

PRAY YOUR VOCAL PRAYERS

St Ignatius' Methods to Pray your Vocal Prayers.

Introduction

- ✓ *The most common way or method of prayer for ordinary folks is saying "Vocal Prayers", namely, reciting traditional Prayer Formulae learned by rote.*
- ✓ *Vocal prayers are beautiful and inspiring, like the Our father, The Hail Mary, The Sign of the Cross, The Hail Holy Queen, and other prayers composed by the Fathers of the Church and other eminent Saints.*
- ✓ *Many Christians down history became saints and came very close to God by just reciting Vocal Prayers.*
- ✓ *However, in the long run, the continuous recitation of prayer formulae may become inefficacious because repetitiously said time and again, their beautiful words may lose their original luster*
- ✓ ***Truly speaking, such prayers are not primary meant to be just said, but to be prayed.***
- ✓ *St. Ignatius Loyola anxious to help people to develop their prayer life, and help them say their prayers in a meaningful way, in his book of the Spiritual Exercises, outlined two simple prayer methods to help people to pray their vocal prayers.*
- ✓ *These methods can be used any time, especially when one is left to himself without books or other sources of inspiration. (Confer The Book of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Nos., 238 to 260)*

Method One

(Book of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Nos 249 to 257)

CONTEMPLATE AND MEDITATE FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD OF TIME THE MEANING OF EACH WORD OF A PRAYER, for instance" the Our Father", "the I Believe", "Soul of Christ," "Hail Holy Queen" ." The Psalms, Sacred hymns, Liturgical Prayers specially those of the mass. Etc.

Introductory Notes:

- ✓ *In the previous method of rhythmical recitation of vocal prayers, we spent a few seconds only dwelling on each word of a prayer.*
- ✓ *In this method, contrariwise, we are told to spend unlimited time in each word of a prayer; namely, to dwell on it and meditate on it as long as we find consolation and profit.*

- ✓ *It is highly recommended to use this method of prayer, from time to time, so that we may not fall into a routine way of saying our customary vocal prayers.*
- ✓ **Note:** *Before you start praying, following this method, decide the length of time you want to spend in it. (Say. a quarter of an hour, half an hour or more)*

Advantages of this prayer method:

- ✓ *It is very useful in time of sickness, while traveling or when pressings duties keep us away from other types of mental prayer.*
- ✓ *It helps to bring alive the prayers we normally recite.*
- ✓ *It makes us understand the content and meaning of our customary prayers.*

As instances of this prayer method we offer below three sample exercises:

First exercise on the “OUR FATHER”

Second exercise on “THE I BELIEVE”.

Third exercise, on “THE HAIL, HOLY QUEEN”

Later on, using this method, you may meditate on any other prayer, Psalm, or Hymn of your choice

First Sample Exercise:

PRAYING THE OUR FATHER”

Procedure:

- Take a position that helps to relax and invites you to pray.
- Close your eyes for a while and in silence, place yourself in the presence of God.
- Think of what you are about to do
- Ask The Holy Spirit to teach you to pray as Jesus taught his disciples.
- Begin your prayer exercise by taking the first word of the “Our Father”. (*Cfr. Appendix below*)
- Then, leisurely and affectionately, recite the selected word over and over again. Ponder on it; find its various meanings, comparisons, etc.
- Keep meditating on it and relish it as long as you find joy, consolation and meaning.
- When you feel satisfied, take the following word and proceed in the same manner till you complete the entire prayer.
- If in the course of your prayer exercise, you find in one or two words abundant matter for thought and much relish, do not be anxious to go ahead and finish the entire prayer.
- If in the span of time you decided to pray, you cannot go through the entire prayer, stop meditating on The Our Father, and recite what’s left of it in the ordinary way

- Next time you wish to pray on the “Our Father”, recite the words you have already meditated upon on the previous occasion, and start meditating on the words that follow them.

Closure: The reflective meditation of “The Our Father” could be accompanied or followed by a “**colloquy**”

A colloquy would be here a spontaneous heart to heart chat with God the Father on the thoughts and feelings that popped up within you while you meditated on the Our Father

APENDIX; “THE OUR FATHER”

Our Father – Who art in heaven – Hallowed be your name – Your kingdom come - Your will be done on earth - As it is done in heaven - Give us this day our daily bread – Forgive us our trespasses - As we forgive those who trespass against us – Lead us not into temptation – But deliver us from evil – Amen.

Second Sample Exercise:

PRAYING “THE I BELIEVE”

Procedure

- Take a position that helps to relax and invites you to pray.
- Close your eyes and, for a while, and in silence place yourself in the presence of God.
- Think of what you are about to do
- Ask The Holy Spirit to teach you to pray as Jesus taught his disciples.
- Begin your prayer exercise by taking the first word of the “I Believe” (*Cfr. Appendix below*)
- Leisurely and affectionately recite it over and over again. Ponder on it; find its various meanings, comparisons, etc. Keep meditating on it and relish it as long as you find joy, consolation and meaning..
- When you exhausted its meaning and feel satisfied, take the following word and proceed in the same manner till you complete the entire ‘I Believe ‘
- If in the course of your prayer exercise, you find in one or two words abundant matter for thought and much relish, do not be anxious to go ahead and finish the entire “I Believe” in the length of time you decided to pray.
- When the length of time you decided to pray using this prayer method is over, stop, and recite what’s left of “The I Believe” in the ordinary way.
- Next time you wish to use this method, recite the words you have already meditated upon on the previous occasion and start meditating on the words that follow them.

