

THE AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE AND THE NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS PRESENT

The Heart of Prayer

A Study with
Bishop Andrew Cozzens



*The Evening Prayer, Pierre Edouard Frère /
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam*

INTRODUCTION

SESSION

1

Opening Prayer

Holy Spirit, teach us how to pray. Give us eyes to see ourselves as you see us and to see our world as you see it. Clear away the noise of our lives so that we might be fully attentive to your voice in the interior room of our hearts. Give us the grace necessary to respond to your call to a deeper relationship of prayer with you. Amen.

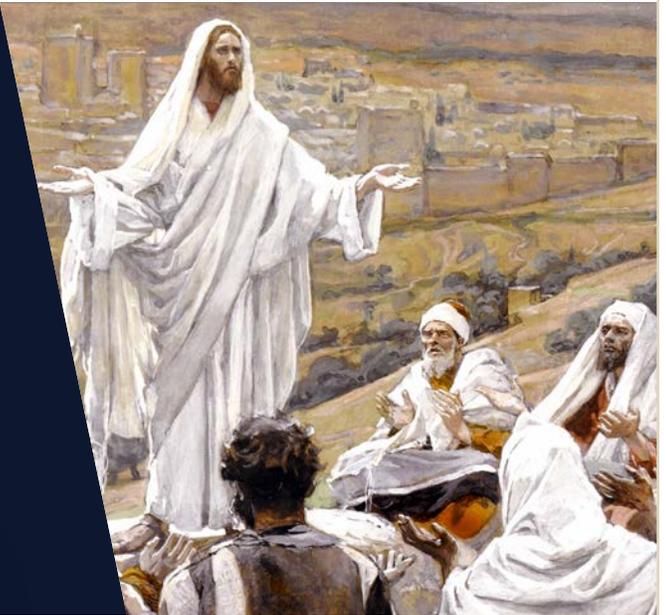
Study Goals

Prayer is essential to the Christian life. It is the most profound expression of a relationship with God that is both vital and personal (see CCC 2558). Prayer is not one-sided. God desires a relationship with us; he initiates this relationship, and when we pray, we respond to him. God doesn't merely want to engage with us at certain times, but at all times. For this reason, Saint Paul says we should "pray constantly" (1 Thess 5:17). This exhortation doesn't mean that we should be constantly reciting memorized prayers. Instead, we should strive to develop our interior life with God. In our modern age, many people lack an interior life and struggle to hear God's voice. This difficulty may be due to a misunderstanding of the dynamic nature of prayer. Saint John Paul II pointed out that prayer is multifaceted. Prayer is "thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening, and ardent devotion," he wrote, and each facet draws us close to God (*Novo millennio ineunte*, no. 33).

Every person, regardless of his or her state in life, is called to pray. We must ask ourselves whether we believe that God is personal and desires a relationship with us. Do we believe that God desires to encounter us in prayer and that God thirsts for us? Many people are familiar with liturgical prayer (like Mass) or devotional prayer (like the Rosary) but are unfamiliar with mental prayer, the kind of prayer that helps us develop a deep interior life. During this course, we will explore this dynamic prayer as we respond to God's loving call for a relationship with him.

Scripture

[Jesus] was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” And 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 every one who is indebted to us; and lead us not into temptation.’ And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”



The Lord's Prayer, James Tissot / Brooklyn Museum

Discuss

1. Reflect on your current prayer life. How do you listen to God?
2. What are some of your preferred ways of praying? When you speak to God, how do you do it? What do you say?
3. We are constantly formed by the voices around us. What voices are currently forming you? How do you allow God's voice to form you? Are other voices in your life in harmony or dissonance with God's voice?

Memory Verse

“Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”

—Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, no. 1

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*Pentecost, Pietro Gagliardi /
Renata Sedmakova/Shutterstock*

RELATIONSHIP, IDENTITY, AND MISSION

SESSION

2

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who have taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that in the same Spirit we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Study Goals

Jesus tells his disciples to “abide” in him. What does this mean for you? Abiding in God’s love is essential for knowing our identity. It is only through God that we can know who we are and our life’s mission. Unfortunately, we often allow other factors to form our identity: other people, our job, other responsibilities, the expectations of others. We “can only know ourselves truly in the light of God” and we abide in God’s love through prayer.¹ Understanding our identity involves two kinds of self-reflection. First, we recognize our wounds, selfishness, and the reality of our sin. Second, we recognize that each of us is a beloved creation of God. The pathway to understanding who we are and our call in the world is abiding in a relationship with Jesus, forming our identity within that relationship, and then becoming attentive to the missional call of God. Jesus’ life followed this same path and modeled it for us.

