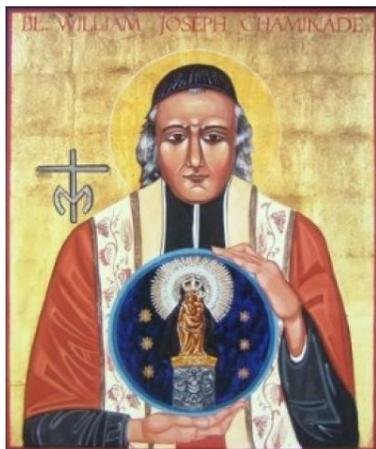


## Praying with Faith of the Heart



---

For Father Chaminade, an act of faith meant not only accepting something as true with our mind but also embracing it with our feelings. As Father Chaminade said, our faith should include “attitudes of the heart. It is faith of the heart that justifies: by believing from the heart you are made righteous (Rom 10:10). Faith of the mind alone does not sanctify.”

*Rule of Life of the Society of Mary, article 8*

---

### OPENING PRAYER

*By Marie Joëlle Bec, FMI, from Walking with Adèle*

Lord, I am silent; you are there.

I love you. I adore you.

The noise of meetings is quieting down,

the calls to help are not so loud,

the different activities

are finding their right place.

It is good to taste your rest.

Finally, I can pay attention to your voice

and tell you again that you are my whole life.

I can listen to you,

and quietly you say to me,

“I am meek and humble of heart.

My strength shows itself in weakness.

Love as you are loved.”

Amen.

---

### REFLECTION FOR THE GROUP



Take a few minutes to think about who taught you to pray.

How old were you?

What was your relationship with this person?

What is most significant to you regarding this memory?

Share your stories with your community as you wish.

---

---

# Food for Thought

## Praying with Faith of the Heart *by Quentin Hakenewerth, SM*

*From A Manual of Marianist Spirituality*

Prayer is our time of conscious encounter with God. It is chiefly during this time of conscious encounter that God grants the greatest gifts and favors to those he loves. It is then that our growth in the virtues of Jesus is most favored. Therefore, the hours of prayer are the most precious of our life.

How well we pray is as important as how much we pray. Therefore, the way we pray makes a difference. As a help to pray well, Father Chaminade left us a common method of prayer. Here is a brief explanation of this method.

### Choosing Topics for Prayer

Because prayer is our most conscious encounter with God, we must treat the time of prayer as a precious treasure. It is very important to choose the topic of prayer beforehand; the night before for the following morning, or in the morning for the evening. The word, truth, or mystery chosen already begins to influence our spirit once we fix it as the subject of our prayer.

Generally, the topic for prayer is one of three kinds: a word from Scripture (e.g., Psalm 23), a truth of faith (e.g., God created me and sustains me in being), or a mystery of Jesus (e.g., Jesus died on the cross). At times our needs might determine other subjects. For example, if we feel a lack of fervor at Mass or a distaste for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we can take such topics for prayer in the light of faith.

In choosing a topic, we follow our needs, our interior attractions, or the grace we desire to obtain from prayer. For example, if we want to strengthen some conviction or grow in faith, we will choose some word from Scripture or some teaching of the Church. If we want to change or acquire some attitude or disposition, we will choose some mystery, that is, some event in the life of Jesus or Mary which embodies that attitude. If we have been granted some interior gift of the Spirit, we might choose to rest in that grace during prayer. So we choose the topic by

considering what subject will most likely lead to the result we desire. We fix in our mind the topic and the fruit desired in such a way that we can easily recall them at any time.

Once we have prepared the topic, we carry it in our memory like a treasure to be unfolded during the next period of prayer.

### Entering into Prayer

There are four important considerations for entering into prayer.

#### *The Presence of God*

God embraces us at every moment with presence, ready to communicate with us. We are always in God's presence, but often we are not aware of this. So, we enter into prayer by giving our attention to God and recalling that God sees and hears us. Once begun, we hold ourselves in God's presence throughout the entire time of prayer.

We immediately recall, under some specific aspect, who God is: creator, Father, ruler of the universe, almighty, source of life, etc. We express our feelings of awe, reverence, praise or whatever arises within us.

