

Finding the Joy in Daily Prayer



Remember how it feels to be in love? Knowing that someone is thinking of you often, eager for the next time you will meet, anxious to be with you.

This is how God feels about us. He loves us unconditionally, wants to be with us, and patiently waits for our attention. "...You are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you ... I will never forget you. See, upon the palms of my hands I have written your name." (Isaiah 43:4, 49:15-16)

But in the hectic pace of daily life, the thought of spending time with God can seem like yet another chore instead of a joy. But when you see prayer as being with the one who loves you most, you can learn how to revel in his very personal love. The key is to find the joy in daily prayer.

"I will come to you in the silence."

Mother Teresa said, "Souls of prayer are souls of deep silence ... we cannot find (God) in noise, in excitement." Unfortunately, few of us have quiet lives, but it is possible to create quiet moments. The first step is to find the right place.

If your home allows, try to create a prayer spot. This can be



a small corner in a larger room where you put an altar, a comfortable chair, or even a big pillow — whatever will make you comfortable while you are there. Surround it with statues or holy

pictures — anything that will help you focus on God while you pray.

Tip: In a pinch, even a dry bathtub can act as a prayer spot. Close the bathroom door, throw a few pillows in the tub, light a candle, and climb in.

When can you give him your full attention?

Finding the right time to pray may not be as tough as you think. **The trick is to find time when you can give God your whole attention.** Find a time when you won't feel rushed or hurried.

Can you get up 15 minutes earlier, or postpone going to bed by a few minutes each day? What about praying with your morning cup of coffee? Think about pausing before lunch or after dinner to read a Bible passage or say a prayer.

When you do it every day at the same time it becomes a habit. It's a time you can schedule and protect from the rest of the day's activities.

But don't forget, a quick heartfelt prayer anytime of the day is an opportunity to feel God's peace. Like a brief phone call during the day, it lets God know you're thinking of him and helps you feel his love.

Finding the right way to pray.

Personal prayer is as individual as a fingerprint, much like a conversation with a friend. But formula prayers may be helpful for starting or breaking into spontaneous prayer. You can choose from hundreds of prayers written by great spiritual masters to match your mood and spiritual intent: praise, thanksgiving, forgiveness, petition, and intercession.

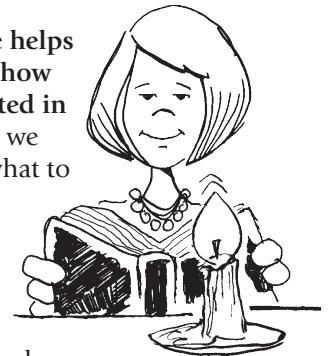
To get ideas, try looking in prayer books such as *The Catholic Prayer Book*

(Servant Publications, 1143 Highland Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48108, 734-677-6490) or *The Essential Catholic Prayer Book* (Liguori Publications, One Liguori Drive, Liguori, MO 63057, 636-464-2500, www.catholicbooksonline.com).

Getting to know him better.

Like any loving relationship, it takes effort to get to know your beloved. The most reliable way to do this is to combine Scripture with personal prayer.

Scripture helps us to learn how God has acted in the past, so we can know what to expect from him in the future. It's a testament to



how often he has answered prayer, granted favors, provided guidance, and demonstrated unconditional love.

Exploring Scripture can be as simple as randomly selecting a different passage each day and meditating on its meaning for you. Or you can choose a good study Bible with built-in study guides that give context and background. Ask your priest for help in choosing one that's right for you.

The point is to find different ways to continually seek God. He is always listening and always waiting. "*I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.*" (Jeremiah 31:3) Prayer is a great way of letting him know you've heard his call.