What is forming your identity right now? Is it what you do—your job, family responsibilities, involvement at your parish? Do you abide in Jesus or do you feel a separation? Jesus desires that we abide in him so he might reveal the truth of who we are as beloved sons and daughters so that we may fully and joyfully live our mission in this world.

1. Jacques Philippe, *Thirsting for Prayer*, trans. Helena Scott (New York: Scepter Publishers, 2014), 19.

Scripture

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. . . . Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”



The Twelve Apostles, Ukraine, Odessa Region / hramikona/Shutterstock

Discuss

1. Our relationship with God should form our identity, and our identity should inform our mission in the world. Bishop Cozzens said that many people have this backward. How have you formed your identity or discerned your mission in the world? Does it flow from your relationship from God or from circumstance?
2. In our identity, we experience two truths at the same time: first, we are sinners in need of God and we must repent of our sin; second, we are infinitely loved. How do you experience these two truths and balance the tension they present? Do you find yourself leaning into one more than the other and if so, why?
3. What does abiding in Jesus mean for you in the weeks ahead? What do you need to change, or what commitments do you need to make in order to remain in Jesus?

Memory Verse

“And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and behold, a voice from heaven, saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’”

—Matthew 3:16–17

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, just as you called your Son “beloved,” you also call me your own. Through the Holy Spirit, draw me closer to Jesus Christ, the true vine, so that I might abide in him and, in his holy light, see myself as you see me. We ask this through Jesus Christ. Amen.



The Baptism of Christ, Elisabetta Sirani / Shutterstock

Challenge

Choose one of the following passages to pray with during the week. If possible, schedule this prayer time before the Blessed Sacrament in your parish adoration chapel.

Option 1: Matthew 11:25–30

Imagine yourself in the scene with Jesus, listening as he prays to the Father. What is the tone of his voice? Does he pray slowly or rapidly? Do you watch him pray, or do you close your eyes to pray along? Then, complete these sentences:

- I thought . . .
- I felt . . .
- I desired . . .
- I sensed in my body . . .

Ask the Blessed Virgin Mary’s help to receive the grace of God as she received it and then speak to Jesus about what you feel or desire.

Option 2: Matthew 3:13–17

Ask God who you are in the scene. Are you being baptized? Are you with Jesus? Imagine yourself going down into the water and rising to hear God the Father say, “This is my beloved son/daughter.” Complete these sentences:

- I thought . . .
- I felt . . .
- I desired . . .
- I sensed in my body . . .

Write down what struck you most. Then, speak to Jesus about what happened and what you desire.

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Jesus the Teacher, Anonymous / Renata Sedmakova/Shutterstock

FOUNDATIONS FOR PRAYER

SESSION 3

Opening Prayer

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy. Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy. Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen.

– *Attributed to St. Augustine*

Study Goals

All spirituality is based on truths that are revealed by God. Knowing and understanding these truths allows us to enter a relationship with him. The five “theological presuppositions” explored in this session are vital in understanding prayer:

1. God desires a personal relationship with us and actively pursues us.
2. Our prayer is always a response to God.
3. The spiritual life is a work of continual conversion and turning away from sin.
4. Discipleship is submitting our lives to the lordship of Jesus Christ and seeking to do his will in our lives.
5. Any personal experiences in prayer are always governed by the objective spiritual authority of the Church’s living Tradition through the Magisterium.

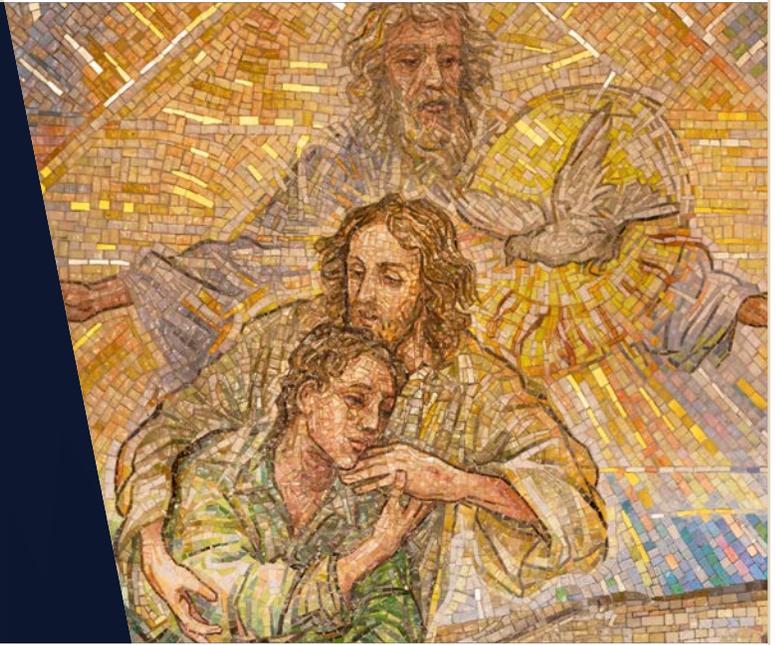
On this foundation we can then build four dispositions necessary for prayer:

1. We must believe God wants a relationship with us.
2. We must have a clear conscience.
3. We must seek total surrender to God’s will.
4. We must desire holiness.

