

Prayer – Building a Friendship With God

In this unit students explore prayer as a way of communicating with God. They investigate examples of Jesus praying in Luke's Gospel, and research prayer practices in the school and Church community. At the conclusion of the unit students prepare a plan for personal and classroom prayer.

DOCTRINAL FOCUS

In planning to teach this unit the following references from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church are recommended:

#2567 *God calls man first.* Man may forget his Creator or hide far from his face; he may run after idols or accuse the deity of having abandoned him; yet the living and true God tirelessly calls each person to that mysterious encounter known as prayer. In prayer the faithful God's initiative of love always comes first; our own first step is always a response. As God gradually reveals himself and reveals man to himself, prayer appears as a reciprocal call, a covenant drama. Through words and actions this drama engages the heart. It unfolds throughout the whole history of salvation.
(See *Compendium* #535 *Why is there a universal call to prayer?*)

#2697 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. These are the special times of Christian prayer, both in intensity and duration.
(See *Compendium* #576 *Is it possible to pray always?*)

#2688 The *catechesis* of children, young people and adults aims at teaching them to meditate on the word of God in personal prayer, practising it in liturgical prayer, and internalising it at all times, in order to bear fruit in a new life.
(See *Compendium* #565 *Who can educate us in prayer?*)

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

The great spiritual traditions offer a veritable treasure trove of devotional acts. There are morning and evening prayers, graces said over meals, and reverent physical gestures. Christians bow their heads and fold their hands. Sufis whirl. Hindus chant. Orthodox Jews sway their bodies back and forth. Quakers keep silent. Muslims respond to the call to prayer five times a day. In all of these devotional practices there is an assumption that there is a spiritual deity who listens to, and often answers, these human requests, or responds to human praise. How does your image of God affect the way you approach prayer? How has your prayer life developed? Do you use a variety of prayer styles in your own prayer life?

In the Christian tradition we engage in many different forms of prayer and meditation, which allow us to communicate with our God. We often turn to prayer during the best and the worst times in our lives, and this is often experienced during times of personal,

community or global disasters, when people turn to the Church and to their God in prayer. Do you turn to God in prayer only when you or those you love are hurting? Are there times when your prayer is one of praise or thanks or joy?

Often it is during the silent times that we feel a special closeness to our God, when we intentionally create space and time in our busy lives to concentrate on the divine. 'Silence like the sunlight will illuminate you in God' (Thomas Merton). Reflect on the 'silent times' in your life when you have allowed God to speak to you. Is there a special place where you feel closest to God?

The disciples of Jesus Christ saw him pray often, and asked him to teach them to pray. Prayer 'constituted the wisdom of his speech, the strength of his actions, the overflowing fount of his loving' (*The Art of Trinitarian Prayer* – Jesus Castellano Cervera). Can you recall a time in your own experience when prayer has constituted the wisdom of your speech or the strength of your actions?

LINKS WITH STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

Students have been immersed in a variety of prayer forms at school from Grade Prep. Many will also have experiences of prayer through family life. They have been immersed in symbol, ritual, movement and story in prayer. They have experienced both personal and formal forms of prayer. *What do students associate with prayer? What is prayer about for them? Can students identify forms of prayer that enable them to feel close to God? How do you integrate these forms into classroom prayer time? Who do students pray to – the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit?*

Students from other religious traditions may know prayer practices and forms from that tradition. *What experiences and understandings of prayer do they bring to this unit of learning? What symbols, rituals, gestures and practices are sacred to them and their families?*

EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

Lk 11: 1–4

The 'Our Father' in Luke's Gospel is simpler than the version in Matthew's. Luke's version also has the advantage of not being couched in the slightly archaic English (dating from the sixteenth century) in which we receive Matthew's 'Our Father'. As such this prayer resembles the prayer of children: its brief phrases are straightforward and direct without the 'professional' air that surrounds much formal prayer. At the same time its themes are a reflection of what the whole gospel seeks to convey: a relationship with God who is to be understood as 'the Father', whose essence is holiness, whose reign is longed for, who is the source of life and daily sustenance, whose forgiveness and mercy does not fall short of the human forgiveness we offer each other, and who is the One who holds each of us, one by one, in his hands and can be trusted to test us no further than we can bear. Above all, Luke's 'Our Father' shows that prayer is 'conversation with God'. God understands not only our words but also our hearts. Therefore we should feel free to speak to him in our normal voices and words whenever or wherever we wish.

POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

Listening Prayer: Use the following steps to guide the class in a 'listening' meditation.

Still the body.
Be aware of breathing/heartbeat.
Listen to the sounds outside. What is the furthest sound?
Listen to the silence inside the room.
Listen to the silence inside you.
Listen for the silence of God.

- Some students can 'listen' to God through engagement with the arts – through painting, sculpting, drawing. Others can listen to God through music, with or without words. For some, movement and dance is a way in which they come to an awareness of God.

Prayer as Speaking to God:

- In times of shared prayer in the classroom invite students to name something they praise God for; to thank God for someone or something in their lives; to ask God for support in an area of concern in their lives or in someone else's life.
- Invite students to keep a prayer journal using words, pictures and images. This is a way in which students can talk to God and be attuned to the Holy Spirit in their lives. It can assist students to be aware of what they believe, value, feel and wonder about. Invite students to address their journal entries to God. Sometimes writing a letter to God can be a way of journaling. For other students, sentence starters may be helpful, e.g. I feel like ... I am happy/sad because ... I wish ... I need ... I am wondering about ... I am sorry for ...
- Using the words of others is another way of communicating with God. Invite students to sing hymns during morning prayer. Or invite them to identify prayers of significant people in the Tradition such as saints. These can be prayed during morning or afternoon prayer. An example of this would be the Prayer of St Francis.
- Invite students to choose words from Scripture that are significant for them. These can be a focus during class prayer time, or students can write them and illustrate them in their journal.

Praying as Jesus Christ taught us:

- Sing the 'Our Father' and devise actions to accompany it.

Related Chapters – *KWL* 2nd edn, Year 3: Chapter 1, Sharing in the Loving Life of God; Chapter 16, Listening and Responding to God.

Faith concepts: prayer, listening, friendship, Trinity.

Seeking understanding:

What is prayer about?

What kinds of prayer help you to listen to God?

Understandings:

Friends listen to each other.

Prayer is about listening to and building a friendship with God the Father, with God's Son Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit.

People can build a friendship with God through formal prayer and personal prayer.

There are many forms of personal prayer.

Scripture Text: Lk 11: 1–4.

Unit specific learning:

| Students will learn about | Students will learn to | Students will undertake to |
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| <i>Knowledge and Understanding</i> | <i>Reasoning & Responding</i> | <i>Personal & Communal Engagement</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The significance of prayer in Scripture.• How to pray, when to pray, ways to pray, and why people pray.• The purpose of prayer as a means of talking to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.• Formal and informal prayer.• Make connections between prayer and how they experience God in their lives. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflect on their experience of prayer.• Identify and provide reasons for praying.• Evaluate ways of praying.• Explore their feelings about and attitudes towards personal and communal prayer. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan, lead and participate in prayer services using formal and informal prayer.• Engage in a personal action plan to promote more meaningful prayer. |

PHASES OF STUDENT INQUIRY

| Additional Reading for Teachers | Orientation to Inquiry <i>What do students already know, think or feel in relation to the topic? What are students' questions about the topic? What experiences and reflections can we offer students to become engaged with the topic?</i> | Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning |
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| <p>There is a sense of raising our minds and hearts when we pray. There is also a sense of 'asking' in our prayers, even at the basic level of placing ourselves in the presence of God. Children are well aware of the asking dimension. Let us lead them into reflection, meditation, and silence, and let them teach us something of the quality of prayer.</p> <p>The Church invites the faithful to regular prayer. Some of this would be: Daily prayers – these are prayers offered at home, school or anywhere; The Liturgy of the Hours or Divine Office – sung or said daily, mostly by clergy and religious but also said by many lay people; Lectio Divina – means 'divine reading' and is an ancient Christian way of prayer, using the Bible or other suitable reading material; The Sunday Eucharist – the weekly celebration of the risen Lord. The community offers Jesus Christ's perfect prayer – his sacrifice of praise, thanksgiving, intercession and atonement – to God.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Experience: Personal Prayer Rubric Teacher creates a 'Personal Prayer' rubric for students to fill in. This is not to be shared with the class, but could be included in their personal journals. Headings are rated 1–3 stars in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – I pray – I know the Our Father – I know the Hail Mary – I can make up prayers – I make time to pray – I can make the Sign of the Cross. This rubric can also be used at the end of the unit, and students may wish to discuss any changes in their ratings and why they think this has happened. | <p>Assessment for Learning This will indicate students' prior knowledge and experience of prayer.</p> |
| <p>The term meditation comes from the Greek</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening Meditation | |

