



The Armor of Faith
Topic Summary: What Does God Ask of Us
Part V: Prayer



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Introduction

[Greeting:] → Welcome to “The Armor of Faith,” a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Sister Sara Draney is a Dominican Nun from the Monastery of the Infant Jesus in Lufkin, Texas. Helen is a lay-Dominican and has a love for music ministry. The Dominicans, I should mention, are also known as the Order of Preachers. Sharon is still our token cradle Catholic, and, as everyone knows by now, I am simply here to ask questions. Fortunately, we have a very qualified panel to answer those questions, so welcome to our panelists as well as to our listeners.

Let us open with a prayer:

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray. Amen.

Discussion:

Last time, I mentioned that my wife and I have a daily prayer for our eldest grand-daughter as she proceeds through her confirmation formation. The prayer goes something like this:

Dear Lord, we lift up these prayers for our eldest grand-daughter. As she continues through her confirmation process, we pray You will grant her wisdom and understanding and help her to see all the blessings of the fullness of faith. We pray also, dear Lord, that

You will help her see the gifts and talents You have placed within her stewardship and the purpose that You desire they should be put so that Your will may be done. Amen.

As we concluded our discussion of how we might discern and live our vocations, I explained the meaning of the final sentence of our prayer when we pray that “God help her see the gifts and talents He has placed within her 'stewardship.’” I mentioned that stewardship implies a responsibility of management and control of resources. A good steward seeks to enhance and optimize what they are allowed to use in their capacity as steward. It may be a resource they own or it may be that of another. If they are a leader in some capacity, that means their stewardship extends to that for which they have leadership responsibility. We must remember that within our vocations, we may also be called to leadership, so our response to the call of God is not only a matter of what we do, but what we encourage others to do as well.

We are all blessed with gifts and talents of which God calls us to share. We are all stewards of what He has given us, for we are His creation. The question is, will we be responsible stewards of those gift and talents, or will we squander them? As His steward of our personal being, He has left that choice to us, but we must also remember, if we are not responsible stewards, He can take back those gifts and talents at any time. We can also expect He will hold us accountable for what He has entrusted to us. Let us pray, then, He will guide us so His will may be done.

So that brings us to the subject of prayer. We all have a perception of prayer, but let's take a moment to reflect first upon what it is, then, let's consider its place within our lives.

If we had the capability to examine every moment of everyone's life, I suspect that almost everyone has let loose with a prayer at some time or another. Some of us have an advanced prayer life while others may only allow a prayer to escape from them from time to time. Sadly, I must count myself in the latter group for a good portion of my life. I resisted prayer for a variety of reasons, but as I have grown in my faith, it has become an increasingly important part of my day.

Our friends Merriam-Webster define prayer primarily as:

- a (1) : an address (such as a petition) to God or a god in word or thought
- (2) : a set order of words used in praying
- b : an earnest request or wish

(Question 1: While this definition is technically correct, I think it is too shallow. **How might we better define what prayer is?)**

A conversation with God:

- An opportunity to share our cares
- An opportunity to listen for how He seeks to guide us
- An opportunity to lift up our petitions for His help
- An opportunity to advocate for others

- An opportunity to lift up thanks for His answers and His blessings
- An opportunity to lift up praise
- An opportunity to adore Him
- An opportunity to receive Him in our hearts

(CCC: 2559) “Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.” But when we pray, do we speak from the height of our pride and will, or “out of the depths” of a humble and contrite heart? He who humbles himself will be exalted; humility is the foundation of prayer. Only when we humbly acknowledge that “we do not know how to pray as we ought,” are we ready to receive freely the gift of prayer. “Man is a beggar before God.”

(CCC: 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.

(Question 2: In Matthew 6:9-14 and Luke 11:1-4, Jesus instructs us how to pray through the example we refer to as “The Lord’s Prayer.” Why do we think God asks us to pray?)

- He wants to hear from us
- He wants a relationship with us
- He wants us to hear Him
- He wants us to reflect on the meaning of His instruction to us
- He wants to hear how we respond to and understand His instruction

(Question 3: As we lift up our hearts in prayer, there are different forms of prayer. What are the forms of prayer which we find discussed within the Catechism of the Catholic Church and how might we compare and contrast these forms?)

The following forms of prayer are discussed in CCC: 2626 – 2643:

- Prayer of Blessing and Adoration
- Prayer of Petition
- Prayer of Intercession
- Prayer of Thanksgiving
- Prayer of Praise

(Question 4: As we learn about prayer and its blessings, that leads to the question. Where should we pray?)