At the same time, we recognize, under some specific aspect, who we are in God's presence: creature, loved by God, limited, gifted, sinner, ignorant, chosen, etc. Again, we express our sentiments to God.

Seeing in the light of faith who God is helps us to see who we are in God's presence. In prayer,



---

awareness of the one should not be separated from awareness of the other because prayer is always a work of God and our work.

### *Union with Jesus*

Of Christ alone can it be said that he “offered up prayers and supplications . . . and was heard because of his reverent submission” (Heb 5:7). We realize that of ourselves we cannot pray as we should. We do not have the dispositions to be heard by the Father. But Jesus invites us to pray in his name and to join him in his prayer to the Father. The more we know we are sinners, the more we feel the need to unite ourselves to Jesus praying for us.

Jesus is always praying before the Father. We join in his prayer, uniting ourselves to him so that we come to the Father clothed in the merits and power of Jesus.

Jesus allows a union with him only of our true self. Our false self, created by our own ego, can never have anything in common with Jesus.

### *Union with Mary*

There are two excellent reasons to be in the company of Mary throughout the time of prayer.

First of all, God chose her to experience Jesus in a unique way — as his mother. Mary conceived God in her heart by faith and in her whole being by the power of the Holy Spirit. She knew Jesus in every mystery and virtue of his life, his death, and his resurrection. It is an awesome privilege for us to pray in the company of one who knows the Lord so fully that her charity brings him forth in our heart.

Secondly, God gave Mary the primary role in forming Jesus in his human personality. Because we want to take on this



same personality, she has the same role in our lives. This is what it means to live the mystery of the Son of Mary. To pray in union with Mary means to open our hearts to her formative presence during prayer. The more we are influenced by her presence, the more we are taken into the experience of being formed in the likeness of Jesus. This is the nature of Mary's influence.

### *Invoking the Holy Spirit*

Jesus has given us his Spirit to be with us at all times, especially to guide us in prayer. Therefore, we ask the Holy Spirit to take possession of our minds and hearts as we submit our entire being to the Spirit's inspiration and guidance. We leave aside all useless thoughts, disturbing concerns, and unruly affections as we abandon ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We confide to the Holy Spirit the grace we desire to derive from prayer. The Spirit will pray in our stead when necessary; it will speak God's inner word in our hearts and will produce in us fruits of God's own life.

### **Praying**

In God's presence, united with Jesus and Mary, given over to the influence of the Holy Spirit, we are into the heart of prayer.

Immediately we bring to mind the topic chosen beforehand. If the topic is a passage from Scripture or a revealed truth, we consider the subject under various aspects, meaning, importance, and applications, especially in view of the grace we desire. If the subject is a mystery of Jesus (e.g., Jesus born in a stable), we imagine vividly the details of the event, ponder his actions, words, and especially his inner feelings and dispositions. In every case, we reflect in a listening attitude, open and attentive to the movements within us.

When some insight, feeling, or desire moves us, we pause and savor it so that it can take root in us. We make acts of faith until a truth becomes a personal conviction. We express an emotion until it attaches us to God or turns us away from evil. We nurture a desire until it moves us to change for the better. Awe, praise, gratitude, contrition, petitions—

---

---

we express such sentiments to God in conversation as long as they continue without strain or burden.

Our aim is to experience within us the sentiments of Jesus. Any movement within us springing from faith moves us toward God's ways. Therefore, we examine how our behavior expresses or contradicts a truth or a mystery. We might compare our attitude to the inner dispositions of Jesus. We can make concrete applications until our life becomes a part of the truth or the mystery. We always express these insights and sentiments in conversation. This is the heart of our prayer.

Sometimes we will be moved quickly, but at other times we may have to continue considerations for some time, perhaps even into the following period of prayer. But we always remain sensitive to the movements of the Spirit within and give ourselves over to their influence. We do not indulge in lengthy speeches or in prolonged reasoning. Prayer is not a study; it is an encounter with God.

