

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year A • November 8, 2020

O Lord,
you hear us as
we call upon you in prayer.
Praising you,
we shall be satisfied.
Exulting you, we shall
find ourselves lifted up.
May we always bless
your Holy Name, as we
lay before you our needs.
Amen.



Sunday Word

Wisdom 6:12–16
Psalm 63:2, 3–4, 5–6, 7–8
1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 [short form 4:13–14]
Matthew 25:1–13

Seek Wisdom

The author of this Old Testament book personifies God's wisdom in the feminine. Those who seek her out readily find her. God's wisdom is available to those who love her.

Console One Another

Saint Paul tells us that Christians do not grieve like unbelievers. The faithful are afforded hope by the Resurrection of Jesus. All who die in the Lord will be raised to new life.

Stay Awake

This parable of Jesus reveals that the coming of the kingdom in its fullness will surprise many. Some will be ill-prepared to welcome Christ when he comes again. The wise ones will be vigilant and ready.

Church Teaching: Perseverance in Prayer

Ready or Not

The parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins presents us with a sobering picture. The Master, Christ himself, will come to usher in the final banquet and many will not be prepared. Whose lamps will be trimmed and filled with oil? Who among us will cultivate the light of Christ and seek wisdom? Who will be vigilant, persevere in prayer, and be ready for the Lord's Second Coming? God's kingdom is at hand, but not yet complete; hence our waiting, and our praying.

Our relationship with God requires attention and expression. Prayer is the expressive link between us and God. Prayer is a vital necessity as we vigilantly watch for the fullness of the kingdom. Prayer is also the gift of the Holy Spirit. Yet there is much in this world and in our lives that draws us away from communicating

with God in prayer. We must be attentive to hear the voice of God. We must listen to God's wisdom so we can be ready for the completion of his kingdom.

Avoiding Distractions

There are numerous distractions that can sideline our prayer life. Oddly enough, our attempts to root out these distractions can lead us to the ultimate failure, that is, falling prey to their allure. The best remedy in avoiding distractions is to turn further into the depths of one's own heart, for there, in that most intimate place, God speaks to us.

Remain in Prayer

We stay with prayer because the Gospel teaches us to do so. The entire scriptural witness urges us to pray, as do the Saints and the Magisterium of the Church. These sources assure us that God desires our communication. God wants us to pray. As in any relationship, without communication, the bond between parties weakens and may even break. This does not mean that God stops loving us, for his love is unconditional. This means that our connection with God is greatly hampered.

We remain in prayer to purify our hearts and to deepen our devotion to God, who alone deserves our love. For example, we can become disheartened when something we are praying for, such as the health of a loved one, does not seem to be answered by God. Yet we must ask if we have conditioned our love of God with such petitions, or has God responded to our prayers in ways that we cannot currently perceive? The ultimate prayer is that in imitation of Christ—unconditional surrender to God. Complete trust in God every moment of our lives is to remain in prayer, especially when we are burdened with the crosses of a fallen, sinful world.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

Prayer is not a manipulation of God. In prayer, we express our thirst and hunger for God. Prayer is also a form of vigilance against the darkness and evil of the world. Steadfast prayer celebrates a heart attuned to the love of the divine, responding to the gift of hope in eternal life. Prayer enlivens us as we draw from the wellsprings of God's love.

Key Terms

HUMILITY

The virtue by which we ascribe to God all that is good; helps us avoid inordinate pride or ambition; lays the foundation for prayer (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2559).

PERSEVERANCE

Steadfast or continued adherence to a course of action; the gift of faith is sustained with perseverance (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 162).

PRAYER

Elevating the mind and heart to God in praise of his glory, or to petition him, thank him, or seek his intercession (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2664).

Voices of Faith

Now how should you begin your prayer? Listen carefully. Suppose you wish to request something of a person and you begin as follows, "Give me this; here is what I am requesting." Would not your prayer appear to be presumptuous? Thus you should begin your prayer by praising God, beseeching the almighty God for whom all things are possible.

—Saint Ambrose

Breathing is made up of two stages: inhaling, the intake of air, and exhaling, the letting out of air. The spiritual life is fed, nourished, by prayer and is expressed outwardly through mission: inhaling and exhaling. When we inhale, by prayer, we receive the fresh air of the Holy Spirit.

—Pope Francis

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2728 (persevering in prayer), 2729 (prayer and distraction), 2731 (prayer and dryness)

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults:

Chapter 35, especially the section entitled "The Work of Prayer," page 476

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church:

572–574 (challenges in praying), 575 (trust in praying)