

## Christian Prayer – How to Pray Alone, as a Married Couple, and as a Family

### *For busy parents with young children – the simple approach to prayer*

Prayer is simply visiting with God – the Creator of the Universe – who is always present. Jesus revealed God to be a Trinity, a Community of Divine Persons: the Father, the Son – who also became human through Mary and is known as Jesus – and the Holy Spirit. Here are the simplest steps for visiting with God in prayer.

### PRELIMINARY NOTES

- 1. TIME AND PLACE:** The ideal time and place is anytime and anywhere and setting aside some time to visit with God without distraction – that is – doing nothing else at the same time.
- 2. PRAYER IN THE DUTY OF THE MOMENT:** All day long we have many things to do, and we can pray at one point or throughout the activity – anywhere, anytime – while in bed, in the shower, preparing food, before / during a meal, commuting to and from work, pausing a moment while you are working, when playing.... **CAUTION:** When you are doing something else, keep your attention in the “front” of your mind on what you are doing to avoid injury... let the prayer “happen” as if on the “back burner”....
- 3. IT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO REALLY DOES THE PRAYING WITHIN US:** Let the Holy Spirit carry you in the praying, especially when you are doing something else. At all times it is really the Holy Spirit who prays in us, and if we want, the Holy Spirit can give us the grace to relax; so we don't need to “strain the brain” at all, and the Holy Spirit teaches us how to allow the prayer to “echo” within.
- 4. PRAYER OF SILENCE:** Holy women and men agree that the best “place” to find God is in silence, not the absence of noise around us, but in the silence we learn to keep within ourselves, quieting our mind, heart, and spirit, like a baby in the parent's lap. You can brush away interior “noises” by letting your breath in and out “echo” a holy word “Lord Jesus, I trust in you.” OR “Maranatha – Come Lord Jesus.” OR “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner.” OR simply the Holy Name: “Jesus Christ.”
- 5. SPECIFIC FORMS OF PRAYER:** You can pray with Scripture, the Word of God in the Bible; or with the Mysteries of the Rosary; or at Holy Mass; or using specific prayers calling on the saints to help you pray; or using prayers you can learn by heart such as the Lord's Prayer or Psalms; and so on....

### ACTUALLY PRAYING

- 6. DECIDE:** Simply decide to pray, to visit with God.
- 7. ASK:** Ask the Holy Spirit to be with you and help you to pray, to visit with the Holy Trinity.
- 8. BREATHE YOUR HOLY WORDS:** Slowly learn to “breathe” the word in and out, focusing on your breath as a way to relax and rest in the Lord. OR Read some Scripture verses slowly and ponder them. OR Pray the Rosary with Mary while meditating on the Mysteries of the Holy Rosary. OR...
- 9. WORRY NOT – ENJOY:** You can almost hear Yoda say this to you. Just let whatever comes into your mind or heart – worries, ideas, emotions, resolutions, anxieties, lists or whatever – as you notice it wanting to occupy you, just let it drop, fall away... you will be able to find it or pick it up again later. Enjoy the presence and the love of God the Father, his Son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.
- 10. GIVE THANKS:** Say “Thank You, Lord... or Father... or Jesus... or Holy Spirit.”

### *Taking our cue from the Star Trek universe...*

Do you feel or think prayer is something saints and mystics do but we ordinary mortals could never hope to do or experience? For people like us, isn't prayer just turning to God in our times of need? Asking for what we or our loved ones need has always been a normal function of praying, but there is more to it than that. In the fictional Star Trek universe, the first goal of exploring space is to discover new life forms and make first contact with them in the hope of establishing ongoing relations between them and the people of Earth and the members of the United Federation of Planets. So how do they make such contact? The Starship Captain's usual command generally goes like this: "Open all hailing frequencies." After this the first message basically introduces them, declares peaceful intentions, and asks for a response. Prayer really is as simple as that, at least to begin with.

### *"Open all hailing frequencies."*

So how do we "open all hailing frequencies" to God? We're not talking about sophisticated technology and equipment in the exercise of prayer, but we are talking about all our human faculties: physical senses, our intellectual and psychological faculties, the faculties of our heart, and of our spirit or soul.

