



Archdiocesan Program

WHY CATHOLIC?

STRENGTHENING FAITH ... MAKING DISCIPLES



CHRISTIAN PRAYER

VOCAL PRAYER AND MEDITATION



Biblical Reflection: Mt. 11:25-30

Prayer is the life of the new heart. It ought to animate us at every moment. But we tend to forget him who is our life and our all. This is why the Fathers of the spiritual life in the Deuteronomic and prophetic traditions insist that prayer is a remembrance of God often awakened by the memory of the heart: "We must remember God more often than we draw breath." But we cannot pray "at all times" if we do not pray at specific times, consciously willing it. There are the special times of Christian prayer, both in intensity and duration. (CCC 2697)

The Lord leads all persons by paths and in ways pleasing to him, and each believer responds according to his heart's resolve and the personal expressions of his prayer. However, Christian Tradition has retained three major expressions of prayer: vocal, meditative and contemplative. They have one basic trait in common: composure of heart. This vigilance in keeping the Word and dwelling in the presence of God makes these three expressions intense times in the life of prayer. (CCC 2699)

Vocal prayer is an essential element of the Christian Life. To his disciples, drawn by their Master's silent prayer, Jesus teaches a vocal prayer, the Our Father. He not only prayed aloud the liturgical prayers of the synagogue but, as the Gospels show, he raised his voice to express his personal prayer, from exultant blessing of the Father to the agony of Gethsemani (cf. Mk 14:36). (CCC 2701)

Meditation is a prayerful quest engaging thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. Its goal is to make our own in faith the subject considered, by confronting it with the reality of our own life. (CCC 2723)

"Whether or not our prayer is heard depends not on the number of words but on the fervor of our souls", St. John Chrysostom. (CCC 2700)

Questions for discussion:

- **Read again the quote from St. John Chrysostom in number 2700. What does it say to you?**
- **Which is your preferred and most frequently used vocal prayer? Why?**
- **The Catechism number 2705 says "that [book] of history – the page on which the 'today' of God is written" could be of assistance to our meditation. How do you understand this idea?**
- **Do you think you could use the Mysteries of the Rosary for your meditation? How?**
- **What do you think is the most important thing in prayer – vocal or meditation?**

Further reading: Catechism of the Catholic Church, numbers 2697-2708; 2720-2723