

Praying Together as a Couple

Marriage on Tap – Couple Exercise

CCC 2559 "Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God."² But when we pray, do we speak from the height of our pride and will, or "out of the depths" of a humble and contrite heart?³ He who humbles himself will be exalted;⁴ *humility* is the foundation of prayer. Only when we humbly acknowledge that "we do not know how to pray as we ought,"⁵ are we ready to receive freely the gift of prayer. "Man is a beggar before God."⁶

Here is one face-to-face prayer format to try with your spouse tonight:

Sit knee-to-knee facing each other, hold hands, and look at each other. Husbands lead (go first).

1. Invite the Holy Spirit

2670 "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit."²¹ Every time we begin to pray to Jesus it is the Holy Spirit who draws us on the way of prayer by his prevenient grace. Since he teaches us to pray by recalling Christ, how could we not pray to the Spirit too? That is why the Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action.

2. Begin prayer by thanking God for the gift of your spouse, be specific. (take turns)

2638 As in the prayer of petition, every event and need can become an offering of thanksgiving. The letters of St. Paul often begin and end with thanksgiving, and the Lord Jesus is always present in it: "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you"; "Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving."¹²⁰

3. Pray for any petitions for your marriage and each other (take turns)

2629 The vocabulary of supplication in the New Testament is rich in shades of meaning: ask, beseech, plead, invoke, entreat, cry out, even "struggle in prayer."¹⁰² Its most usual form, because the most spontaneous, is petition: by prayer of petition we express awareness of our relationship with God. We are creatures who are not our own beginning, not the masters of adversity, not our own last end. We are sinners who as Christians know that we have turned away from our Father. Our petition is already a turning back to him.

2631 The first movement of the prayer of petition is asking forgiveness, like the tax collector in the parable: "God, be merciful to me a sinner!"¹⁰⁵ It is a prerequisite for righteous and pure prayer. A trusting humility brings us back into the light of communion between the Father and his Son Jesus Christ and with one another, so that "we receive from him whatever we ask."¹⁰⁶ Asking forgiveness is the prerequisite for both the Eucharistic liturgy and personal prayer.

4. Offer any prayers of intercession that you desire (kids, parents, etc)

2634 Intercession is a prayer of petition which leads us to pray as Jesus did. He is the one intercessor with the Father on behalf of all men, especially sinners.¹¹² He is "able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them."¹¹³ The Holy Spirit "himself intercedes for us . . . and intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."¹¹⁴

5. Pray Blessing over each other.

2626 Blessing expresses the basic movement of Christian prayer: it is an encounter between God and man. In blessing, God's gift and man's acceptance of it are united in dialogue with each other. The prayer of blessing is man's response to God's gifts: because God blesses, the human heart can in return bless the One who is the source of every blessing.

6. Close the prayer. (Can close with praying an Our Father together if desired)

2725 Prayer is both a gift of grace and a determined response on our part. It always presupposes effort. The great figures of prayer of the Old Covenant before Christ, as well as the Mother of God, the saints, and he himself, all teach us this: prayer is a battle. Against whom? Against ourselves and against the wiles of the tempter who does all he can to turn man away from prayer, away from union with God. We pray as we live, because we live as we pray. If we do not want to act habitually according to the Spirit of Christ, neither can we pray habitually in his name. The "spiritual battle" of the Christian's new life is inseparable from the battle of prayer.

2672 The Holy Spirit, whose anointing permeates our whole being, is the interior Master of Christian prayer. He is the artisan of the living tradition of prayer. To be sure, there are as many paths of prayer as there are persons who pray, but it is the same Spirit acting in all and with all. It is in the communion of the Holy Spirit that Christian prayer is prayer in the Church.