These truths pave the way for deeper intimacy with God as we grow in our understanding of prayer and the disposition necessary for a divine encounter.

Scripture

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you.”



Mosaic found in Chiesa di Santa Croce, Bari, Italy /
Renata Sedmakova/Shutterstock

Discuss

1. Review the five presuppositions. Which of these resonates with you the most? Which is an area you need to grow in? Why?
2. One of the necessary dispositions for prayer is “total surrender to God’s will.” What does this mean for you? Where do you find surrender to God’s will to be difficult?
3. In the beginning of the Gospel of John, Jesus asks two of the first disciples what they are seeking. How would you answer this question if Jesus asked you?

Memory Verse

“Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock.”

—Matthew 7:24

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, you never grow tired of pursuing us and inviting us to know you more intimately. Send the Holy Spirit to teach us to pray and give us a deeper desire for your Son, Jesus Christ. In your mercy, grant us the grace necessary to detach from anything in this world that holds us back from knowing you, loving you, and surrendering our lives completely to you that we might find freedom in this life and an eternal reward with you. We ask this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.



Madonna and Child with Two Donors, Lorenzo Lotto / Getty Museum Open Art Program

Challenge

This week, there is a twofold challenge:

First, as we reflect on our relationship with the Lord, we have an opportunity to examine our conscience and seek God's mercy and forgiveness. Make an appointment to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation this week. Then, choose one of the following two options for your prayer time:

Option 1: Mark 10:46–52

In your imagination, put yourself in the place of Bartimaeus, the blind beggar. As Jesus calls you, what do you feel? Tell Jesus your deepest desire in this moment.

Complete these sentences:

- I thought . . .
- I felt . . .
- I desired . . .

What struck you about the passage? What do you feel called to do?

At the end of your time of prayer, speak to God the Father, Jesus Christ, or Mary about what happened and what you desire, based on your prayerful meditation on these questions.

Option 2: Isaiah 43:1–7

Imagine God the Father addressing this passage to you. What do you feel? What strikes you? Respond directly to him in prayer from your heart.

Journal about your experience of this meditation and hearing God the Father speak these words to you.

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Detail from *Saint Catherine of Siena
Receiving the Stigmata*, Beccafumi /
Getty Museum Open Content Program

PRAYER OF THE HEART

SESSION 4

Opening Prayer

O LORD, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD you know it altogether. You beset me behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

—*Psalm 139:1–5, RSV-2CE*

Study Goals

Prayer happens within our hearts. Throughout Sacred Scripture, the “heart” is frequently referenced as the place of encounter with the Lord. This is not our physical heart, but the “heart” is a representation of the “place of choice,” our center, and the deepest reality of who we are. It is within our hearts that we choose life or death. St. Thomas Aquinas referred to this part of the person—the heart—as “the will” and recognized our will as the place in which we choose to love.

This intimate connection between the heart and love means that to purify the heart is to purify what we love. When we become “pure of heart,” our loves are well-ordered; we love God above all things, and, thus, we deepen our relationship with God. All the knowledge in the world will not lead to intimacy with Jesus if we do not also purify our hearts.

As we grow, we experience interior movements of the heart. God speaks to us through these interior movements, and, by becoming attentive to these movements, we can begin to discern spiritual realities in our lives. There are two significant movements in our spiritual life: spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation. These we must understand so that we can properly respond to each movement. To respond requires a healing of our “affect,” or the emotional movements of our hearts, so we can properly understand how God is speaking to us, free of the disordered lenses we often have in our affective movements. These lenses focus on what others think of us, as well as carry unforgiveness or lie about who we are. We become free of these disordered lenses through prayer, which focuses our hearts on what is true, good, and beautiful while meditating on the Lord.

Scripture

And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.



Children at Prayer, Antoine Édouard Joseph Moulinet /
The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore

Discuss

1. Consider a time you experienced an interior or affective movement in each of the three categories Bishop Cozzens discussed: transitory non-spiritual movements, deep non-spiritual movements, and spiritual movements. What were those experiences like, and what were some of the differences between each?
2. When have you experienced spiritual consolation? Describe that experience and the impact it had on drawing you closer to God.
3. Purifying the affective movements of our hearts requires healing at the psychological level, and Bishop Cozzens reflects on three specific areas for healing: attachment to what others think of me, carrying unforgiveness, and believing lies about ourselves. Which of these three resonated the most with you, and what might you resolve to do to experience healing in this area?