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| <p><i>melete</i> meaning care, study, exercise. Meditation in the Christian context can include vocal and contemplative prayer, sometimes called prayer of the heart in the desert tradition.</p> <p>When we meditate we allow ourselves to be open to God's presence. Silence and relaxation of both mind and body are necessary for meditation. Christians who meditate focus their attention on the person and words of Jesus Christ.</p> <p>Many practices of meditation focus on the individual, but one can practise communal meditation, e.g. Stations of the Cross.</p> <p>Contemporary practices of meditation are often influenced by practices of the Christian East. These often emphasise the importance of quiet, receptive, listening meditation.</p> | <p>Use the following steps to guide the class in the following 'Listening' meditation: <i>Everybody take a big breath in and out. Can you feel your breathing? Listen to your heartbeat. Listen to the sounds outside. Listen to the sounds inside the room. Feel the quiet inside you. Think of a quiet place where you feel comfortable. Who is there with you? Who do you want to talk to? What would you say to them? Listen to your heartbeat. Listen to the sounds outside. Listen to the sounds inside the room. Now listen to me, open your eyes.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think – Pair – Share Give students quiet time to reflect on this experience, using the following questions to guide their thoughts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Did you feel your breathing? – Did you feel your heartbeat? – What sounds did you hear? – How did the quiet feel? – Describe your quiet place. – Who was there with you? – What did you talk about? <p>Work with a partner and share responses. Display these questions around the room.</p> | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Response | Assessment for Learning |

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| | <p>In their journals students respond to the guided meditation by answering the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Where was my quiet place? – Who did I talk to? – What did I say? <p>Invite students to share their responses with the class.</p> | <p>This task will indicate students' understanding and experience of meditation as prayer.</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-it Note Brainstorm Have a poster on walls in the classroom with the following headings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Prayer is ... – Prayers I know ... – I pray to ... – Times when I pray ... – Places I pray ... – People I pray with ... – Questions I have about prayer ... <p>Students are given post-it notes to write responses and place on the appropriate chart. Charts are displayed around the room and referred to as necessary, or presented in a variety of ways, e.g. PowerPoint presentation, book, art-form.</p> | |
| Additional Reading for Teachers | <p style="text-align: center;">Development</p> <p><i>What experiences and religious texts will provide new learning for students? What skills will students need in order to work with these resources? What strategies and tools will enable students to think and reflect on these experiences and texts? How will students process their thinking and learning?</i></p> | Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening Meditation | |

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| | <p>This activity is run weekly throughout this unit, each time focusing on the skills we need to develop to engage in meditation, e.g. to be able to become still.</p> | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Photo Wall Create a photo/image wall of places of prayer at home, school, other classes, Church and the wider community. Students are grouped to go to other grades and to the parish to photograph and observe the prayer places and rituals, and interview teachers and students about their prayer practices. Set up a Myclasses page with relevant links for groups to research information. Students create a concept map linking these words to the information/photos using coloured string or wool. Some suggestions for words: Prayer Father Son Spirit Friendship Symbols Talk Listen Story Actions Informal Formal Sing Movement Special Place | |
| <p>The disciples, who had experience with Jewish prayer at the time, were greatly struck by the singular character of the prayer of their master. Jesus was actually in continual prayer (cf. Lk 5: 16). The most important moments of his life were accompanied by prayer. Jesus prayed:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Luke Scripture Data Chart How did Jesus pray? Using gospel references from Luke (3: 21–22; 4: 42; 6: 12; 9: 18; 9: 28) students consider the significance of prayer in Jesus' life. Possible headings: Where did | <p>Assessment as Learning This task will indicate what students have understood about prayer in the life of Jesus Christ. It will indicate how students identify with Jesus and the place of prayer in his life.</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at his baptism in the Jordan (Lk 3: 21) • before calling the apostles (Lk 6: 12) • before his transfiguration (Lk 9: 28) • for the faith of Peter (Lk 22: 31–32) • for the sending of the Holy Spirit (Jn 14: 15–17) • before raising Lazarus (Jn 11: 41) • at his triumphant entry into Jerusalem (Jn 12: 27) • at the Last Supper (Jn 17: 1–5) • for his disciples (Jn 17: 6–19) • for all believers (Jn 17: 20–26) • before his Passion (Lk 22: 39–46) • at the moment of his death (Lk 23: 24). <p><i>(Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, p.172)</i></p> | <p>Jesus pray? What happened (event)? Who was there? What words or actions were used? Why did Jesus pray? What might he have been feeling or thinking? Who does Jesus pray to? What names does he use and why?</p> <p>Students come together and complete a class data chart. Interpret the data chart and make generalisations.</p> | |
| <p>The Our Father, shared by all Christian denominations, is one of the earliest and most distinctive of prayers. It is presented in the context of a teaching on prayer in both Matthew and Luke. Luke's version is shorter than Matthew's, having only five petitions – Matthew's version has seven.</p> <p>The Aboriginal Our Father's English translation is adapted from the First Karajarri version of the Lord's Prayer (1970, Pallotine Fathers, Kimberley).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the Lord's Prayer: Lk 11: 1–4 Read the gospel (Lk 11: 1–4, <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Year 3, Chapter 16). Use a model of scripture exploration, e.g. <i>KWL</i> model, KITE, composite model, to explore this passage. • Compare and Contrast Use a Venn diagram to compare Lk 11: 1–4 with the Aboriginal Our Father (<i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Year 3, Chapter 16, p. 130). <p>Pose these questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What are the similarities and differences? – Which part of the prayer is the most | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – moving for you? – Which part is the most important part for you? – Which part is the most puzzling for you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal and Formal Prayer: Revisit Photo Wall Look at existing connections from concept words to pictures/information on the wall. New connections are made using a different coloured string, e.g. there is a difference between formal and informal prayer, or God talks to us through Scripture and prayer. This enables new learning to be apparent. | |
| <p>There are many different forms of prayer. One of the most common forms is that of petition, when we express our awareness of our relationship with God and ask for God's help. Jesus Christ often prayed to God on behalf of others. In the Prayers of the Faithful we ask not only for ourselves, but for all who need God's intercession.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer Service: Rubric or Template As a guide for students when preparing for class prayer, the class devises a rubric or format of a prayer service using the following headings as a guide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Symbols – Environment – Gathering Song – Opening prayer – Scripture – Reflection – Prayer of the Faithful – Blessing <p>This is then copied and given to all</p> | |

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| | students. | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Prayer Students are divided into groups to plan a class prayer service using the rubric or template as a guide. | Assessment as/of Learning This planning task will indicate how students plan prayer and liturgy using a given form. |
| Additional Reading for Teachers | <p style="text-align: center;">SYNTHESIS</p> <p><i>How will students demonstrate their understandings, beliefs, values, skills and feelings in relation to the topic? How will students take action based on their learning? What strategies and tools will enable students to discern their action, to plan and implement action and to evaluate their action?</i></p> | Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer Services Students lead prayer services that their group has planned. At the end of each service, feedback is given by the class, and each group completes a self-assessment using the rubric. | Assessment of Learning This reflection product will indicate the students' understanding of the variety of prayer forms. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening Meditation Repeat Listening Meditation and discussion. Students journal their responses to meditation and compare with their responses to the questions given at the beginning of the unit. | Assessment of Learning This task will indicate what learning and skills students have developed on prayer meditation. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Plan Students to make an action plan by completing the following statements: – When I pray by myself I will ... | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- When I pray with my friends I will ...- When I pray with my class I will ...- When I pray with my school community I will ...- When I pray at church I will ...- When I pray for the world I will ... | |
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RESOURCES

To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd Edition

Year 3: Chapter 1, Sharing in the Loving Life of God; Chapter 16, Listening and Responding to God.

Teacher Resources

Stead, B 1994, *Time of Jubilee, Using Luke's Gospel With Children*, Desbooks, Australia.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

This unit may be used to assess some of the Level 3 standards.

Students identify with biblical characters and people in the past and present Church by making inferences about their actions, feelings and motives. Students collaboratively plan liturgy using appropriate symbols, words and actions, following a given liturgical form.