

# 7—Prayer: Growing in Relationship With God

## *Objectives*

By the end of this lesson students will be able to ...

- state that prayer is our dialogue with God.
- recognize that prayer is personal and necessary for our relationship with God.
- understand the difference between prayer that is our personal response to God and worship that is the community's group response to God's actions.
- realize that our prayers are guided and filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

## *For the Catechists*

Praying is an important part of our Christian life—praying is our lifeline to God. One of the aims of the God With Us series is "to develop the children into people of prayer." This lesson encourages the students to accomplish that objective.

Help the students realize the importance of keeping "in touch" with God just as they keep "in touch" with their family and friends. Today's electronic devices let them talk or text each other constantly which might make it even harder for young people to pray—they have no time! That is the reason this lesson emphasizes that we need to place ourselves in the presence of God in a quiet area. The best way to experience quiet is by having the students practice being quiet in the classroom or by going into the church. Let them discover that they can sit quietly (at least 3 minutes) and think about God.

This lesson also includes The Jesus Prayer and the breathing that is suggested for this prayer. Meditation is recommended for all ages to help people "center" their lives, and The Jesus Prayer definitely lets us meditate on the presence of the Lord. We breathe in and inhale Jesus for the first phrase "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God." We breathe out and exhale all else (sinners that we are) for the second phrase, "Have mercy on me a sinner."

Many other ways to pray are included in this lesson to help the students realize that we can talk to God constantly. In fact, Scripture tells us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:15). With all our praying, we need to realize the Holy Spirit is guiding us.

Realize that your students are probably not going to "pray without ceasing" and probably not pray where their peers will see them. But they need to realize that praying will help them make good choices. Encourage them to think about silently praying (the Jesus Prayer is a good suggestion) before they talk back too quickly and say "yes" to something that they should not. Keep reminding them God is ready and waiting to help them.

## *Materials Needed*

*Opening Prayer:* "The Lord's Prayer"

*Icon:* Pantocrator (*Come Bless the Lord* icon packet #3).

*Closing Prayer:* "The Jesus Prayer" and "The Lord's Prayer"

Pens, pencils, markers and white paper

**1. Opening Prayer**

- Chant or recite "The Lord's Prayer."

**2. Introduction**

Allow a few minutes to share ideas about all the ways they keep in contact with friends. Let them talk about their electronic devices. Then ask them about how they keep in contact with the Lord. Help them think about ways they can do that even without being in church.

**3. Guided Reading**

- Before the reading, review last week's objectives. Then summarize this week's objectives of the lesson on a wall pad or easel pad to use for review next week.
- Have students read text aloud and emphasize the importance of Holy Tradition, our Church elders, and Scripture.
- Complete the activity "How do you spend your minutes?" Have the students share their answers. Ask them if this activity will help them spend more time with God? What will they do when they are spending time with God?

**4. Scriptural Reflection**

- Help students find Matthew 6:6-8.
- Before reading aloud, have students make the sign of the cross. Remind them that reading Scripture is praying.
- Look at the icon and ask the students to see themselves praying with Jesus.
- Give the students 3 minutes to answer the questions and read the passage again.
- Ask the students to work in groups of 2 and share their answers aloud.
- Possible answers:  
He trusts that you will pray.  
Praying privately and listen to God. Don't keep talking words.  
Answers will vary.
- Make a list of the prayers the students say they pray.

**5. From the Teaching of the Church Fathers**

- Ask one student to read the words from St. John Chrysostom.
- Have the students answer the questions; then discuss their answers. Suggestions:  
We become paralyzed.  
The fish dies.  
We are cut off from God and we will kill our relationship with God.  
Catechists should start by sharing a story about someone they know who was helped through prayer.

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***Background Reading (Byzantine Prayer)***

"Byzantine prayers are not often directly addressed to God the Father. It is almost as if we were saving this wonderful title for that prayer in which we use the words our Lord Himself taught us. One other special place where we address God as Father is in the prayer of the Anointing of the Sick, as we appeal to His loving kindness as Father to heal the person who is sick. As Jesus taught, "If you, with all your sins, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to anyone who asks Him" (TM 148).

## 6. Liturgical Study

- Read the paragraphs aloud.
- Ask: Are you starting to pay more attention during the Divine Liturgy now that you are learning why we say the prayers then we do?  
Why do we pray The Lord's Prayer before Communion? Would it help you if you (after the prayer) thought of a trespass that you want God to forgive? Should you think of a trespass that you should forgive?

## 7. Closing Prayers

Pray "The Jesus Prayer" 5 times (including the breathing) and "The Lord's Prayer" once and very slowly picture yourself talking to God the Father.

### Supplemental Activities:

Review—At the end of the lesson, ask the students what they remember by using one of the following suggestions:

1. Have the students make a prayer book for themselves. Suggest they look for scriptural passages and new prayers to add to their book. Encourage them to add pictures of icons (possibly from former bulletins).
2. Make a list of time they would recommend praying the Jesus Prayer. Possibly:  
When someone asks you to ....  
When someone shows you to ....
3. Write an advice column for youth. Write questions about praying and write the answers based on this lesson. Consider offering this column for the next church bulletin.
4. Write your own prayer to say throughout the day. Talk to God in your own way.

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### ***Background Reading (Rule Of Prayer)***

"In choosing times for daily prayer, we need to ask ourselves when are we most able to assure that we will not be rushed, disturbed or too tired to give full attention to what we are doing. Some people decide to get up an hour earlier than usual to pray in the early morning quiet. If you are a "morning person," you may find that your best time for prayer. "Night people" may prefer to stay up after other family members have gone to bed for their prayer. Each person will be different.

"Our Rule of Prayer would also include an idea of how long to pray. This generally depends on how much prayer is a part of our lives. If you are a beginner, you should not expect that your attention would last over ten or fifteen minutes. By that time you would have run out of things to say and would probably just be "putting time in."

"Personal Rules of Prayer should also consider where best to pray. Someone alone at home during the day may find the family icon corner a good place to pray. You may prefer the icon corner in your bedroom, a nearby church or the outdoors. What matters is that the place you select makes it possible for you to spend your prayer time alone with God" (DC 23-24).