



Prayer Life and Discernment

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock.
If anyone hears my voice and opens the door,
(then) I will enter his house and dine with him,
and he with me.” (Rev 3:20)

RCIA Journey of Faith - 7 May 2009



Prayer Life

“...pray at every opportunity in the Spirit...” (Eph 6:18)

“Persevere in prayer...” (Col 4:2)

“Pray without ceasing.” (1 Th 5:17)

“It is always possible to pray.” (CCC 2743)



What is Prayer?

- A disposition
- A “*vital necessity*” & “*personal relationship*”
(CCC 2744, 2558)
- Encounter with God
- Dialogue with God
- Communion with God
- Movement of the Holy Spirit in the soul

expressed in word or in thought, and enhanced by posture, action, and/or environment

“Christian prayer is a covenant relationship
between God and man in Christ.”
(CCC 2564)



Forms of Prayer

- Adoration and Blessing
 - Acknowledging I am a creature before the Creator
- Petition
 - Expressing awareness of relationship with God
 - Asking God for assistance
- Intercession
 - Praying for others
- Thanksgiving
 - Showing God gratitude
- Praise
 - Recognizing God as God



Purpose of Prayer

- Knowledge of God
- Union with God
- Dispose us to do God's will
- Increase our faith
- Conversion of the heart
- Spiritual growth
- Holiness
- Act of love



Methods of Prayer

- Meditative
 - Sacred Scripture, icons, writings of Spiritual Fathers, Lectio Divina, Devotions, Adoration
 - Guided by the Holy Spirit
 - “Lord what do you want me to do?”
- Contemplative
 - “Be still and know that I am God.”
- Vocal
 - Personal, spontaneous prayer (thoughts, words, songs)
 - Liturgical (at mass)



What is 'Prayer Life'

- Our relationship with God
- Life in Christ
- Life of prayer

“Prayer and *Christian life* are inseparable...”
(CCC 2745)

“Prayer is both a gift of grace and a determined response... It always presupposes effort.”
(CCC 2725)



Elements of a Prayer Life

- Prayer
- Work
- Scripture
- Spiritual Reading
- Rosary / other devotions
- Mass
- Intellectual Formation
- Spiritual Direction
- Family Prayer





Keys to a Fruitful Prayer Life

- Faithfulness and consistency
- Compatibility
- Simplicity
- Gradual growth



Discernment

"Prayer... is so useful and necessary that without it we could not come to any good, seeing that by means of prayer we are shown how to perform all our actions well."

(St. François de Sales)



Definition

- “The quality of being able to grasp and comprehend what is obscure”
(Merriam-Webster)
- Decision-making process
- In relation to God:
 - Grasping God’s will and action in our lives
 - Hearing God’s voice
 - “Is this me or is this God?”



God's Action

- What is God saying to me in this suffering / joy?
- Where is God leading me?



God's Will

- What is God asking of me?
- Should I take this job?
- Is this the right house to buy?
- How should I be helping out in my parish?



God's Modes of Communication

- Prayer
- Scripture
- Other people
- Spiritual Direction
- Visions
- Directly



The Discernment Process

1. Formulate a proposition/question
2. Gather relevant data
 - Pros and cons
 - Effects and consequences
 - Do I have attachments in these regards?
 - Seek advice, talk to others



The Discernment Process (cont.)

3. Bring data to prayer
 - Where do I sense joy and peace?
 - What does God seem to be saying?
4. Make a decision
5. Sit on the decision
6. Act on the decision



The Discernment Process (cont.)

7. Seek confirmation

- What is the fruit of the decision?

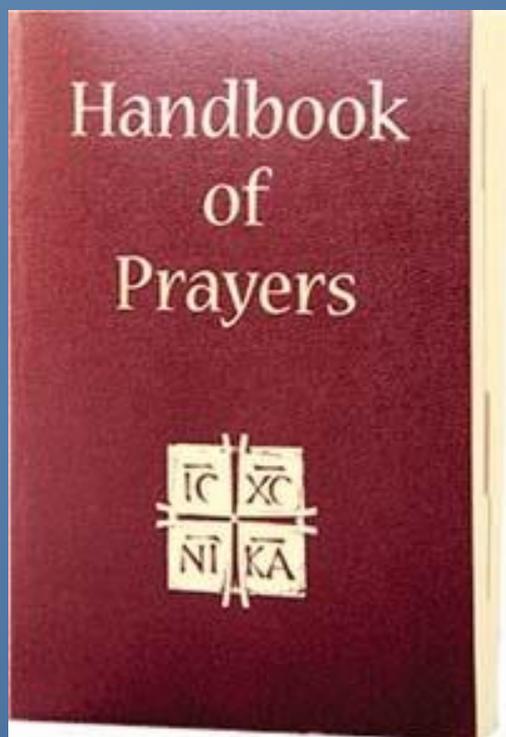
Review:

- Was it right after all?
- Look for patterns
- Learn which mode God primarily uses with me



Questions?

Handbook of Prayers



- Essential for every Catholic!
- Pocket-sized prayer reference
- Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, Morning Offering, Apostles' Creed, and The Liturgy of the Hours
- Order of the Mass in English and Latin
- Prayers before and after Mass
- Guide for a good confession
- Devotions to the Blessed Trinity, Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary, and St. Joseph



Discussion

- What are some of the things you do in your prayer life?
- What are some of the ways in which God made His will known to you?
- Is there a particular discernment experience you would like to share?