Memory Verse

“A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.”

—Ezekiel 36:26–27

Closing Prayer

Holy Spirit, teach us how to pray and purify our hearts so that we may become more attentive to your presence in our lives. Give us joy in spiritual consolation and resolve in spiritual desolation so that we may never cease to draw closer to Jesus Christ in all things. We make this prayer in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



Detail from *Annunciation*, Veronese/
National Gallery of Art, Washington

Challenge

This week, prior to praying through one of the two options below, spend fifteen to twenty minutes in silence and contemplation, attentive to the interior movements of your heart during that time. This can be done in your Eucharistic Adoration chapel or in a prayer area at your home. Immediately after your time of silence, choose one of the following passages to pray through and journal or reflect on the associated questions:

Option 1: Matthew 15:10–20

Imagine yourself in the crowd as Jesus speaks. What is your reaction to his words? Do you feel offended? Challenged? Inspired? What is the state of your heart as you listen to Jesus speak? Complete these sentences:

- I thought . . .
- I felt . . .
- I desired . . .
- I sensed in my body . . .

Speak to Jesus for a few minutes about what you felt and what you desire; ask for the grace to obtain a purity of heart.

Option 2: Romans 5:1–8

Imagine yourself reading St. Paul's letter with other members of the early Church. As you listen to the words, what are the affective movements of your heart? What thoughts and emotions do they provoke in you? Complete these sentences:

- I thought . . .
- I felt . . .
- I desired . . .
- I sensed in my body . . .

Write down what struck you most and then speak to Jesus about what happened and what you desire.

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*Madonna of the Magnificent, Botticelli /
Restored Traditions*

PRAYER AND THE SURRENDER TO GOD

SESSION

5

Opening Prayer

Queen of heaven, rejoice, alleluia. The Son whom you merited to bear, alleluia, has risen as he said, alleluia. Pray for us to God, alleluia.

V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia.

R. For the Lord has truly risen, alleluia.

Let us pray. O God, who have been pleased to gladden the world by the Resurrection of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ, grant, we pray, that through his Mother, the Virgin Mary, we may receive the joys of everlasting life. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

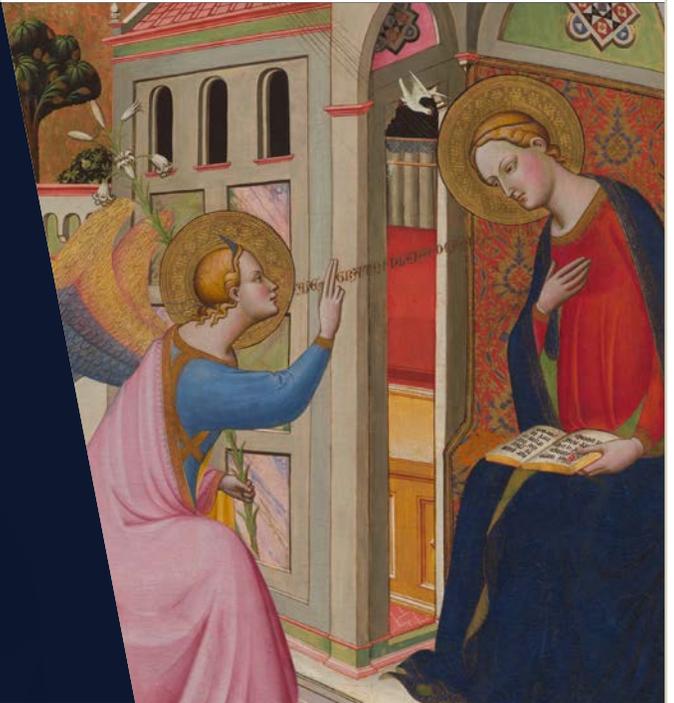
Study Goals

The deepest and most important movement of prayer is when we speak to the Lord, “Let it be done unto me,” or “Let your will be done”—in Latin, simply, “fiat.” Mary is the exemplar of this posture in her response to the Archangel Gabriel’s announcement that she will conceive and give birth to the Messiah.

One of the ways we can embrace this movement is through a form of prayer called ARRR—acknowledge, relate, receive, and respond. This form of prayer allows us to notice our interior affective movements, including our thoughts, feelings, and desires while relating them back to the Lord, receiving God into the deepest level of our hearts, and then responding to this gift. The simple prayer form ARRR allows us to confront struggles we may have in prayer, especially those that arise from psychological, non-spiritual desolation. We can relate difficulties to the Lord while becoming aware of interior realities that may hinder our prayer. The freedom of this prayer allows us to experience God without trying to force an emotional experience or being limited by our burdens or preconceived notions of what we believe prayer should or should not be.

