

The Teacher as Catechist: Person of Prayer

Introduction

Faith is a relationship with God. As in all relationships, communication is essential in our relationship with God. We develop our side of the relationship by talking and listening to God. The more we do it, the more we share, the deeper our relationship with God becomes. It is that relationship which we bring into the Catholic School setting. It is part of what we hand on. This segment is meant to help you reflect on yourself as a person of prayer and give you some helpful tips about praying. Just follow the outline. Begin by reflecting or journaling on the *first question*. Then read the article “Person of Prayer” and jot down your responses to the *reflection questions*:

First Question

- What are the things that most lead you to prayer?

Article: Person of Prayer

One of the tasks of catechesis is to teach the Christian how to pray. (See *National Directory for Catechesis*, 20.4, p. 61) If, as a religion teacher, I am going to teach children how to pray, I have to know how to pray myself. When we pray, we communicate with God using our minds, our hearts and our bodies. People can be led to pray by observing nature, by listening to music, by being part of a faith community. Sickness, death, tragedy and hard times often bring people to their knees, as do joy and gratitude. We pray for ourselves and we pray for others. Sometimes we just pray because we want to talk or

listen to God. We use our bodies to pray in many different ways. We kneel, we stand, we sit, and we use gestures. We pray in silence and we pray with words. It is important to know and accept that all of these are forms of prayer; maybe not for you as an individual but for others. Which are your favorites?

There are two reasons to be aware of the different forms of prayer. The first reason: for yourself. You may have a preferred way of praying and it really works to deepen your relationship with God. But you may have learned one way of praying and it doesn't work because it is not your way of communicating. For example, if you are an extrovert who loves people and talking, you may find contemplative prayer or silent prayer does not work for you but public prayer with the community does bring you into deep meaningful intimacy with God and it will be just the opposite with the introvert.

Often problems with praying come because we do not know we have a choice of different ways to pray. So we need to explore other ways—ways that suit our personalities. The second reason is that as religion teachers, we need to provide different prayer forms for children that help them practice and respond to the presence of God.

“The function of prayer is to change my own mind, to put on the mind of Christ, to enable grace to break into me.” That statement throws a different light on looking at prayer to ask, to praise, to bless, to give thanks, or to intercede. While those are all forms of prayer, whichever forms we use “work” if we experience that kind of change and vulnerability to God's will.

What are some things you can do to develop or deepen your prayer life in today's busy world? Here are ten tips:

- Find a place to pray away from distractions, so you can focus.

- If you can pray at the same time every day, make prayer a regular part of your daily routine. It will become habit.
- Pray out loud. You may find that you concentrate more on what you are praying about.
- Keep a notepad handy so you can jot down different things that come to mind while you're being quiet in God's presence.
- Find time for prayer in the unused appropriate spots of your schedule. Talk to God while you are driving. (Don't close your eyes!) Combine prayer with housework that doesn't require a lot of concentration. Use your workout or walking time for prayer.
- Try different prayer forms from the ones you usually use. Include blessing prayers, praise, thanksgiving prayers, as well as prayers of petition. Sing your prayer. Use body movements.
- Spend time reflecting on one of this week's Scripture readings.
- Use a prayer journal and daily or weekly write a personal letter each day or each week to one of the Persons of the Trinity. For example, you can begin your letter by writing *Dear Lord Jesus*, *Dear Holy Spirit*, or *Dear Father*. Or make a gratitude list and write a prayer of thanks and praise.
- If you always pray alone, try praying with someone else.
- Don't be too wordy. Use one-sentence prayers, or one verse from Sunday's Psalm reading. Choose a psalm and pray one verse a day.

Reflection Questions

- What new insights did you glean from this article?
- Which tips would be easiest for you to follow? Most difficult?