### *Praying is Simply visiting with God*

Every living, breathing human being has expectations, and these expectations change with the changes we experience in time. What do we expect of life, of others, of ourselves, and of God? What might be God's expectations of us? What kind of blessing do married couples expect from God in your marriage? There is no escape from human suffering and death, but you might expect God to minimize your pain and delay your death to an advanced age. You may be afraid of marital difficulties and expect God to save you from friction and marriage failure. You may fear giving birth to less than perfect children and expect God to prevent deformities from happening. The expectations you might have of God could be as extensive as your fears about life. It is quite human to have fears, but a life primarily driven by them would be a wretched existence. Love is a much more reliable engine for our lives, health, marriage, family, career, friendships, and leisure.

Most would expect engaged and married couples to have within them deep desires that are real – for all that is true, right, good, loving, and beautiful. Taken together, these desires look like the desire for happiness, and constitute a great motor driving our decisions and choices. It is considered wise – the Bible often speaks of this – to seek the counsel and experience of our elders. Yet, we who are alive at present and belong to the 21<sup>st</sup> century culture are so wary of being told how to live our lives, that we are loath to seek advice. We value our own competence and independence, which can hinder us from being really open to benefit from the experience of others in order to make better decisions; so bent are we on making those decisions by ourselves.

As we attach ourselves to our own motives at this level; we see that God has expectations of engaged and married couples, and of families, as of all his children. The first human beings knew what God expected of them, and they were happy to carry it out. Then they were tempted to doubt the generosity of God's motives in the few restrictions He had put on their choices. They decided to be free from God's expectations, and ventured into behavior they had been warned to avoid. Since they had taken back the trust they had until then put in God, the result was the loss of the harmony and peace they had enjoyed with God, with each other, and with all other creatures. To this day we are no longer in harmony with God, with each other, or with Creation. We rely far too much on our own opinions and preferences, going so far as to avoid following or even asking for advice; even when this results in pain, suffering, and death.

### *Where Paleontology, Archaeology, Anthropology, and the Sacred Scriptures Meet*

We don't know when the first generations of human beings lived, symbolized as they are in Adam and Eve of Genesis in the Bible. Were they at the beginning of the genus "Homo" in Africa 2.5 million years ago, or 500,000 years ago when Neanderthals in Europe and the Middle East evolved bigger brains than ours today, or when the first homo sapiens developed bigger brains 300,000 years ago with the daily use of fire, or with the evolution of "Homo sapiens sapiens" 200,000 years ago in East Africa, or with the "Cognitive Revolution" 70,000 years ago and the emergence of fictive language, the ability to conceive and express abstract realities, or most recently with the agricultural revolution 14,000 years ago? We don't know. What God reveals in Genesis is that man left God to prefer our current state of rebellion and ignorance, in the beginning, whenever that was.

In time, God chose a people for himself, with a merciful plan to restore them to harmony by giving them what the first human beings had as a natural conscience before they turned away from trust in their Creator God. With Moses God gave 10 commandments and said: "Choose life or death: keep the Lord's commandments and you shall live; break these commandments, and you shall surely die. Consider well, and choose between life and death." It was a struggle for people to observe the Law and all that God expected of them. They felt faith in God was a burden and didn't always feel close to God. Then, "God so loved the world that He sent his only Son."

Jesus came to restore us to harmony with God his Father, with each other, and with all other creatures. He did not come only for the people alive on Earth when He came as man, because He continues to come to each person in every generation until the end of the world. He uses various means to get our attention and then offers us life; that we might be able to live a life like his own. As we respond to Jesus and open ourselves with trust to Him, He lets us know what God expects of us, and we allow Him to have influence in our lives.

According to John 17:3, Jesus said that eternal life is to know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Jesus lived the most human life ever lived, in perfect harmony in himself, with other people, and all creatures. He lived in a way that was in divine communion with his heavenly Father. He clearly intends for us and all his disciples to learn from Him. Jesus continues to send his Holy Spirit in us to guide us into living our life as He lived his. Jesus went to Synagogue every Friday and every Saturday rested with his family before God, to study the Scriptures and discuss life. He prayed 7 times a day: on waking, before every meal, at the beginning and end of his work, and before going to bed. He lived in the peace, trust, and joy that come from knowing his Father's love. He worked, made his contribution to society, and earned food for the family. He faced the world with courage, resisting its efforts to pull Him away from doing the Father's will. He lived on good terms with all, was kind to the poor and suffering, and forgave all who offended Him; even with love and mercy to enemies.

Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit to help us pray and live as He did. We turn to God in prayer as we get ready for sleep and upon waking in the morning. We go to Sunday Mass and worship the Lord, resting all day with our family and friends, spending time with our spouse and playing with our children, reading, discussing, and learning more about God, and enjoying the Lord's Day. Like Jesus we pray often during the day – bringing God into the different experiences and concerns of our day – praying alone, as a couple, and also as a family. We live in the peace, trust, and joy that flow from our Father's love. We work all week to make our contribution to society and support our family, and face the world with courage, resisting its efforts to pull us away from our family or from doing the Father's will. We live on good terms with all, show kindness to the poor and suffering, forgive all who offend us, and give our love and mercy even to those who make themselves our enemies.

Jesus did not take his standards for living from the world, but from his Father's will, which He knew from Scripture, the Synagogue, the teaching of his parents and rabbis, and from personal prayer and converse with his Father. As his disciples, we cannot afford to take our standards for the conduct of our lives from the world, but from Jesus. Jesus sets our standards – as the Person against whom we do well to measure ourselves – for one day we will want to be able to show the Father all the fruit we have generated from all his gifts to us.

Jesus lived his life as a vibrant, intimate, constant relationship with his Father in heaven, and He calls us to do the same. Jesus' faith, hope, and love of his Father were out in the light of day for all to see, though He kept much of it concealed in his heart. Still, his faith in God was not occult but public. Our faith in God must likewise be open and public – not occult or hidden. When a person considers himself a Christian, yet does not participate in Sunday worship every week, does not pray alone every day, does not pray openly – at home and in public places like work, church, and society – then that person's faith is occult or hidden and rather sterile; they limit what God can give and do for them. They push God into the shadows, the corners of their lives.

That leaves the wide-open spaces of their home and lives empty, attracting all kinds of other influences to come and set up shop. They are more easily manipulated and controlled by other people whose motives and intentions can be quite dark. This in turn can open them up to harassment by dark powers and the influence of demons – all the manifestations of evil that we associate with the “occult”. God abides by the laws He has put in place to govern our lives, including the law of freedom. This means that the only way that God will actually be God in our lives is for us to take Him seriously, to put our trust in Him, surrender our lives and homes to Him, pray, and openly practice our faith. These attitudes bear fruit every day as we deliberately practice them.

Living as a Christian, as a disciple of Jesus, includes praying individually and even openly with others. You will find below some simple methods or guides for prayer that you can use in order to get over the initial embarrassment and hesitations that can keep us from even trying to pray together or alone. Keep in mind that God is alive and was the first One ever to love you. The Father loved you even before you were conceived, when you were only one possibility out of hundreds of thousands in your mother's ovaries and your father's testes. He picked you because He wanted you to have life and come into the world; so you might come to know Him and his never-ending love for you. As you begin to pray, and return to prayer each day – alone and with others – remember that you are responding to God's invitation. He is always there first, the One who waits for us; so that He might reveal a little more of Himself and his love for us.

### **A brief reflection on God and the Holy Trinity**

Our Christian faith informs and confirms our own human experience that there is only one true God. At all times as we turn to God and pray to Him we deepen this experience of the oneness and uniqueness of God. In addition, what Jesus revealed about God also progressively enters into our own personal experience. While God is a single divine being, there is so much life in God that there are actually three divine Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Even more mysteriously, the second Person, the Son, took to Himself a human life conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary at the very moment she gave her consent to the will of God as expressed to her by the Archangel Gabriel. “Let it be done to me... as you say.”

In his humanity, Jesus of Nazareth revealed to humanity for all time through his Jewish contemporaries that this one true God is composed of three divine Persons, and that He is Himself the Son of the Father, and that He alone knows the Father and makes Him known to all who come to Him and believe in Him. Towards the end of his earthly life and ministry, Jesus told his Apostles of another, the Advocate, the Consoler, the Holy Spirit, who would continue to teach them after his departure, reminding them of all that He had taught them.