Scripture

And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end.” And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I do not know man?” And the angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.” . . . And Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”



*The Annunciation, Tommaso del Mazza /
The Getty Museum Open Content Program*

Discuss

1. Bishop Cozzens talks about sacrifice as the heart of the Christian life. What does this mean for you and your faith? Where have you experienced this to be true?
2. When we pray, we must acknowledge what is really happening inside our hearts—what do we feel and why do we feel that way? What prevents you from acknowledging and becoming aware of your disposition during prayer?
3. Do you take expectations into prayer about how you want to receive from God? What are those expectations, and how might they limit what God wishes to do in your heart?

Memory Verse

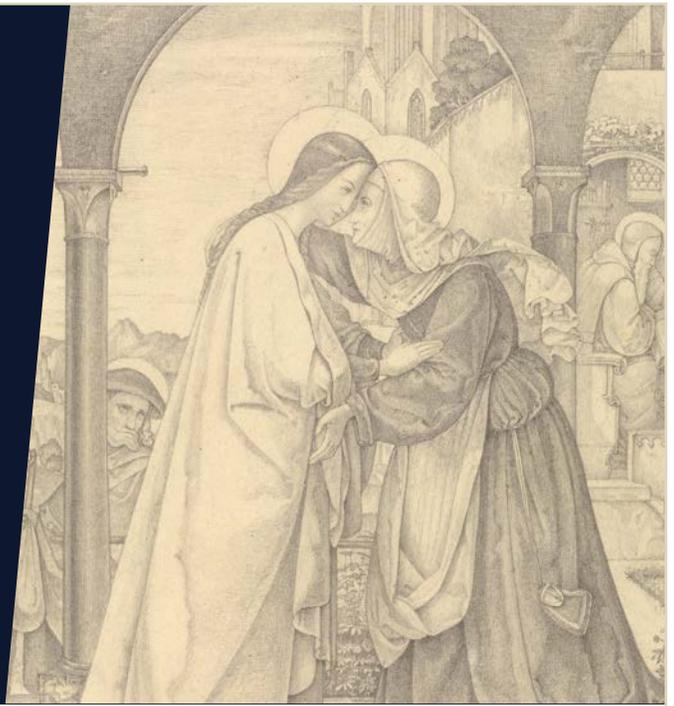
“We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.”

—Romans 8:28

Closing Prayer

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever.

—*Luke 1:46–55*



The Visitation, Theodor Rehbenitz /
The Getty Museum Open Content Program

Challenge

Use the ARRR format—acknowledge, relate, receive, and respond—for prayer this week. If possible, follow this model of prayer while in the Eucharistic Adoration chapel at your parish or in front of the tabernacle. The following format may be used to structure your prayer:

Acknowledge (10 minutes): Silence any devices and eliminate distractions. Spend time in quiet reflection and become aware of any interior affective movements you are experiencing. This includes thoughts, feelings, and desires. Acknowledge those movements and ask:

- What am I feeling?
- Why do I feel this?
- What is actually going on inside me?

Relate (10 minutes): Share what you have acknowledged with God in prayer. Express your thoughts, feelings, and reflections honestly. It may be helpful to write this prayer down or journal during this time. Invite God to reveal to you how he sees the situation.

Receive (10 minutes): Become still and attentive to spiritual movements in prayer. During this time, remember you cannot control how or when God will speak. Continue to relate to God in prayer, taking time to listen in silence.

Respond (10 minutes): This is an opportunity to enter into communion with God and accept the gift you've received in prayer. Ask yourself:

- What have I received from God in prayer today?
- Have I received a new perspective on a situation? Peace? Joy?

Express gratitude for what you've received, recognizing it was a gift from God.

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St. Dominic, Fra Angelico /
Restored Traditions

SPIRITUAL SENSES AND THE IMAGINATION

SESSION 6

Opening Prayer

Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the LORD is God! It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him, bless his name! For the LORD is good, his mercy endures for ever, and this faithfulness to all generations.

