



"All these (the Apostles) with one mind continued steadfastly in prayer with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren" (Acts 1, 14).

475. What is prayer?

Prayer is the lifting up of our minds and hearts to God.

Prayer is an act of love. It is sometimes called conversation with God — but conversation of love — a heart-to-heart talk with God who is Love and loves us.

476. Why do we pray?

We pray:

- first*, to adore God, expressing to Him our love and loyalty;
- second*, to thank Him for His favors;
- third*, to obtain from Him the pardon of our sins and the remission of their punishment;
- fourth*, to ask for graces and blessings for ourselves and others.

477. How should we pray?

We should pray:

- first*, with attention;
- second*, with a conviction of our own helplessness and our dependence upon God;

third, with a great desire for the graces we beg of Him;

fourth, with loving trust in His goodness;

fifth, with perseverance.

478. For whom should we pray?

We should pray especially for ourselves, for our parents, relatives, friends, and enemies, for sinners, for the souls in purgatory, for the Pope, bishops, and priests of the Church, and for the officials of our country.

479. How do we know that God always hears our prayers if we pray properly?

We know that God always hears our prayers if we pray properly because Our Lord has promised: "If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you."

Asking in His name means asking for love of Him, since the name represents the person bearing it. We ask for what we need to love Him. Even if we do not use these words, what we really mean is this: "O Lord, please give me what I need to please You, and if what I am asking for does not really please You, then do not give it to me. Give me instead what would really please You, even if it is a cross." Such a prayer, God has guaranteed to answer.

480. Why do we not always obtain what we pray for?

We do not always obtain what we pray for, either because we have not prayed properly or because God sees that what we are asking would not be for our good.

Many people do not pray in the name of Christ, as explained in the preceding answer, but pray in this way instead: "O Lord, please give me what I want." And they often do not think whether or not it will help them to love God more, and sometimes they do not even care. God has never guaranteed to answer a prayer such as this, as it is not really a prayer but selfishness.

481. Are distractions in our prayers always displeasing to God?

Distractions in our prayers are not displeasing to God, unless they are willful.

DISTRACTIONS**SINFUL**

Distractions are the wanderings of our imagination.

If we deliberately let it wander and do not even try to pray, that is a sin.

But if it wanders when we do not want it to, then this does no harm to our prayer. It is still very good and very pleasing to God.

HARMLESS

If you notice a distraction, gently turn your mind back to some thought of God. Meanwhile, your heart is praying all the time.

482. How many kinds of prayer are there?

There are two kinds of prayer: mental prayer and vocal prayer.

483. What is mental prayer?

Mental prayer is that prayer by which we unite our hearts with God while thinking of His holy truths.

Mental prayer usually begins with meditation, which means thinking about God to move our hearts to love Him. Our hearts then speak to Him in our own words or even without words. Then we listen to Him in silence, not only of lips, but of heart. This is the highest form of private prayer.



It is not hard to do. Think about God's goodness, about the way Christ suffered for you, about Our Lady or one of the saints. Think for a while, then let your heart speak and listen. Take five, ten, fifteen minutes or more. As long as you want to pray and don't deliberately do or think about something else, your heart is praying, even if nothing seems to be happening. It is time well spent and very profitable for your soul.

484. What is vocal prayer?

Vocal prayer is that prayer which comes from the mind and heart and is spoken by the lips.

485. May we use our own words in praying to God?

We may use our own words in praying to God, and it is well to do so often.

486. What are the prayers that every Catholic should know by heart?

The prayers that every Catholic should know by heart are: the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Apostles' Creed, the Confiteor, the Glory be to the Father, and the acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition.

487. How do we usually begin and end our prayers?

We usually begin and end our prayers with the sign of the cross.

488. Why do we make the sign of the cross?

We make the sign of the cross to express two important mysteries of the Christian religion, the Blessed Trinity and the Redemption.

489. How are these mysteries expressed by the sign of the cross?

When we say "In the name," we express the truth that there is only one God; when we say "of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," we express the truth that there are three distinct Persons in God; and when we make the form of the cross on ourselves, we express the truth that the Son of God, made man, redeemed us by His death on the cross.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What promise has Our Lord attached to prayer?
2. What does asking in the name of Christ mean?
3. If we ask God to let our team win just because we want to win, is this asking for love of God or selfishness?
4. What are distractions in prayer?
5. What should we do about distractions in prayer?
6. What is meditation?
7. What should we think about when we want to meditate?
8. How would you go about making mental prayer?
9. Give an example of vocal prayer.
10. Explain the Sign of the Cross.