Prayer is continuous with the rest of our life. It should influence our entire life, just as our lifestyle greatly influences our prayer. Therefore, we determine some specific way to carry into the rest of our life what we have gained in prayer. The direction or resolution we take should have three characteristics: it should be specific, of immediate application, and such that we can easily recall it and repeat it. We might fix on some specific act in our behavior. We might want to continue a particular sentiment resonating in us. Or we might like to be rooted firmly in an attitude of Jesus. Some truths are assimilated simply by a prolonged feeling or awareness.

Like the rest of prayer, the resolution should come from yielding to the Holy Spirit. Resolutions on our own initiative, unmoved by God, lack the necessary vigor to be fruitful and end in frustration. Faith responds to God's action within us, not to the movements of our ego-formed self.

In summary, this common method of praying in faith gradually makes God's word our own convictions; by degrees, it attaches us to Jesus

through feelings and choices. Thus, God's wisdom and power become the guiding light and strength of our lives.

### **Concluding Formal Prayer**

Though the formal conclusion of prayer is brief, it is very important. It assures a continuation in us of the good effects produced by prayer. It consists of four brief acts.

We thank God for the honor of being called to prayer; for any insights, sentiments, or desires we experienced; and for the graces received. Even if our prayer is dry and tasteless, it is a grace to be accepted by God in his presence.

We ask pardon for any lack of openness or response on our part, for any resistance or obstacle we maintained during prayer.

We commend ourselves to God and to the Blessed Virgin as we leave formal prayer.

We place in their care all that happened in prayer and ask them to sustain that grace in us.

We formulate some reminder to carry with us throughout the day; this will recall the grace of prayer and keep it active in our lives.

### **Review of Prayer**

To preserve the dispositions acquired during prayer, we do not leave prayer too abruptly. Quietly and calmly we pass from prayer to more exterior occupations.

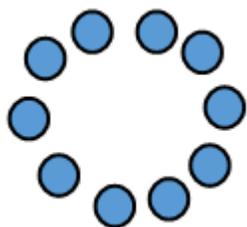
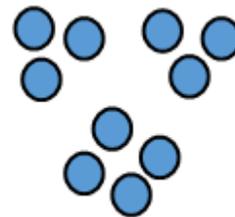
The effects of prayer are too precious to leave to chance. Therefore, at some moment after formal prayer, we review the preparation, manner of praying, and what we gained from it. This examination can take place either immediately after prayer or at some later time in the day. If we are unable to have a fixed time each day to review our prayer, we will examine it more thoroughly several times a week. The important thing is to give the fruits of prayer the care they need to become permanent dispositions in us.

---

---

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ How do you choose your topics for prayer?
- ◆ Hakenewerth writes: “Seeing in the light of faith who God is helps us to see who we are in God’s presence.” This short sentence packs a lot of meaning. What is your interpretation? How does this sentence make you feel?
- ◆ Share a time you deeply encountered God in prayer.



---

## LARGE GROUP GATHERING

Discuss ways your community can utilize the tools Hakenewerth describes for “Faith of the Heart” to discern “fruits of prayer” that can “become permanent dispositions” of your community.

---

## CLOSING PRAYER

Blessed Virgin Mary,  
you in whom the Word was made flesh,  
prepare our hearts to listen to Jesus.  
Open us to simplicity, humility, and availability.  
Help us to become deeply rooted in faith and confidence.  
Jesus your Son asks for our response.  
May our “yes,” united with yours,  
make us collaborators in God’s plan of love for everyone,  
in particular for the young, the poor, and the little ones.  
Amen.



---

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Related resources available at [nacms.org](https://nacms.org) include:

*A Manual of Marianist Spirituality*, Quentin Hakenewerth, SM

*Enfleshing the Word*, Enrique Aguilera, SM, and José María Arnaiz, SM

*Walking With Adèle*, Marie-Joëlle Bec, FMI

Marianist Community Meeting Kits are provided for the Marianist Family by the North American Center for Marianist Studies, NACMS. Additional kits, as well as other Marianist Studies resources, are available at <https://nacms.org/>.

**nac** | North American Center  
**ms** | for Marianist Studies

November, 2019

---