As we continue to address God as One, when we open ourselves to God and pray we also address the Father, Jesus his Son, and the Holy Spirit. When we participate in the Holy Eucharist, at the beginning during the Penitential Rite and the Gloria, we address the Holy Trinity. In the presidential prayers said by the presiding priest or bishop – the Opening Collect, the Prayer over the Offerings, and the Prayer after Communion – we join Jesus and pray to the Father. We do so also in the Eucharistic Prayer, which is actually the prayer of Jesus who is offering Himself to the Father and inviting us to join Him in his offering by offering ourselves to the Father. The Lord's Prayer is also offered to the Father. At all times we can also address Jesus or the Holy Spirit.

**Prayer Exercise #1 – Praying Alone** God is the divine Being who alone existed from all eternity and at the beginning of time became Creator of the Universe. Faith is a supernatural gift given by God as an inner disposition and willingness to trust in God and become able to know God directly – but in a mysterious way, since God is Spirit – and actually communicate with the three Divine Persons revealed and made known by Jesus Christ. The amazing thing we discover is that it is always God who takes the initiative to gently touch our spirit within – in our thoughts, our heart, our soul – often beyond images and deeper than feelings, in inner silence. The Holy Trinity pour into us as in a transfusion their divine life and love. Prayer is entertaining God’s Presence in order to let the Holy Trinity draw us into their own divine vitality. Here is one way you can pray.

Step 1. Decide to pray at a specific time and in a place that will allow you to pray relatively undisturbed.

1. Pick a form of prayer activity, such as praying with Scripture, Liturgy of the Hours, adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, the Holy Rosary, or other form of prayer safe and approved by the Lord.
2. Select a passage of Scripture, or one of the 4 sets of Mysteries of the Rosary, or other texts.

Step 2. Assume a relaxed posture that you will find helpful in giving all your attention to God.

1. You can stand up, genuflect, prostrate yourself, bow before an icon, and make the sign of the Cross, kneel, or sit. Various postures suit various occasions and purposes of prayer.
2. You can, if you are in Church, make a reverent genuflection before the Blessed Sacrament.
3. Ask for God’s guidance, ask the Holy Spirit for inspiration, or with your own words like these:  
*“Dear Father, here I am in your presence. Please guide and inspire me, in Jesus’ Name. Amen.”*

Step 3. Enter into your time of prayer, conscious that you are entertaining God’s presence.

1. Read your Scripture passage, or the Liturgy of the Hours, or Mystery of the Rosary....
2. Allow moments of silence, especially as something moves you, or impressions arise, or memories. Notice such things while giving your attention to God, remembering you are in God’s presence.
3. God sees all that is happening in you at this moment, and all the connections with your entire life.
4. Go back, or dwell there a bit more if you sense God touching something in you, making connections, bringing light or peace, disturbing or challenging you, or inviting you to follow his lead within you.
5. As this passes, or if you sense nothing at all happening, let yourself rest in silence and peace.

Step 4. Near the end of your prayer time, take a step back – with God’s help – have a look at this prayer time.

1. Try to tell God something of what you feel now, or what has been happening during this prayer time.
2. If you’re not clear about it, then just say that and begin thanking the Lord for his time, for his love.
3. What is important is simply to have visited with the Lord, whether or not you think or feel anything.
4. Let yourself be receptive, like a child that is content to be on his father’s or her mother’s lap.

Step 5. Formulate into prayer anything you noticed happening or coming up during your prayer.

1. The Word of God or Rosary Mystery may have touched something in your life. E.g.: *“I remember what happened at work, and I feel bad about it, and worried. Father, You know what happened. Please give me peace and help me find a way to resolve the situation, in Jesus’ Name. Amen!”*
2. If you sense God is drawing you to do or correct something, then ask his help and guidance.
3. Your personal prayers can be simple or more detailed, as you are comfortable, see more clearly, and in the time you have. This whole exercise is done in freedom, trust, faith, and generosity.

Step 6. Over time, let your prayer time become more human, personal, specific, practical, and fully alive.

1. An old man answered the Curé d’Ars that in his prayer he just looked at God, and God looked at him. In time a soul at prayer becomes somehow aware of God’s love shining or burning in them.

