

Dear Teacher - Catechist,

We are very excited to provide you with an initiative that has been requested over the last five years by, most notably, students, as well as parents, Catholic school teachers, directors (DREs,) coordinators (CREs) of parish Faith formation programs, youth ministers and priests.

“Going Deeper in Prayer” is the title of this initiative.

The vision:

Many prayers and ways of praying are taught each year, and that needs to continue. However, there is a need for you the Catholic School teacher or parish catechist, as well as parents and their sons and daughters, and indeed all of us, 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.



The Blessed Trinity with the Father portrayed as a grandfather and the Biblical image of the Holy Spirit portrayed as a dove; with Jesus – the Risen Savior – surrounded by Mary, St. John the Baptist, and Apostles.

“Going Deeper in Prayer” needs to begin and continue in an ongoing manner in the family:

- “Family catechesis... precedes, accompanies, and enriches all other forms of catechesis. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, hereafter CCC, paragraph 2226).
- “Parents are the primary educators in the faith” (*General Directory for Catechesis for the Universal Church*, n. 225).
- “...With their parents leading the way by family prayer, children... will find a readier path to human maturity, salvation and holiness” (*The Church in the Modern World – Gaudium et Spes*, Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, n. 48).

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 that starting this initiative *is to be preceded* by intentional parental engagement. In other words, the “Going Deeper in Prayer” Initiative will begin in the Catholic school or Parish Faith Formation Program as support for the family when the parents are on-board. This could take place, for example, through a parent gathering where the initiative can be explained, the Prayer Card read over and the Prayer modeled, and formation on prayer can take place. Parents want the best for their children and therefore their participation in such gatherings is essential. Further, formation on family prayer needs to be offered in an ongoing manner.

The goal:

The goal is that children and young people pray in the home with their parents each day as well as in the Catholic School and Parish Program in order to continue to deepen their friendship with Jesus Christ. When the year of praying and learning about this specific way of praying is completed, it will become a part of your, and their life, that they will never forget.

Teacher and Catechist Resources

Parents are the primary educators of their children in helping their sons and daughters come to know the Person of Jesus Christ through studying the Catholic Faith, daily conversation with Him in prayer and reception of the Sacraments. Learning about Jesus in an ongoing way, being committed to speaking with and listening to Him on a daily basis and receiving the Sacraments, most especially the Holy Eucharist every Sunday, are needed in order to be strengthened to love God and our neighbor. This is the path to happiness – interior peace and true joy.

The Catholic School teacher and catechist are to support the parents in their role of teaching their children to pray. In this regard, to be consistent, it is essential to choose a specific time during the religion session that the *Our Father* is prayed along with one or more of the steps as specified on the Prayer Card.

It is helpful to have a picture or statue of Jesus in the room to remain focused on Him during prayer time.

The following **Parents and Teacher – Catechists Resources** are also provided online for use in helping children to go deeper in their understanding of the **Our Father**: diolc.org/prayer/ 3rd Grade



Our Heavenly Father creating Adam, with the portrayal of Eve still in His mind of God

- A simple introduction about God's love
- The goals for praying this prayer each day
- The meaning of the words of the prayer
- The Principles underlying the prayer
- Activities to help the children remember the words
- Spiritual Comprehension: do they understand?
- Encountering God in Prayer
- The Scriptural Foundation of the words of the prayer

The following truths underlie any formation in prayer:

1. *The Person of Christ desires that you develop a friendship with Him.* This relationship is prayer. You are to support the parents in helping to teach the children about the Person of Jesus, but even more importantly, to help them encounter and develop a friendship with Him by modeling your own personal and communal prayer.
2. *Every person needs to learn how to pray.* "Like a wise teacher Jesus takes hold of us where we are and leads us progressively toward the Father." (CCC, paragraph 2607). *Jesus teaches you how to pray!*
3. *The Holy Spirit dwells within you and guides you in prayer!* "The Holy Spirit is the interior Master of Christian prayer" (CCC 2672). The Holy Spirit helps and guides you to develop a daily habit of prayer. If you ask, He will even give you the desire to pray.