

**SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR PERSONAL GROWTH IN FAITH**

*Choose any of the items listed to challenge or create your own faith routine.*

* Attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation
* Spend 15 minutes a day in personal prayer
* Refrain from gossip
* Attend daily Mass
* Pray Grace at meal times (even in restaurants)
* Read one paragraph of the Catechism of the Catholic Church daily/weekly
* Share a meal with family removed from distractions of TV, phones, etc.
* Spend time each week in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
* Go to confession at least once a month
* Visit someone who lives alone or is homebound
* Discuss the Catholic Faith with my children/parents
* Read the Bible for 15 minutes a week
* Invite a friend or neighbor to Mass
* Pray together with my family
* Join a prayer group in the parish
* Refrain from complaining
* Pray the rosary at least once a week
* Practice hospitality by greeting others at Mass
* Unplug from all social media for a period each day

God invites us into a relationship with Him that is both personal and communal. He speaks to us through His Son, Jesus Christ, the Word-made-flesh. Prayer is our response to God who is already speaking or, better yet, revealing Himself to us. Therefore, prayer is not merely an exchange of words, but it engages the whole person in a relationship with God the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit.

**How do I pray?**

Various forms of prayer are presented in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 2623-2649). These various forms include prayer of blessing or adoration, prayer of petition, prayer of intercession, prayer of thanksgiving, and prayer of praise.

**What is meditation?**

Meditation is a Christian practice of prayer dating back to the early Church. As the Catechism states: “Meditation is above all a quest. The mind seeks to understand the why and how of the Christian life, in order to adhere and respond to what the Lord is asking.” By meditating on the Gospels, holy icons, liturgical texts, spiritual writings, or “the great book of creation,” we come to make our own that which is God’s. “To the extent that we are humble and faithful, we discover in meditation the movements that stir the heart and we are able to discern them. It is a question of acting truthfully in order to come into the light: “Lord, what do you want me to do?” (CCC 2705-2706).

**Meditating on Sacred Scripture**

Spiritual reading of Sacred Scripture, especially the Gospels, is an important form of meditation. This spiritual reading is traditionally called *lectio divina* or divine reading. *Lectio divina* is prayer over the Scriptures.

**How do we pray over the Sacred Scriptures?**

1. The first element of this type of prayer is reading (*lectio*): you take a short passage from the Bible, preferably a Gospel passage and read it carefully, perhaps three or more times. Let it really soak-in.
2. The second element is mediation (*meditatio*). By using your imagination enter into the Biblical scene in order to “see” the setting, the people, and the unfolding action. It is through this mediation that you encounter the text and discover its meaning for your life.
3. The next element is prayer (*oratio*) or your personal response to the text: asking for graces, offering praise or thanksgiving, seeking healing or forgiveness. In this prayerful engagement with the text, you open yourself up to the possibility of contemplation.
4. Contemplation (*contemplatio*) is a gaze turned toward Christ and the things of God. By God's action of grace, you may be raised above meditation to a state of seeing or experiencing the text as mystery and reality. In contemplation, you come into an experiential contact with the One behind and beyond the text.

**To strengthen your prayer life, answer these questions:**

∗ How much time do I set aside for prayer each day?

∗ What is my motivation for giving of my time, talent and treasure? Is it for recognition or reward? Or is it out of gratitude? Do I take the time to personally say “Thank You” to those who serve me?

∗ What portion of my time, talent, and treasure do I give to the Church, my family, my community?

∗ When I have choices to make in my own life, how do I make the distinction between my “wants” and my “needs”? Do I include prayer in my own decision-making process?

∗ Have I used my God-given gifts and talents wisely, discreetly and carefully?

∗ Can my family, friends, Church and community count on me when I make a commitment?

∗ What am I doing to promote respect for life, Stewardship of the environment, and wise use of the natural resources of our earth?

**Scriptural References Relating to Stewardship**

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| **Old Testament**  Lv 27:30 Dt 14:22-29 Dt 15:7-8 Dt 16:10-17 Dt 26:1-4 1 Chr 29:14-16 Ps 24:1 Prv 3:9 Prv 11:24 Prv 28:27 Eccl 5:9-16 Sir 35:7-10 Mal 3:8-10**New Testament**  Mt 6:19-21 Mt 6:25-34 Mt 23:23-24 Lk 6:38 Lk 15:11-32 Lk 16:19-31 Acts 4:34 Acts 20:35 Rom 12:6-8 1 Cor 4:1-2 1 Cor 16:1 2 Cor 8 2 Cor 9:6-12 Phil 4:11-12 1 Tm 6:7-9 Jas 2:14-17 Jas 4:2-3, 13-15 1 Pt 4:8-10 1 Jn 3:17-18 |  **Parables of Jesus that deal with money and possessions:**  The Two Debtors (Lk 7:41-43) The Hidden Treasure (Mt 13:44) The Costly Pearl (Mt 13:45-46) The Unmerciful Servant (Mt 18:23-35) The Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37) The Friend at Midnight (Lk 11:5-8) The Rich Fool (Lk 12:16-21) The Barren Fig Tree (Lk 13:6-9) The Tower Builder (Lk 14:28-30) The King Contemplating a Campaign (Lk 14:31-33) The Lost Sheep (Lk 15:3-7) The Lost Coin (Lk 15:8-10) The Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32) The Unjust Steward (Lk 16:1-9) The Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31) The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Lk 18:9-14) The Generous Employer (Mt 20:1-16) The Wicked Tenants (Mk 12:1-12, Mt 21:33-46, Lk 20:9-19) The Servant Entrusted with Supervision (Mt 24:45-51, Lk 12:42-48) The Talents (Mt 25:14-30, Lk 19:12-27) Sheep and Goats (Mt 25:31-46) Render Unto Caesar (Mt 22:15-22) |