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TOTAL CATECHESIS

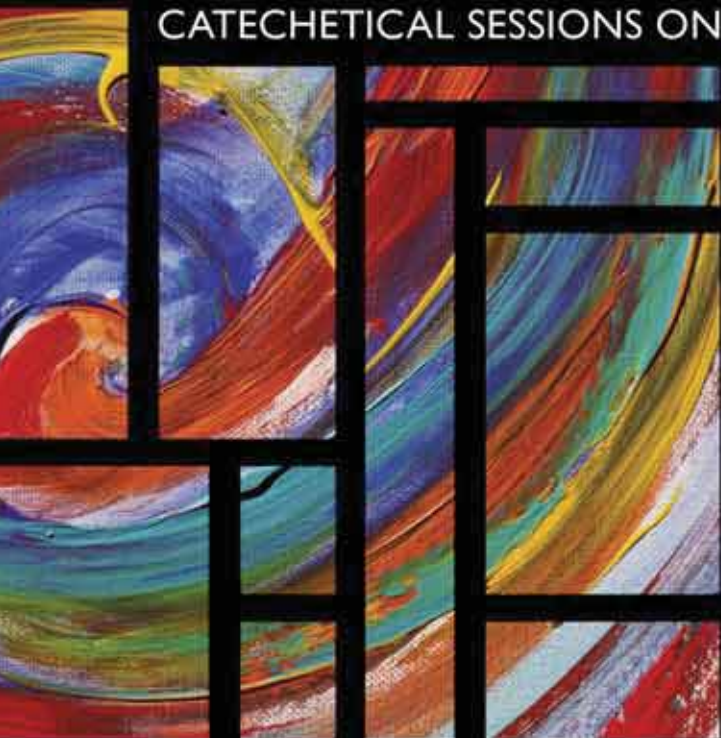
Christian Morality

Christian Prayer

the Creed

Liturgy and the Sacraments

CATECHETICAL SESSIONS ON



Laurie Delgatto and Mary Shrader

TOTAL CATECHESIS

CATECHETICAL SESSIONS ON

Christian Prayer

Pray It! Study It! Live It!® resources offer a holistic approach to learning, living, and passing on the Catholic faith.

The Total Faith™ Initiative

Total Catechesis

Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality

Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer

Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments

Catechetical Sessions on the Creed

Total Youth Ministry

Ministry Resources for Community Life

Ministry Resources for Evangelization

Ministry Resources for Justice and Service

Ministry Resources for Pastoral Care

Ministry Resources for Prayer and Worship

Ministry Resources for Youth Leadership Development

Total Faith™ Initiative Coordinator's Manual

The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth

The Catholic Youth Bible™

TOTAL CATECHESIS

CATECHETICAL SESSIONS ON

Christian Prayer

Laurie Delgatto and Mary Shrader

Laurie Delgatto, general editor



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For Ed Abel, who during my teenage years helped to instill in me a deep love for liturgy.

—Laurie Delgatto

For my parents, who taught me the first prayer that I remember: “My Guardian Angel.” For the Scott family—Lauri, Gary, Patrick, Justin, and Ethan—who remind me that every moment of every day is a prayer.

—Mary Shrader

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Introduction

The Total Faith™ Initiative: An Overview

In 1997 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) published its blueprint for youth ministry in the twenty-first century. That document, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, highlights three goals for ministry with adolescents:

- to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today
- to draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community
- to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person

In *Renewing the Vision*, the bishops describe a rich and challenging vision for Catholic youth ministry. Catechesis is at the heart of that vision; throughout the document the bishops urge the Church to guide young people toward a life of fullness in Jesus Christ, and to give them the tools that will enable them to live out that fullness as Catholic Christians. To put it simply, the bishops call young people to embrace their faith as they study it, pray it, and live it. The bishops also challenge the faith community to surround young people with love, care, and attention and to include youth throughout the life of the parish.

By addressing each of the eight components for comprehensive youth ministry as articulated in *Renewing the Vision*, the TOTAL FAITH Initiative helps communities implement that vision. It addresses those elements in a way that pays attention to the intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral needs of young people. In this renewed vision, catechesis is one component of youth ministry; it is not distinct from it.

The initiative includes a three-part series that brings to the field of youth ministry the ancient yet timeless truths of the Catholic faith. The Scriptures and Tradition are set within a framework that any parish can apply in its everyday ministry with youth. From the initial proclamation of the Good News, through evangelization and outreach to effective catechesis,

The Pillars of the Catechism and Total Catechesis

Here is how the four parts, or pillars, of the *Catechism* and the Total Catechesis manuals are related:

- The first pillar of the *Catechism*, based on the Apostles' Creed, is covered in *Catechetical Sessions on the Creed*.
- The second pillar of the *Catechism*, based on the seven sacraments, is covered in *Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments*.
- The third pillar of the *Catechism*, based on the Ten Commandments, is covered in *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality*.
- The fourth pillar of the *Catechism*, based on the Lord's Prayer, is covered in *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer*.

In addition, the core text of the Total Catechesis series, *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth (CFH)*, follows the same structure. The Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, has found the *CFH* to be in conformity with the *Catechism*.

the TOTAL FAITH Initiative seeks to root youth in and connect them to the unchanging truths of their Catholic faith—while challenging them to apply the words of the Gospel and the teachings of Tradition to their daily lives.

