

How to Pray - Fr. Cristino Bouvette

Fr. Cristino gave us a great talk on How to Pray. He taught us that prayer is a relationship with God, and he gave us many ways to build this friendship, by sharing our thoughts, feelings, and concerns with God.

What does prayer look like?

Prayer is having a regular conversation with the Lord. It does something, it builds something in us. It's trying to build a monastery in our heart, a place we can retreat to and be with God.

St. Theresa of Avila, said prayer is a conversation between friends. First a conversation presupposes at least two voices, back and forth, each has something to contribute, an exchange, between friends. In John, Jesus now he calls us friends.

We need to think about it as a relationship. We can't let it get too complicated.

If we think we are not called to do prayer, we will deprive ourselves of the greatest blessing, and depriving Jesus of us, of our friendship.

When we ask someone for something, we are not automatically in a friendship. E.g. a Waitress brought what you asked, but she is not a friend. If I am not getting what I am asking for, am I asking wrong, is there something wrong with me, some complication. This gets us to the core of prayer.

A friendship would have to do more, to develop. He is close friends with Fr. Troy. He doesn't think twice about asking him for favour, because they are friends. Friendship comes first, it's not based on the asking.

Q. What Makes a Prayer a Prayer?

A prayer is a conversation between friends. What do you converse about?

YA: I tell him about my day.

YA: Talk about your worries, your concerns.

YA: I apologize if I'm feeling guilty about something.

Confession is prayer. It's worries, asking for forgiveness. It's laughing and telling a joke. These are natural topics of conversation. It doesn't always have to be structured the same way. We should ask God for things, but that cannot be the basis of the friendship, or it becomes disappointment. But if your usual experience of praying is talking to him, a sense of relationship can open your heart more, laugh, cry, get angry. God wants this friendship.

In Confession, it's not uncommon for people to say they have gotten angry with God in their prayer. It's not a sin. There is a difference between cursing God, I don't believe, hate, I wish didn't know, versus anger. Asking why is this happening, I feel so lost, alone. This is normal, opening up, and being honest.

He has experienced a wide range of ways of communicating with God. Some are nourishing; other times it's just going through motions, more often it is this way.

Story: A priest in Spain, heard confessions at 6:00 am. Every morning, while he was hearing confessions, he heard the door open, and he heard a metal hitting the marble floor, then silence, then it being picked up, and the door opened and closed as they left. One day there was no people for confession, so he burst out, and saw a milk man with bar and 48 bottles of milk in it. When he genuflected, the steel thing hit the floor. He asked him, "Who are you, and what are you doing?"

He said each morning I say, "Good morning Jesus, it's Jose the milk man, and then I leave."

He knew how to pray, it was a natural part of the day. So simple and so natural.

Friendship is built up over time, by simplicity and naturalness. He imagines Jose, maybe on Sunday, came in and sat down for a while. Short hellos, led to more profound encounters.

We build this friendship, by sharing our thoughts, feelings, and concerns with God.

You Have to Build a Prayer Life

You have to want it, or at least want to want that. Aiming, moving in that direction. You need to be a bit strategic. Have to put some work into it. That is the theology of prayer.

4 Parts to Build a Prayer Life

To build a prayer life, you need blue prints. You need to design it, to build it. Not just getting random supplies and sticking them together.

4 parts to build a prayer life.

PSMC: Planned
Scheduled
Manageable
Consistent

Planned

We know what we are doing when we sit down to pray.

What is praying to me? The Rosary, a spiritual book, Lectio Divina, spiritual music, adoration of the blessed sacrament.

How are you filling the time?

Scheduled

It doesn't have to be at same time or same length of time, but know when the time is. Maybe half an hour after wake up, but maybe you wake up later some days. I know when during the day I'm going to pray. If we don't schedule it, it won't happen.

Don't procrastinate it.

It doesn't have to be first thing in the morning. But have the discipline to stop during the day, and say "now is the time to pray."

Manageable

We need to be able to do it, to what we planned and when we planned to do it. The more consistently we fail what we planned, the more discouraged, and the more

tempted to abandon it. Something small is good when at first when you're trying to get going.

He does the "Morning Offering:"

O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary,
I offer you my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day
for all the intentions of your Sacred Heart
in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world,
for the salvation of souls, the reparation of sins, the reunion of all Christians,
and in particular for the intentions of the Holy Father this month.
Amen.

He says this prayer every morning first thing, even before coffee. It sets the tone for the day. And, "I consecrate this day to you Lord."

You need to have something to start with. The *Morning Offering* takes 15 seconds max, so you are not too busy ever to do it.

You might be too stressed, but then other issues need to be fixed, how I'm living or routines that make it difficult to pray.

At one time, the *Morning Offering* was as much as he could muster. Now if he doesn't make time for it, the day is a write off, he is cranky, being interrupted. It took a long time for it to be manageable.

Consistency

Pray every single day, without exception, including Saturday & Sunday. It's easy to take a break from praying on the weekend, but we must pray everyday. As long as it's manageable, it doesn't matter if it's a Monday or a Sunday.

This will give you a firm foundation: you will keep adding to it, and making it stronger and stronger.

Questions

YA: Even if you're not 100% into it, it's still a start. Is that within the plan?

Fr. Cristino: Dragging yourself to prayer, distracted, but you still put yourself in the mindset of prayer. It's like being in the sun, you get sunburned whether like it or not.

In prayer, whether you are fully engaged or not, God will work with that.

He doesn't save prayer time only for when you're doing a big effort.

YA: What about doing the Our Father?

Fr. Cristino: It was given to us by Jesus. It's form is vocal prayer. It can be done silently, but it's following a predetermined formula, like the Rosary. Vocal prayer leads to mental prayer. Our own consideration of it. It is engaging our mind.

The third highest contemplation, is to unite our mind and heart to God, not speaking or doing anything; allowing our mind and heart to lift up to God.

Heaven is contemplating God.

Imagine with friend, talking, and then just being quiet together. I'm still feeling I'm glad you're here, I'm glad I'm here.

Contemplation is moving towards God.

Psalm 46:10: Be still and know that I am God. Contemplative prayer.

- *Summary of talk from Fr. Cristino Bouvette*
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