
Four Forms of Prayer.

Prayer is simply the turning of the mind and heart to God. It is conversation with God, intimate, sometimes sweet, conversation.

About what? About anything one would like to have--a good mind, for example, a good girl and eventually a good wife, the grace to follow the call to the priesthood; courage and industry and health and favors for home and friends; virtues and spiritual gifts, like the love of prayer itself, and fidelity to duty.

This asking something of God, constantly and confidently, as a child asks its mother, is called the prayer of petition. It is not the most exalted form of prayer, any more than it is the most exalted form of love for a child to be ever and only asking favors of its mother.

But it is a good and necessary kind of prayer. It implies faith and trust in God's power and providence. And God wants us to pray to Him that way. "Ask" he says "and you shall receive."

Have you ever sinned? Do you feel sheepish, loathsome about it? Do you wish you could wipe it all away, make God forget? Then don't go around mumbling to yourself about it, condemning yourself because of weakness or past malice. Tell God to see your change of heart, to observe how you now long for the power of never sinning any more, how you realize that you have messed things up.

Make your apologies to Him; and to prove your sincerity, offer to do some penance as a peace offering. Take steps to eliminate this or that person or book or show or thought or anything that frequently starts you to sin. This is the prayer of reparation.

Are you weak on manifesting gratitude (even to friends?) after you have got something you have been after? Never think to say, "Thank you, God?"

Do you ever look around in your own condition of life for reasons for gratitude--your health, your opportunities for an education, your fortunate home conditions, your victory over this or that temptation or sin, your correction of this or that fault? You have plenty of reasons to thank God, if you are not too much spoiled to see them.

Ferret them out and acknowledge them to Him from time to time. This is the prayer of thanksgiving. And God is very much pleased with it.

The proper form of the relation of man to God, of a creature to the Creator, is humility. Pride--root of all sin, and primary cause of most anomalies and perversions of character--dissolves the proper relationship of man to God. Pride sets up one's own person, instead of God, as the supreme being. A man's own pleasure, his own success gets first call over the law of God. This is sin.

To correct this innate tendency to pride and to sin, it is necessary, by thought, to clarify in our minds God's greatness and glory and power and goodness, to acknowledge our weak position in regard to Him. This is the prayer of adoration--highest and first form of prayer.

Prayer is not to be confined to the prayer bones, nor to the church, nor to certain set forms of words. It is to be done as we walk, as we ride, as we play, in between our every-day duties. It is to be done through our duties themselves, in accepting them obediently, in performing them perfectly, in offering them up every morning and throughout the days, as prayers. This is to fulfill God's command to pray always.