

What is prayer?

Why do we pray?

We learn the types of prayer as youngsters

Prayer of petition and thanksgiving

Praise and worship

Prayer of contrition or sorrow

There is also Hindu prayer and Islamic prayer

Jewish prayer and more

I suppose even atheists have a type of prayer

But for us as Christians there is a specific approach to prayer

And at its heart

A specific person we pray to

That is really what the difference in all prayer is

We pray to a person

A person who is so powerful and transcendent

He knows every hair on your head

Even a sparrow does not fall from the sky without his knowledge

And a person who is so imminent

I knew you before I created you in the womb

He tells us to call him Father

Abba, papa

Nothing is beyond his providential care

Nothing is too small to bring to him in prayer

And people have been praying in one form or another since the beginning

We see a type of prayer in our reading from Genesis

Abraham praying over the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah

God has heard the outcry

He wishes to investigate to see if it is as dire as it seems

While the 2 go to investigate the Lord remains with Abraham

And Abraham begins to question him

Really to petition for the innocent

Will you sweep away the innocent with the guilty?

What if there are only 50 innocent people in those cities?

Six times he asks

Each time reducing the number

45, 40

What if only 10 can be found?

The Lord tells Abraham

For the sake of those ten I will not destroy it

We see the power of prayer

The power of persistence

The same thing we see in our Gospel

When Jesus teaches us the Our Father

He first teaches the words

What to say

Then he teaches us perseverance

How to pray

He teaches us the intimacy God desires

Our Father

We call out to the very source of all creation and life

But we do so with a term of endearment

Calling God our papa or daddy

**As baptized Christians, we have a special relationship and
familiarity with God**

Like a small child in the arms of their grandfather

With the total trust this implies

That is how intimate God desires us to be

Then Jesus teaches us the power of surrender

His will be done

Even when our vision is clouded

When we cannot see through the suffering and the pain

Of our own

Or often what is worse

That of a loved one

When we do not understand

We trust that even here

Our Father is present

He who was present when his own son was offered up for our sin

He who did not abandon him

Will not abandon us

His will and his presence is our peace

Christian prayer is not a prayer of manipulation

We do not force God into granting our desires

We cannot manipulate him according to our whims

He is not a genie that answers prayers based on our actions

He does not demand we say it a specific number of times

Or we put so many copies in the back of the church

Or we publish it in the newspaper

The power of prayer comes from conversion of heart

Our heart

And the peaceful surrender this brings about

Then there are a series of petitions to our Father

Where we present our needs

We ask for forgiveness for ourselves

And the grace to forgive as well

Trusting God with the truth about ourselves

In humility and truth

It is said that doctrine forms the mind

But prayer forms the soul

This is true for all faiths

Even for non-believers

How they see God

How they view the world

This is their doctrine

We have this as Catholics

We learn the structure and form of our sacraments

The doctrines of our Church

But as Christians we have a special prayer

We are the only ones to have a relationship with a Father

Not a master

Not a remote task master

Not one removed from our daily existence

But a God who is our Father

And one who knows our every need

One who desires to give us everything for our own good

One that wants us to return to him again and again....and again

Seeking him

Trusting him

Loving him