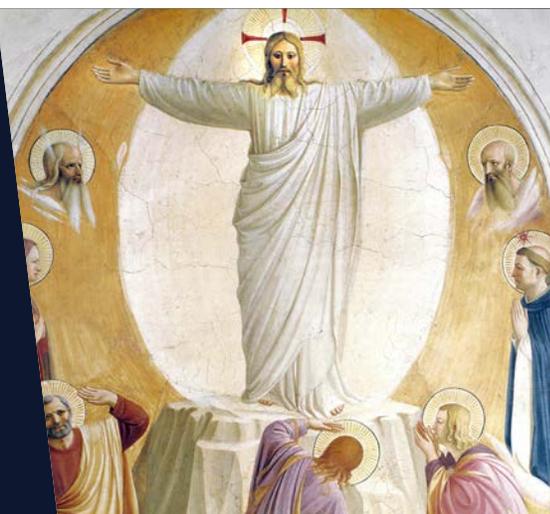
—*Psalm 100:2–5*

Study Goals

The goal of prayer is to hear the voice of the Lord and to follow it. In order to do this, God has given the soul spiritual senses, just as the body has physical senses. These spiritual senses allow us to contemplate God deeply and enable us to “see,” “hear,” “taste,” “touch,” and “breathe in the fragrance” of God (St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, 121–26). Our imagination is the faculty God created within us that allows us to tap into these spiritual senses. However, it is important to make a distinction in prayer between real imagination and fantasy. Authentic spiritual imagination communicates truth, whereas fantasy seeks selfish consolation. An imagination filled with false images can prevent us from living in the truth and using the senses of the soul fully. For this reason, we need to invite God to heal our imagination through prayer. As we grow in our journey of prayer, these spiritual senses become important in navigating spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation and can enable us to practice discernment of spirits. The discernment of spirits allows us to become aware of these spiritual movements, understand them, and take action accordingly. We can then respond appropriately in prayer and draw closer to God in both states of spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation.

Scripture

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.



The Transfiguration, Fra Angelico / Restored Traditions

Discuss

1. Read through Psalm 139. As you do, what interior movements do you notice? Share what stands out to you from the Scripture passage itself as well as what affective movements you experienced when praying through it.
2. Think about when you've used your imagination in prayer. What makes the use of your imagination easy for you, and when is it difficult?
3. Have you ever experienced non-spiritual consolation or non-spiritual desolation leading to spiritual consolation or spiritual desolation? Describe the experience and how it impacted your prayer.
4. Desolation is permitted by God but is a difficult spiritual state that requires the appropriate response. Why do you think God permits spiritual desolation in your life? Have you ever experienced this? How did that time impact your faith and relationship with God?

Memory Verse

“Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.”

—*Psalm 103:1–2*

Closing Prayer

I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together! I sought the LORD, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. . . . When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the LORD delivers him out of them all. . . . The LORD redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

—*Psalm 34:1–4, 17–19, 22*



King David Playing the Harp, Gerard van Honthorst / Restored Traditions

Challenge

During prayer this week, use your imagination as you visualize a moment in the Gospels. There are two suggestions below that involve physical senses; be mindful of how you experience these narratives using your spiritual senses. If possible, spend this prayer time in your parish's Eucharistic Adoration chapel or shortly after attending Mass.

Option 1: Luke 8:40–56

Imagine yourself in this narrative. Which person are you? A member of the crowd? Jairus? The woman? Complete the following sentences:

- I see . . .
- I feel . . .
- I hear . . .
- I sensed in my body . . .

Spend time journaling and speaking to the Lord about why these details stood out to you, mindful of any affective movements you experience. Ask Jesus to help you understand yourself and your relationship with him through this Scripture reading. What does this encourage you to do?

Option 2: Matthew 17:1–8

Put yourself in the place of one of the three apostles that Jesus takes with him to pray. Imagine the scene from that point of view. Create details in your imagination about what the environment looks like, what Jesus looks like, and what Moses and Elijah look like. Complete these sentences:

- I see . . .
- I feel . . .
- I hear . . .
- I sensed in my body . . .

What other spiritual sense does this awaken as you enter the scene? Are you experiencing any spiritual consolation in this moment? Speak to the Lord about what you are experiencing.

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*St. Catherine of Alexandria in Prison, Veronese /
Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY*

GROWING IN SIMPLICITY AND AWARENESS

SESSION

7

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, and bring to our memory all of the times and places we have felt, heard, and seen God moving in our prayer. Bring us an awareness of your goodness, your mercy, and a desire to repent of anything that prevents us from deeper union and intimacy with you. Guide us today in our reflection in prayer that we may desire whatever is your will, nothing more and nothing less. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Study Goals

Repetition in prayer is not just a way of praying, but a way of living that continually revisits the places where the Lord is moving in our lives, recognizing there is always more the Lord wishes for us to receive. As we grow in prayer, our prayer also grows in simplicity; learning the art of repetition is vital in growing in both simplicity and depth in prayer.

The more deeply we move into prayer, the greater intimacy and union with God we can experience. This deepening awareness in our prayer also creates a greater awareness of our sinfulness. This can bring about discouragement, but we must remember that discouragement is not from God. Rather, we must take our awareness of sin into the Sacrament of Reconciliation to receive God's grace.

