

# Rite of Christian Initiation in Adults (RCIA)

## Prayer



# Mary Henig's Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for the gift of today. Refresh me, help me to discover Your presence in every person that I meet and every event encountered. Teach me when to speak and when to listen, when to ponder and when to share. In moments of challenge and decision, attune my heart to the whisperings of your wisdom. As I undertake ordinary and unnoticed tasks, gift me with simple joy. When the day goes well, may I rejoice. When it grows difficult surprise me with new possibilities. When life is overwhelming, call me to Sabbath moments, to restore your peace and harmony. May my living today reveal your goodness.

# The Need for Prayer

“If you don’t pray you will inevitably become either depressed or inflated - or bounce back and forth between the two” (Robert Moore).

Fr James Martin SJ (2022) *Learning To Pray: A Guide For Everyone*. Harper Collins.

# Prayer Definition

From The Catechism:

God has always called people to prayer.

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

# Scripture Readings

“But when you pray, go into a room by yourself, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.” (Matthew 6:6)

“In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house and went to a lonely place and prayed there.” (Mark 1:35).

“His reputation continued to grow, and large crowds would gather to hear him and to have their sickness cured, but he would always go off to some place where he could be alone and pray” (Luke 5:15-16).

“He was praying in a certain place and when he had ceased, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray'.” (Luke 11.1)

# Discussion Questions

- What do the Scriptures say about prayer?
- What is your understanding of prayer?
- What is your experience of prayer?

# Formal and Communal Prayer

- Liturgy and Sacraments
- Divine Office
- Rosary
- Novenas (special prayers for 9 days)
- Adoration
- Others – e.g. Grace before meals

# Informal and Private Prayer

- Vocal Prayer - repent, praise, ask, and thank
  - Praying with the Saints
  - Praying in Tongues
- Meditation
  - Understanding “the how and why of the Christian life”
- Contemplation
  - Resting in the presence of God

# Meditative Prayer

“We are usually helped by books ... the Sacred Scriptures, particularly the Gospels, holy icons, liturgical texts of the day or season, writings of the spiritual fathers, works of spirituality, the great book of creation.”

“Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ, as in *lectio divina* or the rosary. This form of prayerful reflection is of great value, but Christian prayer should go further: to the knowledge of the love of the Lord Jesus, to union with him.”

# Contemplative Prayer

Contemplative prayer in the Catholic tradition is a silent, wordless communion with God, characterised by resting in God's presence and a "gaze of faith" fixed on Jesus. It is a close sharing and a gift from God that transforms the individual, leading to a deeper, more intimate relationship with the Holy Trinity.

Unlike meditation, it is not about using the mind to reach God, but rather about opening the heart to God's presence within.

"I look at him and he looks at me"

# Contemplative Prayer

In contemplation we go beyond belief in God to knowing God.

“The time is fast approaching when one will either be a mystic [contemplative] or an unbeliever” (Karl Rahner).

Center For Action and Contemplation <https://cac.org/>

# A Final Insight into Prayer

“To pray, I think, does not mean to think about God in contrast to thinking about other things, or to spend time with God instead of spending time with other people. Rather, it means to think and live in the presence of God. All our actions must have their origin in prayer. Praying is not an isolated activity; it takes place in the midst of all the things and affairs that keep us active. In prayer, a “self-centred monologue” becomes a “God-centred monologue”.” (Henri Nouwen).

# The New Serenity Prayer

## Fr. James Martin, SJ

God, grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change, which is pretty much everyone, since I'm clearly not you, God. At least not the last time I checked. And while you're at it, God, please give me the courage to change what I need to change about myself, which is frankly a lot, since, once again, I'm not you, which means I'm not perfect. It's better for me to focus on changing myself than to worry about changing other people, who, as you'll no doubt remember me saying, I can't change anyway. Finally, give me the wisdom to just shut up whenever I think that I'm clearly smarter than everyone else in the room, that no one knows what they're talking about except me, or that I alone have all the answers. Basically, God, grant me the wisdom to remember that I'm not you. Amen