- A quiet place (cf Matthew 6:5-6 – 5 “When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. 6 But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.)
- A place with others – in community (cf Matthew 18:19-20 19 Again, [amen,] I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”
- In His house
- In His creation
- At a place of joy – remember to give thanks for His blessings
- In a foxhole – even the hardest of hearts may be found to let a prayer escape from them as they face difficult tribulations – the old adage, “there are no atheists in foxholes”

(Question 5: Essentially, we have established that anyplace is a good place to pray. So the next question is: **When is a good time to pray?**)

(1 Thessalonians 5:17)

17 Pray **without ceasing.**

- Start with a few minutes
- Consider prayer during natural breaks or transitions of the day
- Replace mindless or non-productive time with prayer time
- Allow prayer time to expand as you learn, practice, and grow
- Wherever we are waiting is an opportunity to pray

(Question 6: Jesus taught us how to pray, but with what we discussed concerning the different forms of prayer, this raises another question. **What might we use to inspire our prayer?**)

- Reflection on our day or days past
- Reflection on our conscience (similar to examination of conscience for confession)
- Reflection on our plans and goals (always a good opportunity to give God a good laugh)
- Pray while reading scripture – Ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in understanding
- Pray while reading the doctors of the church or the saints
- Reflect on prayer requests and needs of others
- Pray for those in purgatory
- Reflect on prayer books containing prayers of past generations (attach our heart)

(Question 7: As we advance in our prayer life, we should also consider using a prayer journal. **What is a prayer journal and how might we use it to enhance our prayer life?**)

- It is not a diary, but a reflection of our conversations with God
- Consider our joys and blessings → remember to give thanks
- Consider our petitions on behalf of others
- Consider our aspirations and discernment of vocations
- Consider our plans, goals, and objectives both near and long term
- Consider our questions to God
- Reflect on prayers answered → Remember giving thanks and praise
- Highlight prayers which inspire our thoughts and to which we periodically return
- Reflect on trials and tribulations – vent – but listen for what is right and just
- Greet the Lord, listen, write, listen, write, reflect, write, listen, write, repeat

(Question 8: We just discussed the importance of listening in prayer: **How might we listen for God's answer?)**

(Matthew 7:7-11)

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asks for a loaf of bread, 10 or a snake when he asks for a fish? 11 If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him.”

- His answer does not always come in Internet time
- We hear Him less in our ears and more as we search our hearts
- We must remain alert so we may observe and be aware of His answer
- His answer may not always be according to our expectations, but according to our eternal needs

Quotes:

– *Pope Benedict XVI* (from his meeting with members of the Roman clergy, 2 Mar 2006)

In a world where there is so much noise, so much bewilderment, there is a need for silent adoration of Jesus concealed in the Host. Be assiduous in the prayer of adoration and teach it to the faithful. It is a source of comfort and light, particularly to those who are suffering.

– *St. Louis de Montfort*

Pray with great confidence, with confidence based upon the goodness and infinite generosity of God and upon the promises of Jesus Christ. God is a spring of living water which flows unceasingly into the hearts of those who pray.

– *St. Therese of Lisieux*

For me prayer is a surge of the heart, it is a simple look towards Heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.

– *St. Faustina*

A soul arms itself by prayer for all kinds of combat. In whatever state the soul may be, it ought

to pray. A soul which is pure and beautiful must pray, or else it will lose its beauty; a soul which is striving after this purity must pray, or else it will never attain it; a soul which is newly converted must pray, or else it will fall again; a sinful soul, plunged in sins, must pray so that it might rise again. There is no soul which is not bound to pray, for every single grace comes to the soul through prayer.

Final Thoughts:

As we mentioned at the beginning of our discussion, prayer is a conversation with God. As with any relationship, time together is important to the quality and blessings which may be shared within a relationship. God calls to us and is ready to hear our prayer at any time and at any place. The choice as to the time we spend with Him, He has left to us.

Some people may be like I was, praying only in desperation. I didn't really know how to pray or what to pray other than the occasional cry for help. He is certainly there for us when we do cry out, but He also wants to hear our joys, our questions, our thoughts for our future. He also wants to give His love and receive ours in return. These are all things we can do through prayer.

Just as time and practice was required for us to learn how to communicate with those who surround us, we cannot learn how to communicate with God if we do not spend time with Him. It may feel uncomfortable at first, but as we allow ourselves to grow in prayer, we will eventually find that we become more uncomfortable when we do not allow ourselves the time to spend in prayer.

Note, I said, "...when we do not allow ourselves." While there are many demands upon our day, if we look, there is always time to pray. It does not take that long to say, "Dear Lord, I love You." If there is nothing else we have to say for the day, that short prayer speaks volumes.

Wrap Up: Well, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we discuss the blessings of adoration.

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to open and discuss Your Holy Word. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk with us and help us to see how we may put on the armor of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation**, and the **Word** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

Next Session: What Does God Ask of Us – Part VI: Adoration

References:

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