

Good evening, Parents!

Thank you for coming. It is good to see all of you.

Part of this meeting is about a new initiative entitled "Going Deeper in Prayer."

I. This new initiative was instigated by young people

For the past seven years, we have been hearing specifically from young people that they want to **encounter God** and **deepen their friendship with Him through prayer**.

The "Going Deeper in Prayer" initiative selectively focuses on one prayer for the entire year for each age level (Pre-K through 12th grade).

(Directions for the person leading the Parent Gathering are in red)

- II. **Provide each parent with the *Our Father Prayer Card* so that all the parents in attendance have the same resources to pray with and to look over during this meeting. Note: the 3rd Grade is not listed on this prayer card, so that parents stay engaged, whether they have a 3rd grade child or not.**

The point of giving the parents the same prayer card is so that they can see the simple format, which is the standard format of all Prayer Cards, even though each grade level focuses on a different prayer. **And, most importantly, the parents will pray the Prayer Card together: to see it modeled and to know the time frame for prayer is relatively brief.**

Parents: You are being given a Prayer Card, with a simple format that is the same for every grade level. The specific Prayer on this Card is the *Our Father*. Each grade level will focus on a different prayer, but will follow this same format.

III. Prayer Time:

Pray through front side of the Prayer Card, which is provided below. Begin by reading the explanatory sentences at the top of the Prayer Card

This time of prayer focuses on the *Our Father*, also known as The Lord's Prayer. Pray the *Our Father* two times: the first time for understanding, the second time from the heart.

Follow the steps that are listed below.

Begin your prayer with the Sign of the Cross.

The Sign of the Cross affirms our belief in the three Persons of the Triune God and that we are saved by Jesus' death on the cross.

Let us pray the Sign of the Cross together:

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

(Together...)

Heavenly Father, please give me the grace to quiet down inside so as to become aware of Your love for me. Heavenly Father, I want to spend this time with You. Help me to give You my full attention & to pray from my heart.

Our Father

(Pray together aloud)

**Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and
forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us
and lead us not in to temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.**

Read through each bullet, and allow a brief time of silence after each:

- **EXPRESS** silently your sorrow for any sins you committed, remembering that all sin offends God.
- **PRAY** the *Our Father* a second time, silently more slowly than the first time, from the heart.

For these parts of the prayer time, allow parents to briefly share their response with the person next to them:

- **CHOOSE** a word or phrase from the *Our Father* that stood out for you. Silently think about it, speak with God about it, and share it aloud with another person nearby.
- **THANK** our Heavenly Father in your own words for a blessing received. (Share this aloud with another person.)
- **ASK** the Lord for any request that is in your heart. (Share this aloud with another person.)

Close this time of prayer with the Sign of the Cross

IV. **This initiative is about Going Deeper in Prayer.** In the repeated experience with the prayer throughout the year, we will be provided the opportunity to interiorize the prayer very personally.

This allows enough time with this prayer for God to have spoken through it personally, so it becomes our own (for us and your children and young people), and we/they will remember it because it will be anointed in some specific way by the Holy Spirit.

V. **Read aloud the back side of the Prayer Card**
Answer any questions

VI. **Now, hand out the Resources Pages that correspond with the *Our Father*.**

Resource Pages: walk parents briefly through, looking at one bullet for each section, so that they know what is at their fingertips. These are aspects to help guide their child deeper in prayer:

- Read aloud: “Our Heavenly Father’s love for us” (page 1)
- Read aloud: “Why do we want to pray the *Our Father* every day?” (page 1)
- Invite the parents to pick out one phrase that each one of them would like deeper understanding. Find that phrase in the “Meaning of the Words” of the *Our Father* and encourage the parents to look at the explanation of that phrase, on pages 1 or 2.
- Turn to the “Learning the Principles” on pages 2-3. These explain the foundational principles of the *Our Father*. Look at the second to last bullet on page 3. Read this bullet aloud.

Teach the children how to pray with their heart; not just rattling words. “Prayer is internalized to the extent that we become aware of Him ‘to whom we speak.’ In the case of the *Our Father*, we are speaking with the person of Our Heavenly Father (CCC 2700, 2704)
- Moving to the “Activities”, read aloud the last bullet on page 3.

