

## ***Catechetical Sessions*** ***on Christian Prayer: An Overview***

The earliest followers of Jesus knew the power of prayer. In a letter to the Ephesians, Paul said, "Pray in the Spirit at all times" (Eph. 6:18). To the Thessalonians, Paul wrote, "Pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thess. 5:17–18). The material in this manual invites young people to see prayer as communication in a relationship of love. It encourages them to take the Scripture message to heart and to pray always as they grow in their relationship with God.

The *Catechism* offers three fundamental facts of faith about prayer:

- "*It is always possible to pray*" (no. 2743).
- "*Prayer is a vital necessity*" (no. 2744).
- "*Prayer and Christian life are inseparable*" (no. 2745).

From the Scriptures and Tradition, we come to know prayer as our response to God's invitation of covenant and communion. It is both a gift of grace and a determined effort on our part. Prayer involves our whole being—mind, body, and soul.

By teaching young people to pray, you can open for them a way to communicate on a deeply personal level with God, who is the source of all holiness. By inviting them to explore different forms of personal prayer, you will encourage them to expand their image of God and their expectations of prayer. You will also call them to take greater responsibility for their own spiritual growth. By challenging them to look at communal prayer, you will

remind them that their role in building God's Reign and as a part of the Body of Christ is important, unique, and valued. This manual can help you give young people the tools to pray all ways, and always, and enable them to build their relationship with God on a solid foundation.

## Session Outcomes

### Chapter 1: "Introduction to Prayer"

- The learner will establish prayer as an essential way of building a closer relationship with God.
- The learner will understand prayer as a responsive relationship with God.
- The learner will explore prayer as covenant, communion, and gift.
- The learner will understand that everyone is called to prayer.

### Chapter 2: "Models of Prayer"

- The learner will understand the role of prayer in God's call to covenant.
- The learner will explore the notion of trust in God and reflect on the role of trust in her or his own prayer journey.
- The learner will share how he or she hears and experiences the call to prayer in his or her life.

### Chapter 3: "Forms of Prayer"

- The learner will be introduced to the Church's five traditional forms of prayer: blessing and adoration, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise.
- The learner will gain an appreciation for how different forms of prayer connect to different times and situations in her or his life.

### Chapter 4: "Personal Prayer"

- The learner will be encouraged to develop a deeper appreciation for personal prayer as a way to enrich his or her relationship with God.
- The learner will develop a knowledge of and appreciation for vocal, meditative, and contemplative prayer forms.

### Chapter 5: "Challenges of Prayer"

- The learner will be presented with the difficulties involved in praying and encouraged to discuss ways of overcoming those difficulties.
- The learner will examine and discuss the various misperceptions about prayer.
- The learner will explore the kind of effort needed to develop a solid prayer life.

## **Chapter 6: "Praying with the Scriptures"**

- The learner will establish connections between reading and praying the Scriptures.
- The learner will identify key scriptural texts that are significant to his or her continual faith development.
- The learner will develop an understanding of the Scriptures as a useful tool in deepening her or his prayer life.

## **Chapter 7: "Praying Together: An Intergenerational Session"**

- The learner will expand her or his knowledge of communal prayer expression.
- The learner will develop the skills necessary to transform daily experiences into prayerful and prayer-filled moments.
- The learner will experience communal prayer.

## **Chapter 8: "Catholic Prayers and Devotions"**

- The learner will be reminded of (and in some cases introduced to) the traditional prayers and devotions that are part of the Catholic heritage.
- The learner will gain an understanding of the value of familiar ritual and repetitive prayers and their association with Catholic Tradition.
- The learner will be offered the opportunity to discover the ways that traditional prayers are a part of his or her family history.

## **Chapter 9: "The Lord's Prayer: God's Glory"**

- The learner will identify the reasons we pray the Lord's Prayer and its potential to change us.
- The learner will understand the opening address as a means to place themselves in the presence of God and in the right frame of mind.
- The learner will explore the first three petitions, which address the glory of the Father, the sanctification of his name, the coming of his Kingdom, and the fulfillment of his will.

## **Chapter 10: "The Lord's Prayer: Human Need"**

- The learner will recognize the final four petitions of the Lord's Prayer as Jesus' answer to the desires of the Christian heart.
- The learner will understand the need to boldly ask for nourishment, healing of sins, and the victorious struggle of good over evil.
- The learner will acknowledge a dependence on God for all essential things needed to sustain life.