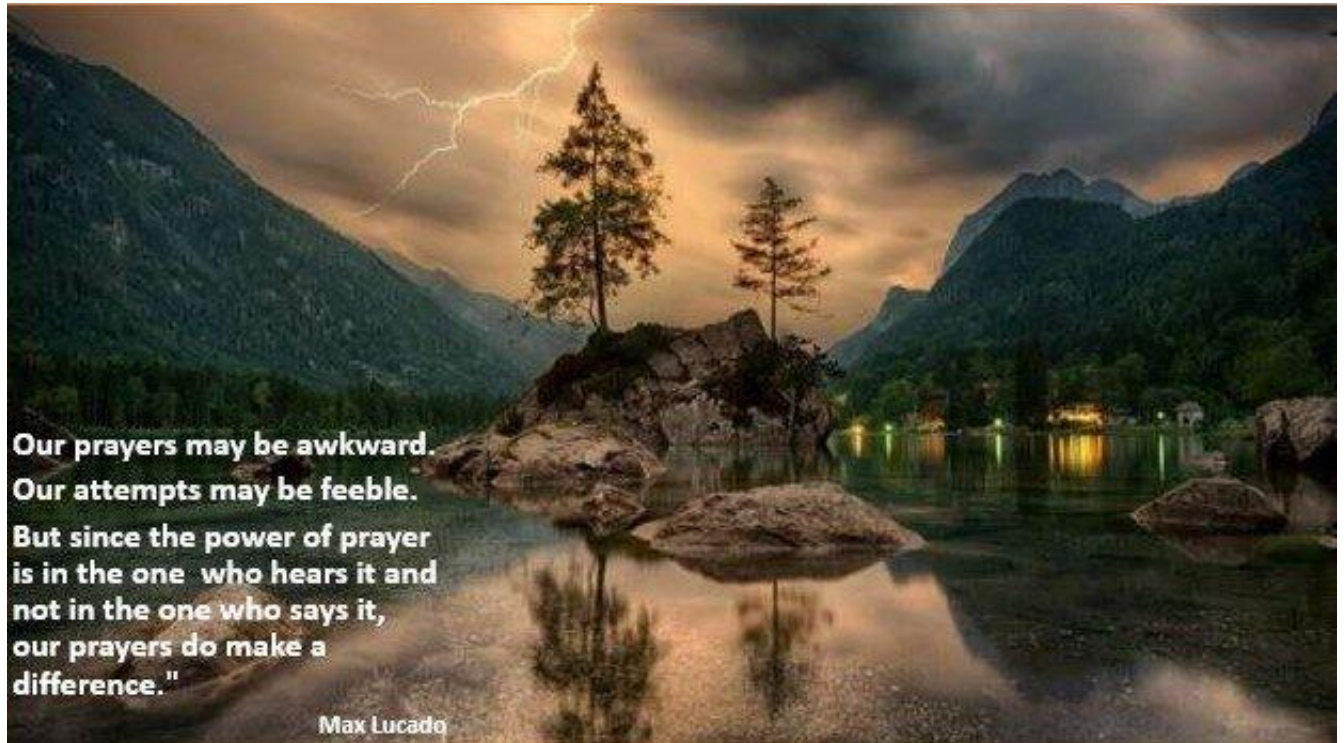


How to pray



What is Prayer?

Prayer is about an individual's relationship with God. When using the word "prayer", it often conjures up images or memories of formulaic recitations within a formal religious service setting. While this is one type of prayer, it is not the only one and it isn't the whole story!

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. — Luke 11:9-10

What is the right way to pray?

Prayer makes us ready to experience the warm embrace of God's love. Sometimes it is easy, and at other times, it is hard and challenging.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. — Philippians 4:6

There are many web-based resources about prayer but the [Why Do We Pray](#) thought provoking article by Fr William Barry SJ articulates the sometimes contradictory relationship that many of us have with prayer and our relationship with God.

In his letter to the Ephesians, St Paul encouraged the people to:

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” — Ephesians 5:19-20

That is certainly one way of communal prayer but by no means is it the only way. There is no right or wrong way to pray.

- You can pray privately or in the presence of others.
- Some find it useful to follow a time structure. For example some may use the Prayers of the Church, Liturgy of the Hours or the Rosary to do this.
- Some find time to pray during exercise or when doing a sole activity.
- Some find it useful to join others in prayer. As part of the parish community, we do this during Mass on Sundays but in these unusual times, prayer groups have occurred through Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp and by virtual participation in live stream services or Masses.

So what is needed?

Time. Time allows us to nourish our souls with prayer. Time to pray as part of a regular routine is up to each individual – it could be as you wake up, as you go to sleep, as you go for a walk or as you sit – prayer can happen at any point in the day and you can pray for as long or as little as you feel is sufficient to feed your spiritual life.

Is there a “correct” position to adopt when praying?

There isn't a “correct” position. When participating with others in formal prayer or Mass liturgies, there are likely to be expected or traditional positions (ie kneeling, standing).

It is more important to “be” in a comfortable space that allows for focus – and we all do this in different ways. Some ideas include (but are not limited to):

- Some create a quiet space in their environment
- Some create a quiet space in their minds
- Some create a visual focus – a candle, a cross
- Some use a book, beads or other aides to prayer
- Some engage in prayerful mediation
- Some maintain a prayer journal
- Some use music and sing their prayers
- Some use action – faith in action

What should prayers be about?

Again, there is no right or wrong answer to this. It is very easy to become distracted and concentrating on prayer can be a challenge. Prayer can be about any topic, experience, person etc...

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” Colossians 4:2

Some broad groupings that are likely to be relevant to most people are:

- Prayers of Praise – the Psalms are a good source of these if you are stuck!
- Prayers of Thanksgiving – family, friends, community, education, freedom etc...
- Prayers of Petition – when people have asked for prayers, individual personal petitions etc
- Prayers about the Kingdom of God – the Global Church, Church and world leaders, international and local missionary works, evangelisation, schools, social injustice, the persecuted and those in any kind of need etc
- Prayers for the people in your life – partners, children, parents, siblings, family, friends, colleagues, neighbours, our local communities etc...

Here are some ideas of things to pray for during this time and some Bible references you might find helpful:

- Give thanks to God for his unending love for us even in hard circumstances (Psalm 63:3)
- Pray for our government and our leaders around the world (1 Timothy 2:1-2)
- Give thanks for NHS medical and support staff (James 1:17)
- Pray for key workers in healthcare, social care, delivering food, working in supermarkets, government and emergency services.
- Pray for those who are unwell at the moment and people who are isolated and lonely (James 5:13)
- Pray for people who are worried for themselves or loved ones and for those who are bereaved (1 Peter 5:7)
- Pray for ourselves to trust the Lord and rely on him during this time and for fellowship among the church even when we are apart (Colossians 3:16)
- Pray for others around the world in affliction and in need (Romans 12:12-13)