2. At times, either in the midst of activity or while at rest, you may not need to use any words, but may simply be content to let God see the simple, daily secrets of your heart and to receive his love.
3. We tend to feel tremendously loved when we realize that someone – even God – is interested in the simple thoughts and feelings of our heart, because this is who we really are.
4. Remember that your prayer experiences may be completely different – that nothing at all may appear to be happening during the prayer time – and that would be perfectly normal too. At such times, your perseverance in “visiting” is an expression of your faith in God and your love for Him.

Step 7. Wrap-up and closing

1. Wrap up with prayer in your own words to thank God for his abiding presence, care, and love.
2. You can also end with an Our Father, a Hail Mary, and a Glory be to the Father.
3. Feel free to stand up, genuflect, prostrate yourself, bow before an icon, make the Sign of the Cross, and make a reverent genuflection before the Blessed Sacrament. Prayer doesn’t have to include words, or be painful or boring. In fact it is as lively and connected as we ourselves are.

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**Prayer Exercise #2 – Letting God Show You His Presence and Care throughout Your Whole Life**

A good, holy, elderly priest – Fr. Walter Lallemand, a war veteran who as a recovering alcoholic was a man familiar with suffering – in February 1977 gave us young adults a prayer exercise to see our life like that of the people of Israel in the Bible. Like theirs, each journey is a sacred history of God’s grace. This is an invitation to reflect in God’s presence with your memory. Ask God to help you remember when – whether you realized it at the time or not – God was there for you and with you. Sharper memories may present themselves first – times when you were loved and cared for – or moments of pain, illness, discomfort, or sadness. God can impress his Love on us powerfully in times of trial. As this relies on our ability to remember, it is an exercise that you can return to and add onto several times over the years. Each experience we remember becomes a treasure enriching and enlightening our life and relationship with God and others. Write in the boxes that help you organize your thoughts, memories, and reflect on them. May the Holy Trinity bless you and reveal to you your sacred history.

**God’s Sacred History with Me**

AGE / OR YEAR / DATE	AGE / OR YEAR / DATE
WHAT HAPPENED	WHAT HAPPENED
CORE OF THE MEMORY	CORE OF THE MEMORY
HOW I FELT	HOW I FELT
ROLE ANOTHER PERSON PLAYED	ROLE ANOTHER PERSON PLAYED
HOW I WAS AFFECTED	HOW I WAS AFFECTED
HOW GOD WAS / IS WITH ME	HOW GOD WAS / IS WITH ME
HOW I FEEL NOW	HOW I FEEL NOW

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### Prayer Exercise #3 – Praying As a Couple

God is the source of vitality and love for Marriage and Family life. Prayer is entertaining God's presence in order to let Him connect us to his divine vitality. Here is how you can pray together as a Couple.

Step 1. Pick a form of prayer activity, such as praying with Scripture, and select a passage.

Step 2. Someone pray out loud, in a way something like this, in order to ask God's guidance: *"Dear God, here we are in your presence. Please guide and inspire us, in Jesus' Name. Amen."*

Step 3. Follow this simple process, which will give each person the opportunity to hear the other person sharing their thoughts and in this way reveal how they need to be prayed for.

1. One person read the Scripture passage out loud, slowly, and clearly.
2. Both remain quiet for a good 2 to 3 minutes, to allow the Word of God time to bounce around inside you and stir up impressions that come from your daily life, thoughts, and feelings.
3. The other person reads the same passage over again out loud, slowly, and clearly.
4. Both listen again in silence to what's bouncing around inside as the Word of God continues to connect with thoughts, impressions, and feelings that come from your daily life and deep within you.

Step 4. Now one of you can put into words, for the sake of the other, what effect the Word of God had on you, and give the other a glimpse of your thoughts, impressions, feelings, and experience of your day.

1. The first person simply puts into a few words what the reading from Scripture stirred up inside; meanwhile, the second person listens attentively.
2. The second person responds with a simple prayer out loud based on what the first has previously disclosed about what is inside them that has been touched by the Word of God. E.g.: She said, *"As I listened, I remembered the fight I had with my boss, and I feel bad about it, and worried."* So, he says, *"Father in Heaven, You heard her say what happened, and now she feels bad and worried. Please give her peace and help her find a way to resolve this problem, in Jesus' Name. Amen!"*
3. Your prayer for the other can be simple or detailed, as you are comfortable and have the time to do, but use the other's own words. This whole exercise is done in freedom, trust, faith, and generosity.

