

Prayer in the Catechumenate

Seeking the Living God

To recognise the integral nature of prayer in the Catechumenate: particularly focussed on the Word.

The importance of different models and experiences of prayer.

Links to other sessions in this series:

General

- The role of Prayer in RCIA
- The role of Scripture in RCIA
- Exploring/Engaging with the Liturgical Year

Catechumenate

- Blessings, Exorcisms

Purification & Enlightenment

- Scrutinies
- Presentations



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www.rcia.org.uk/Resources/Seeking.html

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Listen to Scripture

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.'

He said to them, 'When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone
indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of trial.'

'So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!'

Luke 11:1-4, 9-13

Read & Reflect

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

- 81 During the period of the catechumenate there should be celebrations of the word of God that accord with the liturgical season and that contribute to the instruction of the catechumens and the needs of the community. These celebrations of the word are: first, celebrations held specially for the catechumens; second, participation in the liturgy of the word at the Sunday Mass; third, celebrations held in connection with catechetical instruction.]
- 82 The special celebrations of the word of God arranged for the benefit of the catechumens have as their main purpose:
1. to implant in their hearts the teachings they are receiving: for example, the morality characteristic of the New Testament, the forgiving of injuries and insults, a sense of sin and repentance, the duties Christians must carry out in the world;
 2. to give them instruction and experience in the different aspects and ways of prayer;
 3. to explain to them the signs, celebrations, and seasons of the liturgy;
 4. to prepare them gradually to enter the worship assembly of the entire community.

ref

Act

- Decide how to use prayer during process.
- Ensure that prayer is part of your session each week.
- Some prayer texts and forms of prayer are core to the tradition of the Church, others can be more suited to different individuals and groups — how do you distinguish between them?
- How might you balance between the need to provide the experience of different ways of praying and importance of repetition and familiarity?
- How might the prayer be integrated and connected with the content of the session and the life of the parish?
- What encouragement might be offered to Sponsors in prayer guidance?
- How might catechesis on prayer draw on the practice of the group and individuals?

Prayer

Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end.
Amen.

Further Reading & Resources

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church— Part IV*
- *Compendium of Catechism of the Catholic Church — Appendix*
- *Margaret Silf - Taste and See: Adventuring into Prayer*
- *Enzo Bianchi, Praying the Word*
- *Ruth Burrows, Essence of Prayer*
- *Pray as you Go - <http://www.pray-as-you-go.org/>*

Top Tips

- Create space and time to pray
- Have a prayer focus and encourage catechumens to find a prayer space at home
- Acknowledge different styles of prayer
- When celebrating the Liturgy of the Word with catechumens, invite members of the community.

Prayer in the Catechumenate

PRIOR READING

If you have time before the session take time to read the following extracts from Church documents as an introduction to the session. There is space to make you own notes in the right hand column.

Let my prayer arise before you like incense,
the raising of my hands like an evening oblation. Psalm 140 (141)



In virtue of its own internal dynamic, the faith demands to be known, celebrated, lived and translated into prayer. Catechesis must cultivate each of these dimensions. The faith, however, is lived out by the Christian community and proclaimed in mission: it is a shared and proclaimed faith. These dimensions must also be encouraged by Catechesis. GDC 84



Teaching to pray — Communion with Jesus Christ leads the disciples to assume the attitude of prayer and contemplation which the Master himself had. To learn to pray with Jesus is to pray with the same sentiments with which he turned to the Father: adoration, praise, thanksgiving, filial confidence, supplication and awe for his glory. All of these sentiments are reflected in the Our Father, the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples and which is the model of all Christian prayer. The “handing on of the Our Father” (262) is a summary of the entire Gospel (263) and is therefore a true act of catechesis. When catechesis is permeated by a climate of prayer, the assimilation of the entire Christian life reaches its summit. This climate is especially necessary when the catechumen and those to be catechized are confronted with the more demanding aspects of the Gospel and when they feel weak or when they discover the mysterious action of God in their lives. GDC 85



The Holy Spirit who teaches the Church and recalls to her all that Jesus said also instructs her in the life of prayer, inspiring new expressions of the same basic forms of prayer: blessing, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise. CCC 2644

The catechesis of children, young people, and adults aims at teaching them to meditate on The Word of God in personal prayer, practicing it in liturgical prayer, and internalizing it at all times in order to bear fruit in a new life. Catechesis is also a time for the discernment and education of popular piety.⁴⁶ The memorization of basic prayers offers an essential support to the life of prayer, but it is important to help learners savour their meaning. CCC 2688



One who sings well prays twice Ancient Proverb cf. GIRM 39



The presentations take place after the celebrations of the scrutinizes, unless, for pastoral reason, they have been anticipated during the period of the Catechumenate (see nos. 79, 103-104). Thus, with the catechumenal formation of the elect completed, the Church lovingly entrusts to them the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer, the ancient texts that have always been regarded as expressing the heart of the Church’s faith and prayer. These texts are presented in order to enlighten the elect. The Creed, as it recalls the wonderful deeds of God for the salvation of the human race, suffuses the

vision of the elect with the sure light of faith. The Lord's Prayer fills them with a deeper realization of the new spirit of adoption by which they will God their Father, especially in the midst of the Eucharistic assembly. RCIA 134



Celebrations of the Word of God Another means of formation is the liturgy that is provided for the catechumens during this period. This consists of services of the word, exorcisms, blessings and (optional) anointings.

Their content and purpose is set out in no. 81-89... Since these services are intended to reinforce and assist in the assimilation of the content of the instructions it is obvious that the biblical readings and the homily should be shaped around the subject-matter of the instructions. If these have been teaching sessions, as may well be necessary, the services are meant to turn them into worship and prayer. They will help the catechumens to see the relevance of the teaching to their formation and daily life.

RCIA- J.D. Crichton

Commentary on



The Lord leads all persons by paths and in ways pleasing to him, and each believer responds according to his heart's resolve and the personal expressions of his prayer. However, Christian Tradition has retained three major expressions of prayer: vocal, meditative, and contemplative. They have one basic trait in common: composure of heart. This vigilance in keeping the Word and dwelling in the presence of God makes these three expressions intense times in the life of prayer.

CCC 2699



For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.

St Therese of Liseux