Closure: The reflective meditation of “The I Believe” could be accompanied or followed by a “**colloquy**” or “**colloquies**”

A colloquy would be here a heart to heart chat, with God the Fatter., or with Jesus, or with The Holy Spirit or with our Blessed Mother on the thoughts and feelings that popped up within you while you meditated on the I Believe.

Appendix: “THE I BELIEVE”

I believe...in God....the Father...Almighty...Creator....of heaven.. and earth...
 I believe in Jesus Christ....his only Son...Our Lord....He was conceived by the power of
 the Holy Spirit...and born of the Virgin Mary...He suffered under Pontius Pilate...
 was crucified...died... and was buried...He descended to the dead...On the third day he
 rose again...He ascended into heaven ...and is seated at the right hand of the Father....
 He will come again....to judge the living and the dead...I believe in the Holy Spirit....
 the Holy Catholic Church...the Communion of Saints...the forgiveness of sins...
 the resurrection of the body...and life everlasting...AMEN..

Third Saple Exercise:

PRAYING THE “HAIL, HOLY QUEEN “

Procedure

- Take a position that helps to relax and invites you to pray.
- Close your eyes and for a while and, in silence, place yourself in the presence of God.
- Think of what you are about to do
- Ask The Holy Spirit to teach you to pray as Jesus taught his disciples.
- Begin your prayer exercise by taking the first word or words of the Hail Holy Queen.
(*Cfr. Appendix below*)
- Leisurely and affectionately recite them over and over again. Ponder on them; find their various meanings, comparisons, etc. Keep meditating on them and relish them as long as you find joy, consolation and meaning.
- When you exhausted their meaning and feel satisfied, take the following word/s and proceed in the same manner till you complete the entire “Hail Holy Queen”
- If in the course of your prayer exercise, you find in one or two words abundant matter for thought and much relish, do not be anxious to go ahead and finish the entire prayer.
- If in the course of the time you decided to pray .using this method, you cannot go through the entire “Hail Holy Queen”, stop, where you are and recite what’s left of the prayer in the ordinary way. .
- Next time you wish to use this method with the “Hail Holy Queen”, recite the words you have already meditated upon on the previous occasion, and start meditating on the words that follow them.

Closure: The reflective meditation of “Hail Holy Queen” could be accompanied or followed by a “**colloquy**” with our Blessed Mother,

A colloquy here, would be a spontaneous heart to heart chat, with Our Lady on the thoughts and feelings that popped up within you while you meditating the Hail Holy Queen.

APPENDIX : “THE HAIL HOLY QUEEN’ ”.

Hail, Holy Queen, - Mother of mercy – Hail. Our life – Our sweetness –and Our hope – To you we cry - poor banished children of Eve - to you do we send our sighs – mourning and weeping – in this vale of tears –Turn, then, most gracious advocate – your eyes of mercy towards us – and after this our exile – show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus – O clement, - O loving – O sweet virgin Mary - Pray for us – O holy Mother of God – that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Method Two

Spiritual Exercises Book Nos: 258-260

RHYTHMICAL RECITATION OF YOUR PRAYERS

(Book of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Nos 258 to 260))

Ignatius Calls this Method: “A Measured Rhythmical Recitation“

Advantages of this Prayer Method:

- ✓ *This method of prayer, suggested by St. Ignatius, though simple and easy, it can lead ordinary people to contemplation*
- ✓ *It is very appropriate when we are sick and helpless.*
- ✓ *It helps us to pay attention to the prayers we normally just recite in a customary way.*
- ✓ *It directs our attention to Gods presence even when the meaning of the words may not be so clear to us.*

Instructions:

- Choose one of your daily prayers or psalms, or one of the Devotional Hymns found in our Hymnals. For instance: “The Our Farther”, “Hail Holy Queen”, “Soul of My Savior”, “Great, Indeed Are Your Works, O Lord”, Etc.
- Close your eyes for a while and in silence place yourself in the presence of God.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you to pray as Jesus taught his disciples.
- Begin breathing deeply and slowly in a rhythmical way.
- With each breath, lovingly, devoutly and prayerfully utter one word after another of the prayer, psalm or hymn you have chosen.
- For the length of time a word is rhythmically recited, pay attention to the meaning of that word and to the person you are addressing it.
- Slowly proceed, in this way, word by word, till the prayer, psalm or hymn is over

- If you wish to spend longer time in prayer you may take the same prayer or hymn a second time for meditation or if you prefer it, another prayer.

Closure:

The rhythmical recitation of each prayer could be followed by a “colloquy” with the Divine Person, or with our blessed Mother, or the one to whom the prayer was addressed

A “colloquy” is a spontaneous chat, heart to heart, with the person addressed at.

- ✓ as a creature speaking to his Creator.
- ✓ or a child to his Father or Mother,
- ✓ or a lover to his beloved,
- ✓ or a disciple to his Master,
- ✓ or a friend to his friend,
- ✓ or a patient to his Doctor, etc.