



EXPRESSIONS OF PRAYER

The Christian tradition comprises three major expressions of the life of prayer:

vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplative prayer. (CCC#2721)

Vocal prayer, founded on the union of body and soul in human nature, associates the body with the interior prayer of the heart, following Christ's example of praying to his Father and teaching the Our Father to his disciples. (CCC#2722) Since we are body as well as spirit, we need to express ourselves vocally. Spoken and sung prayers arise from our souls; they can be complemented by bodily gestures such as the Sign of the Cross, genuflection, kneeling, and bowing." (U.S. Catechism for Adults p. 473)

Meditation is above all a quest. The mind seeks to understand the why and how of the Christian life, in order to adhere and respond to what the Lord is asking.... We are usually helped by...the Sacred Scriptures, particularly the Gospels, holy icons, liturgical texts of the day or season, writings of the spiritual masters, works of spirituality, the great book of creation, and that of history—the page on which the 'today' of God is written. To meditate on what we read helps us to make it our own by confronting it with ourselves. Here, another book is opened: the book of life. We pass from thoughts to reality. (CCC#2705-6)

Contemplative prayer is a gift to which we dispose ourselves by resting attentively before Christ. It involves hearing and obeying God's Word. It is a time of silent listening and love. (U.S. Adult Catechism, p.474)

[NB: CCC refers to the Catechism of the Catholic Church. See the link to the full text on our website under "Other links, Theology Resources." The U.S. Catechism for Adults is available for purchase at the parish office.]

FORMS OF PRAYER

Adoration is the first attitude of the human person acknowledging that he or she is creature before the Creator. It exalts the greatness of the Lord who made us. (CCC #2628)

By prayer of *petition* we express awareness of our relationship with God.... We are sinners who as Christians know that we have turned away from our Father. Our petition is already a turning back to the Father. (CCC#2629)

Intercession is a prayer of petition which leads us to pray as Jesus did. He is the one intercessor with the Father on behalf of all people, especially sinners. (CCC#2634)

Thanksgiving characterizes the prayer of the Church which, in celebrating the Eucharist, reveals and becomes more fully what she is....*every event* and need can become an offering of thanksgiving. (CCC#2637-8)

Praise is the form of prayer which recognizes most immediately that God is God. It lauds God for God's own sake and gives God glory, quite beyond what God does, but simply because GOD IS. (CCC#2639)

PSALMS

The prayer of the psalms is always sustained by praise; that is why the title of this collection as handed down to us is so fitting: "The Praises." ...the Psalter both sounds the call to prayer and sings the response to that call:



Hallelu-Yah! ("Alleluia"), "*Praise the Lord!*" (CCC#2589)

The Psalms constitute the masterwork of prayer in the Old Testament. (CCC#2596)

CHRISTIAN PRAYER

"Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God."

—St. John Damascene (early 8th c.)

"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 of Lisieux (late 19th c.)

According to Scripture, it is the *heart* that prays....The heart is our hidden center, beyond the grasp of our reason and of others; only the Spirit of God can fathom the human heart and know it fully. (CC #2562)



Blessing expresses the basic movement of Christian prayer...our prayer *ascends* in the Holy Spirit through Christ to the Father—we bless God for having blessed us—and it implores the grace of the Holy Spirit that descends through Christ from the Father—God blesses us. (CCC#2626-7)

There is no other way of Christian prayer than Christ. Whether our prayer is communal or personal, vocal or interior, it has access to the Father only if we pray "in the name" of Jesus. The sacred humanity of Jesus is therefore the way by which the Holy Spirit teaches us to pray to God our Father...."Jesus," "YHWH saves:" The name "Jesus" contains all: God and humanity and the whole economy of creation and salvation. (CCC#2664-6)