We also can begin to make a distinction between deliberate and non-deliberate sins and, through this awareness, understand how to continue growing in our spiritual life. There are three categories of deliberate sin: (a) knowing what is right and wrong, but not caring; (b) wanting at some level to overcome sin, but at a still deeper level not willing to change; and (c) wishing to change but not yet being able to. In order to overcome sin, at any level, we must take the advice of Saint John Henry Newman to watch and pray, noticing when we find ourselves in a near occasion of sin and praying for the grace to overcome sin. Our weakness is a place where God can work powerfully, if we are open to his will and allow it.

Scripture

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your merciful love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in your sight. . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.



Woman Kneeling in Prayer, George Henry Boughton / Walters Art Museum, Baltimore

Discuss

1. Where have you experienced a place of consolation or desolation in prayer over the past several weeks? What more might God wish for you to receive from that place?
2. Saint John Paul II wrote about God's mercy, "Those who come to know God in this way, who 'see' Him in this way, can live only in a state of being continually converted to Him" (*Dives in misericordia*, no. 13). What do you think Saint John Paul II is saying here? How do you see this lived out in your walk of faith?
3. God can use our weakness and even our failures to help us learn humility, compassion, and perseverance. When have you experienced God's grace through your weakness or even a failure?

Memory Verse

"But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

—Ephesians 2:4–7

Closing Prayer

Take a moment to call to mind areas where you've fallen short of God's call to holiness, sinned, and need forgiveness and mercy.

I confess, to Almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned; in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do—through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. Therefore, I ask the Blessed Virgin Mary, all the angels and saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord, our God.



Detail from *Return of the Prodigal Son*, Rembrandt / Restored Traditions

Review

This week, we are going to return to the Scripture passages we've prayed through so far in this course. Choose one of the passages below that resonated with you previously, either by causing a movement of consolation or desolation, and then return to it in prayer today. Ask God what more he wishes to reveal to you in this passage as you pray.

- Matthew 11:25–30
- Matthew 3:13–17
- Mark 10:46–52
- Isaiah 43:1–7
- Matthew 15:10–20
- Romans 5:1–8
- Luke 8:40–56
- Matthew 17:1–8

After prayerfully imagining yourself in the scene set by the passage, complete the following sentences:

- I thought . . .
- I felt . . .
- I desired . . .
- I sensed in my body . . .
- I feel God calling me to reflect more deeply upon . . .

THE AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE AND THE NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS PRESENT

The Heart of Prayer

A Study with
Bishop Andrew Cozzens



The Thank Offering, William-Adolphe Bouguereau
Restored Traditions

GROWING IN PRAYER THROUGH SUFFERING

SESSION

8

Opening Prayer

O most holy heart of Jesus, fountain of every blessing, I adore you, I love you, and with lively sorrow for my sins I offer you this poor heart of mine. Make me humble, patient, pure, and wholly obedient to your will. Grant, Good Jesus, that I may live in you and for you. Protect me in the midst of danger. Comfort me in my afflictions. Give me health of body, assistance in my temporal needs, your blessing on all that I do, and the grace of a holy death. Amen.

—*Prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus*

Study Goals

Suffering is one of the most difficult realities we face in our lives and in our prayer. It forces us to confront the reality of our limits, the broken and fallen world in which we live, and the question of why God allows suffering to occur. We often don't see the value in suffering, but some of the greatest joys in life come through suffering, especially through suffering as a result of self-gift. Real love is self-gift, and real joy comes from giving ourselves to another in love; this is how we can experience great joy even through suffering.

One of the mysteries of the Christian faith is that Jesus did not take away suffering; Jesus did, however, save us from death and reclaimed suffering by making it the way of love. Uniting our suffering to the suffering of Christ on the cross allows us an opportunity to be a part of redemption. In this way, sacrifice and suffering become life-giving and fruitful for the world. This way of suffering is not reserved for the holiest saints, but is meant to be embraced in the ordinary trials of daily life.

Transforming our suffering into an opportunity to love requires us to know, first, that we are loved. This allows us to avoid turning inward on ourselves and falling victim to the danger of acedia, which is a deep form of spiritual desolation and a sadness toward spiritual goods. Acedia, or sloth, can make it difficult to pray, which in turn requires us to recommit more intentionally to prayer during this time, especially using the ARRR formula.

Scripture

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.



Detail from *Christ Washing the Feet of the Apostles*,
Dirck van Baburen / Restored Traditions

Discuss

1. What is your first response to trial or suffering? Do you run from it, attempt to numb it, or do you embrace it?
2. When have you experienced a deeper union with Christ as a result of suffering? What was that experience like?
3. Reflect on the final story Bishop Cozzens shared about Fernando. What emotions did this evoke inside you? What experiences in your own life did you recall as you heard that story? What did it reveal to you about your relationship with Jesus?

Memory Verse

“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.”

