

Doctrinal Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA
Expressions of Prayer

Catechist Preparation

Clarifying the Essentials

Jesus intercedes with the Father for us.

- In his eternal love for us, Jesus constantly petitions the Father on our behalf (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2741).
- Christ prays in and with us; it is our responsibility to align our prayer through him, with him, and in him (see CCC 2740).

We must persevere in prayer.

- We do not doubt whether God hears praise or thanksgiving. Similarly, we must be boldly confident in prayer, petitioning as does Christ himself (see CCC 2735).
- We pray, therefore, with his Spirit of freedom (see CCC 2736).

Why Is This Important?

Authentic prayer is preeminently relational. It begins in the self and ends in God. We express ourselves in prayer—as imperfect and sometimes sinful. Yet we also find our “truest” selves in prayer as we open up to receive the Holy Spirit and allow our hearts to be conditioned by God. This is why prayer is a lifelong activity. Christians constantly engage in prayer—daily, weekly, year by year, and moment by moment. Even in the driest periods, when prayer seems most difficult, believers persevere because communing with God as his son or daughter is what God created us for.

Doctrinal Session Guide

(Approximately 60 minutes)

Arrange chairs in a circle. Place in the center a candle, an open Bible, a rosary, and prayer booklets. Have name tags and refreshments available. If the group is

This great assembly of people has gathered for the dedication of this house of prayer. This being a house of prayer, we ourselves are the house of God.

SAINT AUGUSTINE

larger than five or six, guide people to share in smaller groups whenever possible.

Welcome

Greet people as they arrive. Take time for introductions and check in with everyone to find out how they are doing

Pray

Sing or play a recording from the parish’s repertoire of hymns and songs. Encourage everyone to join in the song as they are able.

Engage

1. Begin with the *Insight* and *For Reflection* sections of the participant handout. Invite any questions that participants may have.
2. Then point out that the opening prayer was one of the three major forms of prayer, vocal prayer.
3. Next lead the group in an experience of meditative prayer: Take the crucifix from the table and hand it to a participant. Invite each person to hold the crucifix for a few minutes and think about the great love Jesus demonstrated when he died on the Cross for us.
4. Gather their responses to the experience of the forms of prayer by asking: What did you experience? In what way did you find this easy or challenging?

Teach

1. Explain that prayer is a lifelong commitment to deepen our response to God, who loves us unconditionally. Prayer does not seek to make us feel good; rather it helps us to seek an ever deeper relationship with God.
2. Discuss the *Church Teaching* section.

Apply

Encourage the participants to complete these statements:

From the prayer, discussion, and study for this topic, I understand the essence of this Church teaching to be...

What insight into this Church teaching did I gain?

Pray

Allow for a few minutes in silent prayer for each to speak to God in the quiet of the heart.