Encourage children to make a request of our Heavenly Father for a specific need. Give an example from your own life, such as help on a test, for a sick grandmother, rain for the farmers, safe travel in a storm. When a prayer is answered, it makes faith come alive for them and will help the students to develop a relationship with our Heavenly Father. At a time when students have a specific prayer that was answered, it is most helpful for them to share it with the class. Children might keep a journal of their requests or the class might keep a list of answered requests. Our Heavenly Father desires a relationship with each of us. We don’t want to just ask for good things from Him with no desire to speak with Him and develop a friendship with Him.
- Turning our focus to “Spiritual Comprehension – Do they understand?”, read aloud the first bullet

Ask questions to ensure that young people understand the meaning of the words and how to pronounce the words. (We have heard children pray, “Our Father, who art in Heaven, how do you know my name? We want to help them to understand what they are praying.)
- On page 4, “Encountering our Heavenly Father in Prayer” – read aloud the bullet.

Pray the *Our Father* aloud and have the children listen, preferably with their eyes closed. Have them take notice of a word or phrase that stood out for them. Allow some time of silence for the girls and boys to think about why the word or phrase stood out for them. Allowing the children quiet time to reflect on the phrases of the *Our Father*, after they have received explanation of each part, takes it to the next level of a deep personal encounter. As a further progression, provide silence so that they may have a “heart-to-Heart” conversation with Our Heavenly Father.

- Also on page 4, the “Scripture References about Our Heavenly Father” – read the first one, which provides the foundation of the *Our Father*
Jesus said, "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' "The unbelievers are always running after these things. **Your Heavenly Father** knows that you need all these things” (Matthew 6:31-32).

The Resources will allow us to approach prayer differently, making it personal: we are speaking with the Person of our Heavenly Father in the case of praying the Our Father; and the words of the prayer will become understandable and more meaningful.

VII. This initiative is to begin with the family and be supported by Catholic schools and parish programs. (Simply highlight the key points of the Parent’s Letter without handing out the Letter, to keep it simple for the parents).

Many prayers and ways of praying are taught each year, and that needs to continue. However, there is a need for you the parents, as well as your sons and daughters and indeed, all of us who hand on the Faith, to go deeper in prayer by spending a whole year focusing on one prayer and allowing it to become very personal and a place of encounter with Our Heavenly Father for each person who is praying with it.

Parents, you are the primary educators of their children. We desire to support you in this responsibility.

The role of the family is so vital to each young person’s understanding of the importance of and commitment to a daily habit of prayer. The “Going Deeper with Prayer” Initiative will begin in the Catholic school or Parish Faith Formation Program as support for families when you, the parents, are on-board. You want the best for your children and therefore your participation in a gathering such as this is essential. We hope that you will be committed to formation on family prayer in an ongoing manner.

Learning about our Heavenly Father in an ongoing way, being committed to speaking with and listening to Him on a daily basis and receiving the Sacraments are needed in order to be strengthened to love God and our neighbor. This is the path to happiness – interior peace and true joy.

- VIII. We know Parents and teachers are teaching prayers. The hope with **this initiative** is by focusing on this one prayer through repetition, special attention, extra time, it will allow for true conversation with God, and a deepening friendship with Him.
- IX. **Invite the parents to pick up the Prayer Cards, one for each of their children. The most organized and orderly way to do this would be to have all of the Prayer Cards for each family together with the family name on the top. In addition to the Prayer Card and**

Resources, the Letter to the Parents is to be included in each plastic sleeve for each grade level.

- X. Speak about various ways that the family can implement “Going Deeper in Prayer” if they have more than one child.
- It could be helpful to begin with the smallest child’s Prayer Card and pray together as a family at dinner or before bed or in the morning.
 - When the time is right, add the other children’s Prayer Cards. Perhaps, a different Prayer Card could be prayed each day. If there are three children, after 3 days, then return to the first Prayer Card.
 - Another way: if there are 3 children in the family, it could also be that one Prayer Card is prayed in the morning, one at dinner, and one at bedtime.
 - Another possibility is for the mother to pray with one child and the father to pray with another child, so that parents have specific time alone with each child.
 - Questions? Does anyone have any additional suggestions on how this can be implemented in the family?

In Summary:

This initiative entitled “Going Deeper in Prayer” was requested by young people.

Our purpose with the Prayer Card and Resources is to provide an opportunity for a personal encounter with Our Lord for each child and young person so that we have the assurance that a growing personal friendship is in place.

Thank you.