—2 Corinthians 4:8–10

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, through your grace help us to follow the example of Saint Teresa of Calcutta, who joyfully united her sufferings with your own, and to console your Sacred Heart with our joy of being found worthy to share in your suffering and embraced by your love. May the trials, obstacles, pain, and challenges we face in this life bear fruit in the next. We ask this in your name. Amen.



Christ Carrying the Cross, Titian / Restored Traditions

Challenge

This week, choose one of the following options for your time in prayer. If possible, spend this time in your parish Eucharistic adoration chapel or before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle at your parish.

Option 1: ARRR prayer about a current situation involving trial or suffering

Using the Acknowledge, Relate, Receive, Respond prayer, bring a current area of suffering to the Lord and spend some time in conversation with him. The following is a suggested structure for prayer:

Acknowledge (10 minutes): Silence any devices and eliminate distractions. Spend time in quiet reflection and become aware of any interior affective movements you experience related to the situation. This includes thoughts, feelings, and desires. Acknowledge those movements and ask:

- What am I feeling?
- Why do I feel this?
- What is actually going on inside me?

Relate (10 minutes): Share what you have acknowledged with God in prayer. Express your thoughts, feelings, and reflections honestly. It may be helpful to write this prayer down or to journal during this time. Invite God to reveal to you how he sees the situation.

Receive (10 minutes): Become still and attentive to spiritual movements in prayer. During this time, remember you cannot control how or when God will speak. Continue to relate to God in prayer, taking time to listen in silence.

Respond (10 minutes): This is an opportunity to enter into communion with God and accept the gift you've received in prayer. Ask yourself:

- What have I received from God in prayer today?
- Have I received a new perspective on a situation? Peace? Joy?

The Heart of Prayer

A Study with
Bishop Andrew Cozzens



St. Ignatius of Loyola, Peter Paul Rubens /
Restored Traditions

IGNATIAN SCRIPTURAL PRAYER GUIDE

Know the Scripture verse you will use ahead of time. Find your place of prayer. Open your Bible and find the passage.

1) Preparatory Prayer

“A step or two before the place where I am to contemplate or meditate, I will stand for the space of an Our Father and, with my consciousness raised on high, consider how the Lord my God looks upon me. Then I will make an act of reverence or humility” (St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, no. 75).

Spend the first minute considering how God looks at you.

Ask God our Lord for the grace that all your intentions, thoughts, and actions may be ordered purely to the service and praise of his divine majesty.

2) First Prelude: Set the Scene

This is made by imagining the place. Here we should take notice of the following: When a meditation is about something that can be gazed on, for example, a scene where our Lord is visible, the composition will be to see in imagination the physical place where the event is happening. By physical place I mean, for instance, a temple or a mountain where Jesus Christ or our Lady happen to be, in accordance with what is written.

When a Scripture passage isn't set in a physical place, for example, a psalm, imagine yourself before God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit, and imagine these words being spoken to you or by you.

This step sets the mind/intellect.

3) Second Prelude: Ask for a Grace

Ask God our Lord for what you want and desire. What you ask for should be in accordance with the subject matter. For example, in a contemplation on the Resurrection, ask for joy in union with Christ's joy; in a contemplation on the Passion, ask for pain, tears, and suffering with Christ's suffering.

Ask for what you desire and what you need—"I want to know my sins. I want to taste your love for me."

This sets the will.

4) Actual Meditation

Follow the Lord through the scene and stop when something impacts you. "Look" into the scene at Jesus, his heart, his actions, his words. Further, prayerfully examine the heart, actions, and words of any one person or many persons nearby.

Pay attention to the words and what you notice when you read them or "hear" them in your heart. What do you notice in Jesus or the Father or Mary as these words are spoken to you or by you? Stop when something stands out to you or strikes you.

As soon as you stop because something impacts you, look more deeply into that moment. What do you feel? Desire? Think? What is happening at that moment in the scene or the passage? What is capturing your attention?

5) Communication with the Lord

Speak to the Lord about what you are seeing in him or in others in the scene. Tell him what is happening in your heart because of what you are watching. Relate to him what you feel. Tell him what you desire. Listen to anything that comes to mind as a response from him. Don't be afraid to simply be quiet with him, to let his peace sink into you, to let him repeat to you his words of love and truth.

Repeat steps 4–5 until you feel as though your conversation is "complete" or you have no more time.

6) Final Colloquy (Final Conversation)

A colloquy is made, properly speaking, on the way one friend speaks to another, or a servant to one in authority—now begging a favor, now accusing oneself of some misdeed, now telling one's concerns and asking counsel about them.

The meditation should always end with a colloquy. It is a time to make a commitment to live what has been revealed or to enter more deeply into a truth. It is time to give thanks for what you experienced, or to ask for grace to change. Saint Ignatius gives examples of a colloquy:

