

7 Degrees of Prayer From St. Teresa

A Lord's Flock General Assembly Topic

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According to St. Teresa, prayer is an intimate sharing between God and us. We lift our heart, mind and spirit to Him. We are given the choice to choose God as our true friend to whom we can pour out our emotions and difficulties. Likewise, as a true friend, we share in Jesus' sufferings. God assures us: "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9). Thus, we must establish a good relationship with God and our prayer must come from a humble and grateful heart.

1. Principles of Prayer

In everything we do, let us begin and end with a prayer. Let us consult the Holy Spirit for guidance to do the right things and to follow God's word.

1.1. Prayer is an ESSENTIAL in life. It is like a breath. St. Alphonsus Liguori said, if we stop praying, we shall go to hell.

1.2. Prayer is PRESENCE. We must recognize the holy presence of God and be grateful for He gave His only begotten Son, not to condemn the world, but to save the world (John 3:16).

1.3. Prayer is LOVE. Prayer without love is not a prayer.

2. **Meditative Prayer.** Focuses on the word of God in silence and in deep communion with God.

3. **Prayer of the Heart.** "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me" (Is. 29:13).

4. **Contemplative Prayer:** "Unites all things under Christ" (Eph.1:10).

5. There are Seven (7) Degrees of Prayer:

5.1. ASCETICAL. It is a simple prayer initiated by man to God and it is assisted by grace.

5.1.1 First degree: Vocal Prayer. It is a memorized and recited prayer.

5.1.2 Second degree: Mental Prayer. We understand what we are reciting.

5.1.3 Third degree: Affective Prayer. We lift our emotions to God. We truly feel what Jesus feels.

5.1.4 Fourth degree: Prayer of the Simple. There is no need for words; it is just a simple understanding of being in God's presence.

5.2 MYSTICAL. After developing the first four (4) degrees of prayer, we deepen our belief in the living God. We need only silence and a few words to experience and feel His presence.

5.2.1 Fifth degree: Infused Contemplation. Experiences the loving and gentle presence of God. It is short in duration, but our soul is possessed by God.

5.2.2 Sixth degree: Prayer of the Quiet. This is a deeper sense of God's presence; the soul is filled with joy, peace, sweetness in spite of afflictions.

5.2.3 Seventh degree: Prayer of Union. The mind, heart, imagination and memories are overwhelmed by God's presence in the soul.

Conclusion:

When we want to grow in prayer, we must choose God to be our friend; being a friend, we must commit to Him our time and our whole self. To develop and nourish our spiritual life, we must practice daily meditative prayer which is our passage to eternal life. Henceforth, before we start our daily endeavors, we should start with prayer. Our work is not our work but God's work; thus, we need to be united with Him.

Reflection:

1. Do you choose God to be your best friend? If you do, do you desire to share Jesus' sufferings?
3. How do you pray? Aside from ascetical prayer, have you experienced mystical prayer? How will you develop your prayer life to go deeper?

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