

- This coming Friday we will come to the end of our 30 Days of Prayer Campaign here at St. Ann, and I hope this has been a fruitful time for you – as I trust it’s been a fruitful time for our parish.
- For the past four weeks I’ve been speaking about prayer, with the hope of providing a little catechesis on this most important of human activities.
- Whereas sin robs us little by little of our humanity, making us less and less of whom God created us to be, it is our prayer (and the Sacraments, of course) that restore us.
- Truly, prayer is the most human of actions, for it unites us with our Creator and makes us more like Him. So, to fail to pray is to deny one’s humanity. To fail to pray is to be less than human.
- In the past three Sundays we’ve covered the first three aspects of prayer: adoration, contrition, and thanksgiving. While each of these aspects can be found in the Mass, each of these aspects is also a disposition that should be cultivated into our private prayer.
- As we *adore* God in prayer, we come to know Him and His holy will better, and we begin to share in the joyful and intimate union we’ll know fully only in Heaven. We also become more humble and thus better able to love God as we should.
- Adoration also helps us to know ourselves better, opening our eyes to our sinfulness and how much our sins truly offend God, leading us to *contrition*.
- Yet we must also be *grateful* when we pray – grateful for everything: our blessings and especially our sufferings – for all that God allows by His will is meant to make us holier.
- This brings us to the 4th aspect of prayer: *supplication*, which is the act of asking or begging for something earnestly and humbly. For many of us, supplication is what we think of when we think of prayer.
- And while I hope you’ve come to understand in these past few Sundays that prayer encompasses a whole lot more than just asking God for the things we think we need, supplication is still an important aspect of prayer.
- In fact, our Lord – being generous and merciful as we know He is – likes to give to us! But He likes to be asked, for He delights in our faith when we make supplication to Him.
- He says to us, “Ask and you shall receive” (cf. Mt 7:7), but our Lord desires that we ask with confidence in His goodness and abandonment to His divine will. He wants us to trust that He will give us what is best for ourselves and most glorious for Him.
- So as we come before Him in supplication, we must do so with a trusting faith, confident in His goodness, and yet completely abandoned to whatever His will might hold for us.
- Like the other aspects of prayer, the aspect of supplication is found throughout the Mass. If you listen carefully to the prayers of the Mass, you’ll find that we are constantly beseeching our Lord. In fact, every Mass is offered for a particular intention.
- We beg Him for mercy in the *Kyrie*; we ask for the gifts of virtue, protection and salvation in the opening prayer. We make known to God our special pleas in the General Intercessions.
- Then there’s the Offertory, which is a very special moment of supplication within the Mass. Here we bring to God gifts of bread and wine, symbols of our desire to return to Him some of the goodness He has given us, and then we ask Our Lord to change our humble gifts into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ!
- Keep in mind that the Offertory isn’t an intermission; it isn’t a “breather” from the Mass as we prepare for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. No, this should be a time of prayer, of readying yourself for the miracle that’s about to take place on the altar.

- So during this time, it is a good practice to think about your needs and intentions and bring them before the Lord in the silence of your heart. As we place the gifts of bread and wine on the altar, place your own needs and desires there, too!
- Again, this is why we don't usually have a hymn at this part of the Mass. Rather than singing, I want you to use this time for your personal prayer, for supplication.
- And then as we enter into the Canon of the Mass, we'll find if we listen carefully that this is one long supplication to Him. We pray for the pope, the bishops, the living and the dead, and all the faithful.
- We pray for God's protecting help, for peace, for deliverance from eternal damnation, and we pray to share in the fellowship of the saints. It's really quite remarkable.
- Of course the Lord's Prayer is also a prayer of supplication: for the coming of His Kingdom, for His will to be done, for our daily food, for forgiveness from sin, for protection from our temptations and deliverance from all evil.
- As we make supplication to God in our personal prayer, it's good to remember that it's really *Him* that we want most of all – not whatever finite thing we think we need.
- Prayer isn't about asking God for stuff. It's about encountering Him! It's about coming to know and love Him more deeply, binding ourselves more closely to Him.
- Every prayer answered and gift received from God must be for us a foretaste of Heaven, when we will have *all* because we are consumed with Him!
- At the same time, every prayer unanswered or gift denied is a chance for us to share in Christ's passion and death – a deprivation we can embrace in order to share more deeply in God's own life.
- Please understand that God has created each of us for union with Him, an eternal union of love in which we will gaze upon Him for all eternity, and He will gaze upon us!
- If we search our poor hearts thoroughly, what we'll eventually find is that our deepest longing is for Christ's gaze. We desire that beckoning gaze of His that made St. Matthew – a sinful tax collector – get up from his customs post and follow Him instantly.
- We desire that gaze of mercy and forgiveness that the woman caught in adultery saw as Jesus came to her rescue, a gaze that drove her accusers away in shame.
- We desire that gaze of love that Jesus gave to His Mother and His beloved apostle, John, when from the cross He gave them to one another in His stead.
- For the gaze of Christ transforms us, because it's in His gaze that we encounter our Lord and His love and mercy. It's what draws us to Him.
- Knowing that Heaven will be the Beatific Vision: an eternal gazing upon our Lord, our souls long for that, for a glimpse of His gaze here and now. And while we find this gaze perhaps most perceptibly in the Sacraments, we also find it in our prayer.
- Just as we reach out to God through our prayer in the hopes of binding ourselves to Him more closely, so too does He reach back and give Himself to us. While we may not always sense Him or feel Him in our prayer, we know by faith that He hears every word we utter, knows every movement of our heart, and delights in the longings of our soul.
- As we make supplication to Him in prayer, may we do so with a bold and hope-filled faith, one that knows and believes that He will give us everything that is necessary for our salvation, for through prayer He will give us His very self.