Step 5. Now the second person can put into words, for the sake of the first, what effect the Word of God had on you, and give the first a glimpse of your thoughts, impressions, feelings, and experience of your day.

1. The second simply puts into a few words what the reading from Scripture stirred up inside; meanwhile, the first person listens attentively.
2. The first person responds with a simple prayer out loud based on what the second has previously disclosed about what is inside them that has been touched by the Word of God. E.g.: He said, *"As I listened, I recalled I didn't handle our child's discipline very well, and I don't know what to do."* So, she says, *"Father in Heaven, You heard him say what happened, and now doesn't know what to do. Please give him peace and help him find a way to correct this problem, in Jesus' Name. Amen!"*
3. Your prayer for the other can be simple or detailed, as you are comfortable and have the time to do, but use the other's own words. This whole exercise is done in freedom, trust, faith, and generosity.

Step 6. You look at each other and notice how you now feel, having prayed for one another. (Kleenex time)

1. You may not need to exchange any words, but may see in each other's eyes, that this has been a significant time of prayer – a time of intimacy with God, but also a time of intimacy with each other – because you have trusted each other with simple, daily, secrets of the heart.
2. We tend to feel tremendously loved when someone listens to our heart, because this is who we are.

### Step 7. Wrap-up and closing

1. Now, hold hands, sitting as you are, or standing up, or even kneeling together.
2. Wrap up with prayer out loud in your own words, to simply express to God your gratitude for his abiding presence, care, and love.
3. You can also end with an Our Father, a Hail Mary, and a Glory be to the Father.
4. Feel free to hug, kiss, stand up, genuflect, prostrate yourself, bow before an icon, make the Sign of the Cross, or make a reverent genuflection before the Blessed Sacrament if in a chapel. Prayer may be without words and is as lively and connected as we are. Praying together is a marvellous way for husband and wife to prepare for sexual intimacy, the “holy blessing” of Matrimony, especially when unhurriedly he joins gently with his wife, entirely focused on her pleasure rather than his own.

Remember that prayer is a normal human activity. You will become more at ease with it the more you do it. On the other hand, because you are not alone in it, but God is there with you, prayer is not only a human activity, but also divine, like a dance. So it doesn't make sense to try to evaluate our prayer experiences using human parameters or measuring sticks. In fact, it is better not to evaluate our prayer at all, but rather to pay attention to the fidelity and generosity with which we spend or “waste” time “visiting” with God every day. The ultimate rule of thumb here is the rule of love that expresses itself and gives itself in freedom and generosity.

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### Prayer Exercise #4 – Praying As a Family

God is the source of vitality and love for Marriage and Family life. Prayer is entertaining God's presence in order to let Him connect us to his divine vitality. Here is how you can pray together as a Couple and Family.

Step 1. Pick a form of prayer activity, such as praying the Holy Rosary, and select a set of Mysteries. For prayer with Scripture, a family can use and adapt Prayer Exercise #3 – Praying as a Couple, in way that would be appropriate for the varying ages of the family members. Feel free to stand, kneel, or sit to pray the Rosary.

Step 2. Someone pray out loud, in a way something like this, in order to ask God's guidance: *“Dear God, here we are in your presence. Please guide and inspire us, in Jesus' Name. Amen.”* You can also call upon Our Blessed Mother Mary to be with you and your family as you pray her Rosary: *“Blessed Mother Mary, you who pondered in your Immaculate Heart all the wonderful things God did for you and his people, please be with us and guide us as we pray and meditate on the Mysteries of the Most Holy Rosary. Pray for us and help us to contemplate the divine light shining on the holy Face of Jesus, your Son, Our Lord. Amen.”*

Step 3. This is how we begin the Most Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Mysteries of Jesus.

