

What is Prayer?

Virtue Link: Faith, Hope, Love
Catholic Character Themes: Discipleship, Reverence

Prayer is . . .

an anchor - something that keeps us from getting swept away by life's worries and concerns. It reminds us of who we are - God's children, and God will never abandon us.

a place of rest - where we can let down our masks and find acceptance and peace in the face of misunderstanding and struggles.

a place of truth - where we encounter ourselves as we are - beloved, even when we may not believe it.

a journey - where we meet ourselves at deeper and deeper levels, and find God there waiting.

balm for our wounds - where Love can transform life's pain into hope, joy and gratitude.

a school - *of self knowledge*, where we learn about dependence on God for everything.

of the ways of God's Spirit, who teaches us to recognize the Holy Spirit's workings in our lives and in the lives of others.

of mercy and compassion, where we come to know God's love for us despite our sins and faults, are given the power to love others in the same way.

of joy, where we grow in thanksgiving for God's gift of life and love, even in suffering.

Prayer is a gift, free for the asking.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus calls his listeners to steer clear of a show of our prayer before others. Instead, he invites us to go into our hearts, that quiet "room", and to meet God there. When his disciples ask him "teach us to pray", he invites them to address God as "Abba", the Aramaic word for "daddy". Jesus wants us to relate to God intimately, from the heart, and to rely on him for all our needs (see Matthew 6, 5-15).

Reflecting on his faith, St. Paul told the Christian in Rome that God's own Spirit joins with our spirit to help us pray, calling out to God "Abba, Father!" (See Romans 8, 14-17). When we enter deeply into prayer, we can be sure of meeting the God who welcomes us lovingly, like a parent welcoming their children home.

