

A Reflection on Prayer

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I am thankful to Father Jared De Leo and St. Anastasia Parish's youth group for the invitation you graciously extended for this sharing. I regret my schedule could not allow me to be with you personally this time, but as you know, I frequently come to St. Anastasia. You asked me how I prayed as a teen and how my prayer life has changed and how I pray today.

I didn't learn to pray until I began preparing for my First Communion. I learned the basic prayers of the Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be. These basic prayers feed me day by day. When I was 13, I was invited to make a weekend retreat. While there for the first time, I was asked to experience times of silence and reflection. It was very difficult for me, and I barely could keep quiet for more than 10 minutes. Thank goodness, I would go to Mass on Sunday. I enjoyed the songs because while singing, I experienced joy. I liked going to Church because my parish was very alive.

When I entered the seminary, I was taught to expand my prayer life, and soon it became a priority for me: spending time in friendship with God – relating to God as a friend. I believed that someone heard me and loved me, knew the depth of my heart. Praying led me to trust in God.

As a priest, the most important prayer for me has always been the celebration of the daily Mass. Reflecting on the texts of the readings has always given me great satisfaction personally. A very important moment is the Doxology, just before the Our Father. This prayer moves me deeply as I join the community (the body of Christ) with the consecrated Christ, Body and Blood in offering to the One God and Three Persons in total submission and love of will and heart. In the final Amen, I think of Mary because all her life was a fiat. I say the Amen in her presence.

The Doxology is, without doubt, the most sacred minute of my entire day – the Per Ipsum. Each day, I pray the Mass, one hour of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, the Liturgy of the Hours (5), which mostly uses the psalms, the holy rosary, and three Angelus and the sweet Memorare. And I go to confession twice a month.

If a teen asks me, how can I grow in prayer?

I respond, Do not miss the Sunday Mass ever. Say your daily prayers early in the morning and at the end of the day. Read the Gospels daily for at least 5-minutes. Go to confession each month. You will soon learn that the more you pray, the more you will want to pray. The reason being, the Holy Spirit is in action within you, assisting you to draw closer to Jesus.

The secret to prayer is to let the Holy Spirit pray in you; one just needs to let the Holy Spirit guide you.