

## Teach Us To Pray!

In *Teach Us To Pray!* students explore the traditional forms of prayer in the Christian tradition. They have experiences of meditation, contemplation and vocal prayer, and analyse the Lord's Prayer in Matthew's Gospel. At the conclusion of the unit students are invited to name what significance prayer has in their own lives, and to prepare prayer and rituals based on their new learning.

### 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?*)

**#2608** From *The Sermon on the Mount* onwards, Jesus insists on *conversion of heart*: reconciliation with one's brother before presenting an offering on the altar; love of enemies and prayer for persecutors; prayer to the Father in secret, not heaping up empty phrases; prayerful forgiveness from the depths of the heart; purity of heart; and seeking the Kingdom before all else. This filial conversion is entirely directed to the Father. (See *Compendium #544 How does Jesus teach us to pray?*)

**#2761** The Lord's Prayer 'is truly the summary of the whole gospel'. (See *Compendium #579 What is the place of the 'Our Father' in the Scriptures?*)

**#2767** This indivisible gift of the Lord's words and of the Holy Spirit who gives life to them in the hearts of believers has been received and lived by the Church from the beginning. The first communities prayed the Lord's Prayer three times a day. (See *Compendium #581 What place does the Our Father have in the prayer of the Church?*)

### SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

Prayer is the raising up of our minds and hearts to God, either to praise him, or to thank him, or to beg his grace; and therefore it is divided into Prayer of Praise, Prayer of Thanksgiving, and Prayer of Petition (*Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC], sec. 2559*).

We can pray as we go about our daily work, as we join with our community in prayer, or when we recognise our frailties and strengths in relationships. We are reminded to pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5: 17).

Do you take time to pray? Do you pray only when the events of life are too big for you to handle? Are your prayers those of petition, or do you remember to praise, give thanks, to orient yourself to the presence of God in nature and in silence? 'Prayer is not asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is daily admission of one's weakness. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart' (Mahatma Gandhi).

The Christian tradition provides us with a variety of prayer forms. There is *Lectio Divina* (quiet meditation on the word); the repetition of a mantra (whether this be the Rosary or a sacred phrase); the daily reading of Scripture or the words of a holy person; the joining in the communal prayer of the Church at Eucharist, or where two or three are gathered to remember God's presence. Our prayer can be sung, danced, painted, sculpted, recited or silent. What is your way of praying? Do you set aside some time each day for prayer? How devoted are you to committing yourself to this time? Do you find excuses to avoid communication with the Holy Spirit within? Is family prayer important to you?

## LINKS WITH STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

Since Grade Prep students have prayed the Lord's Prayer in classroom and school prayer time, in the Mass, and in the Rosary. Some would have prayed this prayer prior to school in family prayer and in the parish. *What do students understand about this prayer? What images of God does it stir in them? What are students asking from God when they pray this prayer? What does it mean for students to pray, 'Give us this day our daily bread'?*

Students have also been immersed in the main expressions of personal prayer in the Catholic tradition since Grade Prep: Vocal Prayer, Meditation and Contemplative Prayer. At this stage they are learning explicitly about these prayer forms. *What do they associate with each of these prayer forms? Does school and class prayer offer a range of these experiences for students?*

## EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

### Mt 6: 7–15

Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer is the one on which the familiar 'Our Father' is based. The context in which Jesus gives this prayer to his disciples is his instruction about humility and lack of ostentation in prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Prayer is never to be mere display. Jesus teaches that prayer should be simple, straightforward, confident and deeply felt. The prayer Jesus gives his disciples sums up the characteristics of Christian prayer. It is addressed to God who is to be approached as a Father and in communion with others (Our Father). It asks for worship and praise for God's name (hallowed be thy name), for the peace and justice of God's reign (thy kingdom come) and for earth to mirror heaven in obedience to God's will (thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven). For ourselves, it asks for our deepest needs to be supplied (give us this day our daily bread), our wrong-doing to be forgiven (with the important proviso that we forgive others) and begs that we should neither be tested beyond our limits (lead us not into temptation) nor be overwhelmed by evil (but deliver us from evil). Each of these brief phrases encapsulates the message of the whole gospel.

## POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

- Accompanied by quiet reflective music, pray the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer, alternating with the short reflection after each petition (*KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 9, p. 84). Begin with the introductory verse of the prayer, 'Our Father, who art in heaven', and continue with the pattern of petition and reflection. Allow a few moments of silence before proclaiming each petition.
- Praying with a short scriptural phrase: Read Mt 6: 7–13 (see *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 9, p. 85). Allow some moments for the students to choose a short phrase from the text and to meditate on it by repeating it silently a few times. Encourage them to 'carry' this phrase in their hearts throughout the day.
- Formal prayer: Establish a pattern of praying the Lord's Prayer throughout this unit.
- Informal prayer: Encourage students to keep a prayer journal for their own personal prayers and reflections. This is not shared with the class.
- Students compose prayers of blessing, petition, intercession, thanksgiving and praise. These are brought together to form, for example, a Liturgy of Blessing, Prayers of Intercession, a Liturgy of Praise, etc. Students take responsibility for leading these prayers. This will involve decorating the prayer place, choosing symbols and readings, and orchestrating any ritual action that may be decided upon.
- Students take responsibility for planning a class or school Mass. This will involve choosing appropriate readings, hymns and symbols, as well as assisting in processions and ritual actions.

**Related Chapters** – *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 6: Chapter 9, Teach Us To Pray.

**Faith concepts:** prayer, tradition, community, form, ritual, communication

**Seeking understanding:**

How are we invited to pray in the Catholic tradition?

**Understandings:**

The Church has a rich tradition of formal and informal ways of praying.

Jesus Christ's prayer to God, the Lord's Prayer, shows Christians how to pray to God.

Meditation, contemplation and vocal prayer have sustained the faith of the people of God through time, and continue to bring people close to God today.

In Church communities Christians experience various kinds of prayer: thanksgiving, petition, praise and sorrow.

Prayer has different structures and forms in the Christian tradition.

**Scripture Text:** Mt 6: 7–15 Jesus Teaches His Disciples How to Pray.

**Unit specific learning:**

<b>Students will learn about</b>	<b>Students will learn how to</b>	<b>Students will undertake to:</b>
<i>Knowledge and Understanding</i>	<i>Reasoning &amp; Responding</i>	<i>Personal &amp; Communal Engagement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ways to pray through meditation, contemplation and vocal prayer.</li><li>• The main parts of the Lord's Prayer, and how these petitions apply to their own lives.</li><li>• How to pray about current issues/problems through prayers of praise, thanksgiving, sorrow and petition.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reflect on their experiences of prayer.</li><li>• Express their feelings and beliefs about the importance of prayer in light of new learning about prayer forms in the Catholic tradition.</li><li>• Make a recommendation about class prayer based on new learning.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participate in forms of meditation, contemplation and vocal prayer.</li><li>• Plan a prayer ritual using the four forms of prayer – praise, thanksgiving, sorrow and petition.</li></ul>



## 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								
<p>Within the Church, love of God has been expressed through prayer and spiritual life and through love and service of others. They are both vital and, for the Christian, one cannot exist without the other.</p> <p>Prayer is the way people enter consciously and deliberately into the presence of God whom we are to love with every fibre of our being.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Graffiti Sheets</b> Students write/draw responses to a number of questions (listed below) on big sheets of paper – one question per sheet. After responding, the sheet is handed on to another group. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– What is prayer?</li> <li>– How do people pray?</li> <li>– What prayers can you say?</li> <li>– Why do people pray?</li> <li>– When and where do people pray?</li> <li>– What symbols, texts or objects do people use in prayer?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Assessment for Learning</b> These tasks will indicate students' prior knowledge, perceptions and experiences, i.e. the language, gestures, times, objects and styles of prayer with which students are familiar.</p>								
<p>The Christian tradition is rich in approaches to prayer.</p> <p>There is <b>liturgical</b> prayer which is the public prayer of the gathered Church. It centres around the Eucharist and the other sacraments and the Liturgy of the Hours: the daily prayer of the Church prayed by priests and religious, and many lay people too.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cross Classification Chart</b> What experiences, events, prayers and feelings do you associate with prayers of thanksgiving, praise, petition, and sorrow. Students record their responses on a chart with words and pictures.</li> </ul> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Praise</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Petition</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Sorrow</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Thanksgiving</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 20px;"></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Praise	Petition	Sorrow	Thanksgiving					
Praise	Petition	Sorrow	Thanksgiving							
<p>There is the great treasury of <b>learned</b> prayers which can be prayed either together or alone.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Journal</b> Students reflect on the place of prayer</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assessment as Learning</b> Throughout the unit students will use a journal</p>								

<p>These include the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory be, the Apostles' Creed, parts of the psalms and prayers such as the Angelus and the Rosary.</p> <p>There is <b>meditative</b> prayer in which, using an idea, an image or a scripture text, people quietly open themselves to the presence of God. Ways of meditative prayer are meditation on a text, an icon, recitation of the Rosary, the Jesus Prayer, prayerful movement or art or play, Taizé chants, <i>Lectio Divina</i>.</p>	<p>in their lives using the following prompts: I think prayer is ..., Prayer can be challenging when ..., I like to pray when ..., For me, the best way to pray is ..., Prayer is important because ...</p>	<p>to reflect on and monitor their learning.</p>
<p><b>Additional Reading for Teachers</b></p>	<p><b>Development</b></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>	<p><b>Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning</b></p>
<p>There is <b>contemplative prayer</b> which is the opening of our whole being to God, the Ultimate Mystery, who is beyond thoughts, words and emotions; whom we know by faith is within us, closer than breathing, thinking, feeling and choosing; even closer than consciousness itself. Contemplative prayer is wordless – a prayer of silence and longing and union.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Guest Speakers</b> Invite members of the parish or school community who feel comfortable talking to the students about their prayer life and prayer experiences.  Prior to this, students as a class could draft a series of fertile questions to ask this person.</li> </ul>	
<p>There is also <b>spontaneous prayer</b> which arises from the ordinary events and experiences of life and which connects them and us to God.</p> <p>In addition to these ways of praying, countless</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Prayer Experiences</b> Throughout the unit involve the students in a variety of prayer experiences of meditation, contemplation and vocal prayer.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assessment of Learning</b></p> <p>The data chart will show what students have understood and valued about each prayer type, and can be used to track their learning.</p>

<p><b>collections</b> of the prayers of the saints and of contemporary men and women exist which are often a great help to personal prayer.</p>	<p>Students use a data chart to record information and reactions to these styles of prayer. Students may refer to <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 9, pp. 85–86 for information. Headings in the chart could include: Type of prayer experience, What did you do? What do you know about the history of this prayer form? How did you feel during this prayer?</p>	
<p>The important thing about prayer is that it should become <b>habitual</b>. Praying each day at school (and at home) at regular moments using prayers learned by heart, as well as spontaneous and other ways mentioned above, establishes a habit of prayer and gives the children a vocabulary of prayer.</p> <p>Teachers may need to explicitly teach some of the <b>language of prayer</b>; for example: <i>We thank you God for ..., Praise the God who ..., Dear God, we pray today for ..., Lord, we ask forgiveness for ..., We make our prayer through Christ our Lord.</i></p> <p>Use the <b>Psalms</b> to show the children how prayer ought to be honest, and that anger, pain, sadness, tedium and despair as well as more positive emotions can be the raw material for honest prayer to God.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Scripture: Mt 6: 7–13 Orientation to the Text</b> Ask students to identify times in which Jesus prayed. Check in the gospels for references. Place on a class chart with a corresponding symbol to represent that story.  Compare with texts noted in <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 9, p. 87.</li> <li>• <b>Listening and Responding to the Word</b> Use guided meditation to lead students through a retelling of Mt 6: 7–13. Students imagine they are one of the disciples hearing Jesus’ teaching. At the end of the meditation ask students which line, word, phrase or picture stays in their minds. Students may record this in their journals or share with a friend.  Ask students to choose one of the parts of this text (see <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn,</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assessment of Learning</b> The reflection product will indicate what students have understood about a specific part of the Lord’s Prayer, and how they relate it to their own life.</p>

	<p>Year 6, Chapter 9, p. 84). Students form small groups with peers who have chosen the same part and discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Why is this part of the Lord’s Prayer important to me?</li> <li>– How does this part of the prayer apply to my life or to the world?</li> </ul> <p>Ask students to produce a reflection on what this part means through one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Painting or clay sculpture</li> <li>– Collage</li> <li>– Digital photo display</li> <li>– Concept map</li> </ul> <p>This may be done individually or in pairs.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Kinds of Prayer</b></li> </ul> <p>Gather images, songs, scripture passages and/or prayers of the tradition that express the four kinds of prayer: thanksgiving, petition, praise and sorrow. Students view/listen to/read material and reflect on the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– What message is the author/artist trying to convey?</li> <li>– What do you think about or feel when you see or hear this material?</li> <li>– What label would you give to each</li> </ul>	

	<p>of the images/texts/songs/prayers?</p> <p>Compare these with the labels of the tradition of the Church, e.g. petition, thanksgiving, praise and sorrow (see <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Year 6, Chapter 9, p. 88).</p> <p>If you have students from other religious traditions in the classroom, they might like to investigate significant forms of prayer in their own tradition.</p>	
<p>A simple formula to help students write brief prayers is the 'You, Who, Do' technique in which God is named together with an appropriate attribute, e.g.:</p> <p><b>You</b> – Mighty God,  <b>Who</b> – you led your people out of slavery,  <b>Do</b> – show the people of the Holy Land the way to peace and freedom.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Preparing to Pray</b>  Choose a current issue that is relevant to your students. In small groups students construct a prayer around this issue, using one of the four kinds of prayer. Construct a rubric that will guide children in developing a prayer and an appropriate visual image.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assessment of Learning</b>  Through these prayers and images students will demonstrate their understanding of the purpose of these prayers.</p>
<p><b>Additional Reading for Teachers</b></p>	<p><b>SYNTHESIS</b>  <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>	<p><b>Assessment:  for learning, as learning, of learning</b></p>
<p>Prayer together is helped by having a definite shape. Below is an outline of a simple prayer time:</p> <p>An <b>introduction</b>: the Sign of the Cross, a brief statement of why we are gathering to pray, and sometimes a song or hymn or a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Prayer Ritual</b>  As a class, or a small group within the class, create a ritual that incorporates the prayers and images developed in the previous phase. Proclaim Mt 6: 7–15 and pray the Lord's Prayer during this time. Invite students to include</li> </ul>	

<p>short ritual like the lighting of a candle.</p> <p>A reading or <b>readings</b> from Scripture.</p> <p>A sung or spoken <b>response</b> such as a psalm.</p> <p>Prayers of <b>intercession</b> for the needs of others and our own needs.</p> <p>The <b>Our Father</b>.</p> <p>A <b>concluding hymn</b> or song.</p>	<p>some of the material developed throughout the unit.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Prayer Brochure</b> Individually or in small groups, students create a prayer brochure for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults candidates.</li> </ul> <p>Construct a rubric to guide students in their preparation and presentation of the prayer brochure.</p>	<p><b>Assessment of Learning</b> Students demonstrate their understanding of the traditions of prayer and the kinds of prayers in the Church, and their response to the inquiry question.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Journal</b> In their journals students reflect on their feelings, reactions and responses to the unit of work and the prayer ritual. Use de Bono’s framework as a guide to construct prompt questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– What were some of your favourite prayer experiences? Why?</li> <li>– What were some of your least favourite prayer experiences? Why?</li> <li>– What could we do as a class to make prayer more meaningful for you?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Assessment of Learning</b> The Journal will indicate development in students’ knowledge and understanding of prayer.</p> <p><b>Assessment as Learning</b> The Journal will enable students to reflect upon and monitor their learning in relation to prayer.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- How do you feel about prayer?</li><li>- What questions do you still have about prayer?</li></ul>	
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## RESOURCES

### ***To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd Edition***

Year 6: Chapter 9, Teach Us To Pray.

### **Teacher Resources**

Murdoch, K 1998, *Classroom Connections*, Eleanor Curtin Publishing, Armadale.

White, D et. al. 2003, *Into the Deep*, KD Publications, Marayong.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS**

This unit may be used to assess some of the Level 4 standards.

Students analyse and reflect on scripture texts and stories in Church Tradition to inform actions, attitudes and values. Students express the significance of ritual in the Catholic Tradition by planning and evaluating prayer, liturgical and sacramental experiences.