1. Someone leads for the first of seven times this devotional ejaculation: *“Heavenly Father I trust in You, I offer You the United Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the triumphant bleeding wounds of Jesus and the tears of our loving heavenly Mother Mary. Lord, your will be done.”* This prayer could be said after the initial Glory Be and again at the end of the other ejaculatory prayers after each decade; so 7 times in all. (Prayer of Offering to the United Hearts of Jesus and Mary linked to a family consecration to their United Hearts; as revealed to a German soul called by God in the 1970's to make with great love and devotion reparations to Almighty God for the good of souls, under the care of a spiritual director, and published in Germany in 1981 by Fr. Joh. Ev. Gehrler, OFM Capuchin.)
2. The same leader begins the following prayers: Creed, Our Father, three Hail Mary's, Glory Be.
3. All respond with the second half of each of these prayers. Then after the Glory Be all say:
4. *“Heavenly Father I trust in You, I offer You the United Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the triumphant bleeding wounds of Jesus and the tears of our loving heavenly Mother Mary. Lord, your will be done.”*

Step 4. This is how we ponder the Mysteries of the Most Holy Rosary and pray the five decades.

1. One person read the Mystery of the Rosary out loud, slowly, and clearly. One of the parents or a designated child, teenager, or youth could then read a pertinent Scripture passage, and perhaps also a brief meditation from a published booklet or that they have prepared, or even spontaneously.
2. After a pause of one or two minutes to reflect on the Mystery in Jesus' life, each person may express what is on their mind or in their heart as they pray today. In this way all can hear what others think and feel and in this way learn how we can share and join in one another's intentions.
3. A designated leader begins by saying the first half of the Our Father, ten Hail Mary's, and Glory Be and all respond with the second half of each prayer. The leader may add after the Name of Jesus in each Hail Mary the Lourdes Shrine phrase which focuses on the Mystery. Decade prayers are begun in a single language. Different decades can be begun in different languages, each responding at will.
4. The others respond by saying the second half of each of these 12 prayers in a common language.
5. We ponder not so much the words of the prayers but rather Jesus in his mysteries with Mary.

Step 5. Fatima prayer and other ejaculatory prayers at the end of each decade.

1. At the end of the decade the person who has been saying the first half of the prayers now initiates the Fatima prayer and everyone joins in: *“O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of Hell, and lead all souls into Heaven, especially those most in need of your Mercy.”* (July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1917)
2. Another devotional ejaculatory or short prayer can be added such as: *“Come Holy Spirit, come by means of the powerful intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, your well beloved Spouse.”* (Taken from the Chaplet of the Holy Spirit)
3. A third devotional ejaculatory or short prayer can be added: *“Heavenly Father I trust in You, I offer You the United Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the triumphant bleeding wounds of Jesus and the tears of our loving heavenly Mother Mary. Lord, your will be done.”*

Step 6. Steps 4 and 5 are repeated for each of the remaining four Mysteries of the Holy Rosary.

1. The same persons may exercise the leader's roles as in the first decade, and rotation can be made of the roles the following day or the following week, according to family preference.
2. At the end of the fifth decade and the ejaculatory prayers following it, the following prayers are said.
3. Hail Holy Queen and concluding prayer – Prayer to St Michael the Archangel – Prayer for the Pope.

Step 7. You look at each other and notice how you now feel, having prayed together. (Fellowship time)

1. You may not need to exchange any words, but may see in each other's eyes, that this has been a significant time of prayer – a time of intimacy with God, but also a time of intimacy with each other – because you have trusted each other with simple, daily secrets of the heart.
2. We tend to feel tremendously loved when someone listens to our heart, because this is who we are.
3. Feel free to hug, kiss, bow before an icon, make the Sign of the Cross, or a reverent genuflection before the Blessed Sacrament if in a chapel. Prayer doesn't have to include words, or be painful or boring. It is as lively and connected as we ourselves are.

Remember that prayer is a normal human activity. You will become more at ease with it the more you do it. On the other hand, because you are not alone in it, but God is there with you, prayer is not only a human activity, but also a divine activity. For this reason it doesn't make sense to try to evaluate our prayer experiences using only human parameters or measuring sticks. In fact, it is better not to evaluate our prayer at all, but rather to pay attention to the fidelity and generosity with which we spend or “waste” time “visiting” with God every day. The ultimate rule of thumb here is the rule of love that expresses itself and gives itself in freedom and generosity.

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