

## Entering Deeper Into Prayer

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Hi, I'm Katie Sciba. Welcome to our fourth and final session in the Pray More Advent Retreat. Let's pray.

### Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. Jesus, you are love and mercy itself. Give us the graces necessary to hear you speaking in our lives. Soften our hearts to receive your mercy so we can experience the joy and freedom you desire for us. We ask this through your holy name, Amen.

### How do We Get Mercy?

All right, so we've been talking about the mercy of God. What mercy is, it is the capable acting on the part for the incapable out of love and for consideration for that person. We looked at mercy in the Old Testament, in the New, and I offered examples of the mercy of God from my own life. And how do we receive the mercy of God? How do we, like I said in the first session, how do we get our hands on some, right? And the answer is prayer. And what is prayer?

### A Launching Out of the Heart

St. Therese said, "Prayer is a launching out of the heart toward God. And it binds me close to Jesus." A launching out of the heart. That means it's honest and it doesn't need to be anything else, except a presentation of who we are, what we feel, what our thoughts are. Prayer is stamped on our souls. It's inherent to who we are.

Genesis chapter 1:26 is the creation of man. God said, "*Let us create man in our image after our likeness.*" We are the only creatures blessed this way. No other creature is made that way. The Lord revealed that because we're made in His image, we are called to imitate Him. And so, Jesus prayed alone, He prayed with other people, He prayed alone especially when He needed refreshment, when He was ministering to others, when He was healing others, when He was spending so much with others. Scripture tells us that He would retreat to be by Himself, and to pray and be one with his father. Prayer was also part of His experience with His disciples. They prayed, they prayed together.

God is inherent to our identity, regardless of whether we pay attention to Him or not. But when we ignore the Lord, when we don't participate in prayer, when we do not launch our hearts toward Him, that's almost the same as ignoring who we are. But to be in touch with God is to know who we are.

## **A Purpose from God**

We need God to know who we are and what the Lord desires. And we trust that in His infinite wisdom, the God of the universe decided that you were essential to the life of the world. And so that means that you have a purpose, and you were designed to love as God loves. And to reflect mercy, His mercy to others, and to receive it yourself. What's holding you back? We asked ourselves before, after reading from the New Testament, what is it that freezes you, that paralyzes you from having intimacy with Christ? What is it that deafens you to hearing God in your life? What holds you back from prayer? And if those things were out of the way, would you pray? We've heard I'm too busy, I don't have time, I don't think of it. There are ways to overcome those things, those small obstacles. And we're made for it.

## **Thirsty for Living Water**

So, I'll tell you a story. There was one morning when, I'm a stay-at-home mother, and I needed a break. It was Saturday and my husband said, "All right, just get out of here. Go have some time." And I grabbed the keys and I was taking a drive and I thought it would be so great if I could grab like a snack or something fun to enhance my time out, right?

So, I thought I could grab coffee. And I wasn't really that interested in it. Or maybe I could get a shake or some fries, right? Not really interested in either of those either. And I turned on some music, continued with my drive. It was a beautiful day. I got home, went into the kitchen, poured myself a glass of water and sucked it right down because what I really wanted that whole time was just water.

So often when we are thirsty for living water, the living water the Lord offers us, we will get so confused that we'll drink the sand. We'll drink something that will not satisfy us at all but only leave us more thirsty, aching for Jesus even more than when we began. Psalm 43 says, "*A thirst is my soul for the living God.*" Yet sometimes, even when all of the obstacles are out of the way and we have the time, we have the ability to pray, we hesitate even then for a lack of trust on our part.

## **Be Brave, Trust the Lord**

I read once years ago that to trust in God is one's highest wisdom and deepest consolation. There is nothing braver, smarter, more courageous we can do than trust the Lord. And there is nothing that will bring us more safety, more soothing than doing so. So, when we pray, be real, be honest. Again, St. Therese, she said, "*I say very simply to God what I wish to say without composing beautiful sentences and He always understands me because the Creator will understand the creature.*"

So, start by being real. Go to the source and summit of our faith. St. John Bosco said, "*The longer you stay away from communion, the more your soul will become weak, and in the end, you will become dangerously indifferent.*" And I can say that that has happened so many times in my life where I know if I stay away from prayer, if I'm not receiving the Lord nearly enough, then I drift not into anything inherently negative, but just a matter of indifference.

St. Teresa of Calcutta said, *"If I can give you any advice, I beg you, take it closer to the Eucharist."* The more frequently we receive communion, the stronger we become, and in the end, we reflect the love of God. Prayer also calls for tremendous humility because you're acknowledging that someone else has the answer, has the solution and you don't.

When we make ourselves subject to the fact that being in touch with God is more necessary than anything else, when we accept that reality, peace will be the result. This joyful acceptance of God's will. Okay. I entrust myself to you, Lord. My thoughts, my feelings, all of my trials, all of my joys. They belong to you. And you are the author of me. And be patient with yourself.

## **Prayer takes Time and Discipline**

Developing habitual prayer takes time and discipline. And if you're like me, sometimes those are not my strong points. And so, if I pray one day and then I don't show up to prayer the next day, I'll get impatient with myself and I think gosh, why am I even doing this? But you just continue to show up. Everyone has five minutes. Show up for five minutes. Here I am, Lord. What do you have for me today?

So, let's look at this practically speaking too. Wherever you are in your prayer life, I invite you to take one step further. Maybe it's saying a Glory Be when you wake up. That is my favorite prayer to pray when I wake up because it orients my whole day toward the glory of God. That's why I'm there, it's what I want to do. Sometimes when we put ourselves in a prayerful posture, when we kneel in front of a crucifix, even in our homes, then that reminds you, even physically this is what I'm doing right now. Our bodies can remind us of what we're intending to do.

Pray a novena. Dedicate yourself to presenting a particular intention to God for nine days in succession. I mentioned the Surrender Novena before, and one of the most wonderful prayers I'll share with you now. It says why do you confuse yourselves by worrying? Leave the care of your affairs to me and everything will be peaceful. I say to you in truth that every act of true, blind, complete surrender to me produces the effect that you desire and resolves all difficult situations. That concludes with oh Jesus, I surrender myself to you. Take care of everything.

Go to daily mass or pray through the readings. Pray with your spouse. Now, I don't know how many people I've encountered who said, "Well, I would love to pray with my spouse but she doesn't want to, he doesn't want to." That's fine. You can always make the steady, loving invitation. Always invite. Ask the intercession of St. Monica who had a very stubborn spouse who was pagan and not at all prayerful until his deathbed. A married couple is a creation in Christ and when you pray together, you are made new, and you refresh that in your sacrament. Let's pray.

## **Closing Prayer**

Lord, you invite us to know yourself. You invite us to your love and your mercy. Please defeat all of the obstacles within ourselves so we can overcome habitual sin, personal wounds, and any other hesitation that we have. Give us your grace to draw ourselves close to you so we can reflect you to those around us and experience joy and freedom. We ask this in your name. Amen.  
Thank you so much for joining us for the Pray More Advent Retreat. Have a blessed Advent and merry Christmas.