



Scottish Catholic Education Service



HELPING YOUR CHILDREN TO PRAY

- advice to parents of primary school children -

What is Prayer?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains what Catholics believe and it tells us that prayer 'is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.'¹ This indeed is true but it makes the idea of prayer a bit daunting. However, it goes on to say that prayer is a personal relationship with the living and true God. Through prayer we actually develop our relationship with God. God is looking for that relationship and meets us in prayer.

Prayer is talking with God. Prayer is listening to God. Prayer is enjoying the presence of God. It can take many forms – for example: worship, confession, thanksgiving, praise, petition (asking for things) and waiting (silent, listening and sensing of God). For many people, prayer seems complicated, but it is simply talking to God.

The importance of prayer can hardly be overestimated. At the close of the Jubilee Year 2000, Pope John Paul II said: "We well know that prayer cannot be taken for granted. We have to learn to pray: as it were learning this art ever anew from the lips of the Divine Master himself, like the first disciples: 'Lord, teach us to pray!' (Lk 11:1)."

Many people question what prayer is because they desire to pray, but don't know how. Here are some tips which may help:

- Praying is like talking to your best friend. It's easy to talk to someone when you know they love you unconditionally. However, we sometimes find it difficult because we do not recognise God as our Father and best friend. We need to develop our faith.
- As we learn to pray we need help, and formal prayers (Our Father, Hail Mary etc.,) give us words we can say. These formal prayers also help us to pray together. But as we will learn further, we can talk easily to God in our own words.
- Prayer can be private or public, vocal or silent, passionate or meditative. We can pray individually or in groups, in the midst of daily activities or at times set apart, and in complete solitude or in union with the entire Church through her liturgy. Yet all spiritual guides agree that prayer must be practiced privately if it is to become deeply personal and interior.

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2559