

Fr. Paul's How to Pray Handbook!

Books for a LIFETIME of Prayer:

1. Opening to God by Thomas Green (Introduction)
2. When the Well Runs Dry by Thomas Green (advanced)
3. The Cloud of Unknowing, unknown author (super advanced)
4. The Imitation of Christ by Thomas a Kempis (more so about spiritual growth)
5. My Daily Bread, TAN books, Fr. Anthony J Paone S.J. (daily reflections/prayers)
6. The Bible!!!

Stages of Prayer life and Spiritual Growth

1. To Know God
2. To Love God
3. To Truly Love God

Environment is Important

1. Create a prayer corner in your room, home.
2. Use symbols that remind you of prayer; cross, picture, statue, candle, incense

Time is Important

1. Best to do it when you are awake, focused.
2. Do it daily! Be regular, like exercise!
3. Put it on you calendar, and do it if you feel like it, or not!

Ways to Pray (Individually)

1. Existing Word Prayers

Of course, Our Father, Hail Mary, but there are many more! Check them out. Many written by, used by, Great Saints! Pray the same prayers as the Saints!

2. Praying with the Gospels

Along with the Eucharist, God's Great Gifts where TRULY Encounter Jesus! Ask for the Holy Spirit to guide you as you begin. Put yourself in the place of people in the scene. Pray one passage for the whole hour. Use all your senses. Image it really happening and you there. It will come alive. It will remind you of how your life is similar. Journal after. Praise and Thank God after.

3. Praying the Psalms

Don't overlook these 'Existing Word Prayers'. They are the prayers Jesus prayed! Pray the same prayers as Jesus! See attached list of suggested psalms for various situations. (Add your own favorites to the list!)

4. Praying with any other Scripture

All Scripture is Inspired and for our Benefit! Learn the art of Lectio Divina; divine reading. (Ask for the Holy Spirit to guide you. Read the passage slowly, meditatively, perhaps several times. Put it down and let it speak to your mind and heart. Then sit in quiet joy, love, recognizing awe of the God who speaks to us when we ask, and listen and invite him to!

5. Image of God

Scripture and Church give us many images (or word pictures) of qualities of our God. God is a Might Fortress, a Deliverer, a Rock, a Flow of Living Water, Light of the world, "I am the clay, you are the potter", "Under your wings I take refuge" etc. Imagine the image, sit with it, allow God to reveal himself to you through that meditation.

6. Chair Prayer

God became one of US, so we can talk to him like one to another!! Put (or image) an empty chair next to you. Sit next to the chair, invite Jesus to join you. Image him there, and talk in your heart to Him!! Then LISTEN to Him!! Then just sit there, with Him!!

7. Mantra

As a meditative type prayer. Quiet yourself, that is still your mind and body and spirit. As you breath in, say to yourself the first part of the phrase (or mantra) you choose, (e.g. "Jesus"). As you breath out, say the next part of the phrase (or mantra) you choose, e.g. "Have Mercy on Me". Use any phrase from Scripture; "Jesus, my God and my all", "Come Lord Jesus", "Lord have mercy on me a sinner", or make up your own, my favorite: "Jesus I Love You". Pray this way for about 15 minutes. Usually a great peace/calm will come to you. As your day unfolds, just one repetition of the phrase can bring back that same peace/calm, even if in very difficult circumstances!

8. Nothingness

Usually, this is a last stage of prayer, e.g. after we've prayed with scripture, or the Jesus Chair prayer. Just sit in quiet and feel God's presence. Allow your heart to "connect" with the Sacred Heart of Jesus!

9. Examination of Conscience

There is both a general and specific examination of conscience. Ask for the Holy Spirit to help you see your life as God sees your life. With those eyes (not our own) look at what you've done since the last examination of conscience. Confess your faults. Ask for God's help where you need to grow. But then pick one specific area to improve. The specific examination of conscience looks at that one area. How have you done in your attempts to be better. If you've failed again, ask for forgiveness and help, resolve to go back if possible and make amends. Image how you could have done better. Resolve, with God's help to do better next time. The

general examination of conscience is a part of Sacramental confession!!! Going to confession monthly is best.

10. Journal

As part of your prayer, or as your whole prayer, write about what you are praying. Write a letter to God. Write about your life. Write what you think God is saying to you. Sometimes writing allows our mind to think more slowly and clearly, and more creatively. Don't be afraid to write poetry too!

11. With Music

As part of your prayer, or as your whole prayer, listen to Christian music, and really mean and feel the words. Join in the song! To sing is to pray twice! Don't be afraid to write your own songs to God! (Note many find it helpful to play instrumental music during meditation.)

12. Spontaneous verbal prayer

Listening to God, and being in God's presence are ways we learn God's will for us. But God loves to hear us PRAISE Him too!!! So often when we speak, we are asking God for something. Let's use our mouth and voice to PRAISE AND THANK Him more often than ask Him for things! Every prayer should begin with Praise and Thanksgiving. Words from the Heart are very dear to God. We can model our spontaneous prayer on the "Our Father". Look at that prayer, notice it begins with Praise, then it Prays for God's will to be done, then asks for my needs, for forgiveness, than asks for protection from evil. After this, add what you are praying for.

13. You add more!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Ways to Pray in Community

1. Liturgy of hours

The "official" prayer of the Church. Lifted-up 24 hours a day in all parts of the world. It is the same prayers Jesus prayed (psalms), but since we are the Body of Christ, it is the Prayers we Say with Jesus, as we continue to share in His ministry of Salvation for ALL!!!

2. Eucharist

The "Source and Summit" of our Christian Life. Every Sunday, the Lord's Day, we make Holy the Sabbath, by Joining with Each other around the table of the Eucharist; giving Thanks and Praise to our God, joining ourselves to his saving Passion, Death, and Resurrection. We truly receive Him present in the Eucharist, nourishing us for our journey of faith, through the desert of this life, to our Promised Land in Heaven. He is, the Bread of Life! (Just as God gave our ancestor's manna from heaven, in their journey, in the New and Everlasting Covenant, he Gives us His very flesh (Bread from Heaven), for our journey. (See John chapter 6).

3. Adoration

Outside of Mass, we still Worship Jesus present in the Most Blessed Sacrament, placed on the altar and silently adored by the faithful. Often, this prayer concludes with Benediction (a Blessing by a priest with the Blessed Sacrament).

4. Prayer Groups

Jesus said, “When two or more are gathered in my name, I am present in their midst”. Also, when two or more agree on what it is they pray for, I will hear and answer their prayer”. Prayer in groups is a powerful form of prayer. Sometimes God speaks to us through others. Sometimes God speaks to others through us!

Suggested Psalms for Various Needs. Add to this list your own discoveries!

PSALMS OF COMFORT

Psalm 23

PSALMS FOR DEATH & DYING

Psalm 23

PSALMS OF DELIVERANCE

Psalm 85, Psalm 120, Psalm 126, Psalm 142

WHEN WE LACK FAITH

Psalm 73, Psalm 78

FOR FORGIVENESS

Psalm 32

FOR HOPE AND CONFIDENCE

Psalm 123

PSALMS OF PROTECTION

Psalm 91, Psalm 23, Psalm 86, Psalm 121, Psalm 145

PSALMS FOR SADNESS & SORROW

Psalm 42, Psalm 43, Psalm 88

FOR HELP IN TIMES OF TROUBLE

Psalm 70, Psalm 71, Psalm 74, Psalm 80, Psalm 83

FOR WORRY, ANXIETY AND ANGUISH

Psalm 55, Psalm 102