

The Forms of Prayer

Core Activity

Prayer Forms

1. Write the word “prayer” in a place visible to the class. Ask the students to name out loud things they associate with prayer. Explain that those things could be actual prayers such as the Lord’s Prayer or the Hail Mary, or experiences, places, or situations such as liturgy, church, or a retreat. If Mass is mentioned, try to help the students briefly associate with the various prayers within the Mass, such as the opening prayer, the closing prayer, the Eucharistic Prayer, and the intercessions. If a student says “retreat,” help him or her recall the kinds of prayer used on retreat, such as movement, singing, quiet time, and nature walks. Allow the group to generate their own ideas as much as possible. Record their responses under the displayed word. Ask lead-in questions such as these:

- How do your parents or grandparents pray?
- What times of the day do you associate with prayer?
- Have you ever heard of _____ a mantra, a charismatic prayer, [and so on]?

Once the students have generated a list that you feel includes most of the prayers they are familiar with, continue with the activity.

2. Offer a presentation on the five prayer forms covered on pages 374–382 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth, Third Edition (CFH)*:

- blessing
- adoration
- petition
- thanksgiving
- praise

3. Divide the students into five small groups. Refer to the list of things associated with prayer that was generated in step 1. Assign each group a form of prayer and ask the group to identify which of the items from the class’s list fits into its assigned category.

4. Ask each group to designate a speaker to present the group’s list of things associated with its prayer category. When all the groups have presented, engage the students in a discussion using questions like the ones that follow:

- Which items from the class’s list remain uncategorized? Why?
- Which items are used in multiple categories?
- What additional items could be associated with each prayer form?

5. Invite the students to discuss the ways each of them could more fully incorporate one of the prayer forms into their regular prayer life. Offer a few examples that might help the students consider the various possibilities:

- setting aside time at the end of the day to offer gratitude and praise to God
- participating in Reconciliation more regularly
- starting each morning by praying for those in need
- praying for the specific needs of family members, friends, neighbors, and other loved ones

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Prayer* manual.)

Core Activity Extension

Expanding Our Prayer

1. Invite the students to review the five types of prayer you displayed for the core activity. Ask them each to jot the list on a piece of paper and to rank the items in order from the form of prayer they practice most to the form they practice least.

2. Invite the students to look at the last type of prayer on their lists, the form they use least often. Instruct them to practice that form of prayer at home after school for at least 10 minutes. Tell them that after praying in that manner, they are to submit a journal entry that answers the following questions:

- Was it difficult to pray in an unfamiliar manner for that long?
- Did you find doing so rewarding for you? Please explain.
- Will you try to pray like that more in the future? Please explain.

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Prayer* manual.)

Additional Activities

A Prayer Chart



1. Distribute the handout “A Prayer Chart” (Document #: TX003206). Invite the students to complete the chart individually, each person reflecting on her or his own past prayer practices. Refer them to the directions on the handout. Allow about 10 minutes for completion of the chart.

2. Divide the class into small groups and invite the students to share their responses to the chart. Ask them to consider these questions in their discussion:

- What other form of prayer could you have used in each situation?
- Which form of prayer do you practice most in your prayer life?
- How has your use of prayer forms changed over the years?

3. Invite the students back into the whole-class setting and conclude the activity by discussing questions such as these:

- Which form of prayer would you like to incorporate more fully into your life?
- How do you intend to do so?

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Prayer manual*.)

The Five Forms and Traditional Prayer

Assemble a collection of traditional prayers of the Church, such as the Act of Faith, the Act of Contrition, the Apostles' Creed, and the Prayer of Saint Francis. Those and other Catholic prayers and devotions are available in the "Catholic Prayers and Devotions" section of the *CFH*. Make sure the prayers you collect represent the different forms of prayer. Distribute copies of the prayers to the students and ask them to identify which of the five forms are used in each prayer. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Prayer manual*.)

The Five Forms and the Psalms

1. Distribute Bibles and ask the students to turn to the Book of Psalms. Make the following points to the students:

- "As a Jewish man, Jesus prayed the Psalms many times, because they are an important part of Jewish prayer" (*CFH*, p. 368).
- "The Psalms express every emotion of the human heart: anger, certitude, temptation, submission to God's will, praise, abandonment, desire, trust, confidence, and more" (p. 368).

2. Ask the students to read the following Psalms and to identify the most prominent of the five prayer forms contained in each of them. As a class, discuss their findings. The forms are listed in brackets for your reference.

- Psalm 3 [petition]
- Psalm 63 [adoration]
- Psalm 67 [praise]
- Psalm 107 [thanksgiving]
- Psalm 139 [blessing]

3. Invite the young people to write their own psalms of thanksgiving. Conclude by inviting a student to lead a prayer by reading the psalm of thanksgiving he or she has written.

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Prayer manual*.)

Creative Prayer Forms

1. Announce the following homework assignment in your own words:
 - Each of you is to create a work of art that demonstrates one of the five forms of prayer. The artwork may utilize any medium except speech or writing.
 - I want you to see this not as an *assignment about prayer* but rather as an *experience of prayer*. Maintain a prayerful setting and mood when you go home and work on your art projects.

2. On the designated day, provide an opportunity for the students to present their works of art and to interpret them for the class. Again try to maintain a prayerful mood. Invite thoughtful comments on the individual prayer forms.

(This activity is adapted from Judith Dunlap with Carleen Suttman, *Praying All Ways*, pp. 35–36.)

(The material labeled *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer* or *TC: Prayer* is from *Total Catechesis: Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer*, by Mary Shrader and Laurie Delgatto, in the Total Catechesis series [Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2004]. Copyright © 2004 by Saint Mary's Press. All rights reserved.

The material labeled *CFH* is from *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth, Third Edition*, by Brian Singer-Towns with Janet Claussen, Clare vanBrandwijk, and other contributors [Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2013]. Copyright © 2013 by Saint Mary's Press. All rights reserved.

The activity "Creative Prayer Forms" is adapted from *Praying All Ways*, by Judith Dunlap with Carleen Suttman [Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1996], pages 35–36. Copyright © 1996 by Saint Mary's Press. All rights reserved.)