeping the "date," especially during difficult or dry times.

As you remain faithful to the time that you committed to prayer, there is going to be a natural desire to start increasing the amount. A word of caution is needed here. Developing a habit of prayer can be compared to an exercise program. A person desiring

continued on next page >>



Prayer *is* Relationship.

to walk each day does not begin by walking 5 miles but starts out slowly and goes only a short distance, such as walking around the block and then gradually increases the amount over a reasonable period. Things that can be helpful for prayer can include spiritual reading, pondering a passage of Scripture, praying the Rosary, sitting quietly, listening to Jesus as we feel led to do so.

Have you ever asked Jesus to increase in your heart the desire to spend more time in prayer? Recall that prayer is both a gift of grace and a determined response on

your part. Ask Jesus for that grace! Each person needs the grace as it is going to require effort because of our wounded human nature, which makes it is much easier, for instance, to watch a DVD than to spend some time in prayer. In the end, it is much more satisfying and will lead to interior joy and peace to grow in your personal relationship with Christ.

Think of a prayer that God answered in a special way for you. Be thankful. And always remember God is waiting to be with you in prayer and answer your requests!