The TOTAL FAITH Initiative includes these components:

- *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth (CFH)* and the first edition of *The Catholic Youth Bible (CYB)* serve as the centerpieces of this initiative. Each book is an integrated resource for youth who are participating in the learning elements of the TOTAL FAITH Initiative.
- The **Total Youth Ministry** resource manuals address six of the components of youth ministry that are outlined in *Renewing the Vision*. The advocacy component, which is aimed primarily at the adult Church, is woven throughout the ministry resource manuals and is addressed specifically in the *TOTAL FAITH Initiative Coordinator's Manual*.
- The four catechetical manuals that comprise the **Total Catechesis** series are grounded in the content of the *CFH* and address the four pillars of the Catholic faith as outlined in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Total Catechesis: An Overview

Using tested strategies, catechists lead the participants through creative learning experiences and then invite them to reflect on those experiences. Prayer, the Scriptures, and other elements of Christian faith are carefully integrated into every manual in the series. These four manuals correspond to the four sections of the *CFH*:

- *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Morality*
- *Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer*
- *Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments*
- *Catechetical Sessions on the Creed*

The manuals in the Total Catechesis series are Pray It! Study It! Live It!™ resources. The STUDY IT! component comprises a 45- to 60-minute core session focusing on the chapters found in the *CFH*. Optional activities, called session extensions, allow you to extend the core session to 90 minutes or longer. The PRAY IT! component offers a 10- to 15-minute prayer service on the session theme, and the LIVE IT! component suggests ways to connect the session topic to parish, community, and family life.

The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth

The *CFH* is a teen's guide to the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church. This book is an integrated text for youth who are participating in the learning elements of Total Catechesis. All the sessions in the Total Catechesis manuals are linked to this handbook. Leaders in youth ministry will also find it to be a helpful resource and guide for sharing and living the faith.

The Catholic Youth Bible

The *CYB* is designed for searchers and committed Christian youth to read and to apply the Scriptures to their life. The first edition of the *CYB* is linked to sessions throughout the Total Catechesis manuals and, therefore, is considered an important student resource.

An Added Feature: CD-ROMs

Each manual is accompanied by a CD-ROM containing the full content of its activities and is in read-only, non-print format. Handouts are provided in both color and black-and-white versions, and the latter can be customized for the particular needs of your group. Each CD-ROM also provides video clips, hyperlinks to suggested Web sites, and a selection from *A Quiet Place Apart*, a series of guided meditations from Saint Mary's Press.

Catechetical Sessions on Christian Prayer: An Overview

The earliest followers of Jesus knew the power of prayer. In a letter to the Ephesians, Paul said, “Pray in the Spirit at all times” (Eph. 6:18). To the Thessalonians, Paul wrote, “Pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess. 5:17–18). The material in this manual invites young people to see prayer as communication in a relationship of love. It encourages them to take the Scripture message to heart and to pray always as they grow in their relationship with God.

The *Catechism* offers three fundamental facts of faith about prayer:

- “*It is always possible to pray*” (no. 2743).
- “*Prayer is a vital necessity*” (no. 2744).
- “*Prayer and Christian life are inseparable*” (no. 2745).

From the Scriptures and Tradition, we come to know prayer as our response to God's invitation of covenant and communion. It is both a gift of grace and a determined effort on our part. Prayer involves our whole being—mind, body, and soul.

By teaching young people to pray, you can open for them a way to communicate on a deeply personal level with God, who is the source of all holiness. By inviting them to explore different forms of personal prayer, you will encourage them to expand their image of God and their expectations of prayer. You will also call them to take greater responsibility for their own spiritual growth. By challenging them to look at communal prayer, you will

remind them that their role in building God's Reign and as a part of the Body of Christ is important, unique, and valued. This manual can help you give young people the tools to pray all ways, and always, and enable them to build their relationship with God on a solid foundation.

Session Outcomes

Chapter 1: "Introduction to Prayer"

- The learner will establish prayer as an essential way of building a closer relationship with God.
- The learner will understand prayer as a responsive relationship with God.
- The learner will explore prayer as covenant, communion, and gift.
- The learner will understand that everyone is called to prayer.

Chapter 2: "Models of Prayer"

- The learner will understand the role of prayer in God's call to covenant.
- The learner will explore the notion of trust in God and reflect on the role of trust in her or his own prayer journey.
- The learner will share how he or she hears and experiences the call to prayer in his or her life.

Chapter 3: "Forms of Prayer"

- The learner will be introduced to the Church's five traditional forms of prayer: blessing and adoration, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise.
- The learner will gain an appreciation for how different forms of prayer connect to different times and situations in her or his life.

Chapter 4: "Personal Prayer"

- The learner will be encouraged to develop a deeper appreciation for personal prayer as a way to enrich his or her relationship with God.
- The learner will develop a knowledge of and appreciation for vocal, meditative, and contemplative prayer forms.

Chapter 5: "Challenges of Prayer"

- The learner will be presented with the difficulties involved in praying and encouraged to discuss ways of overcoming those difficulties.
- The learner will examine and discuss the various misperceptions about prayer.
- The learner will explore the kind of effort needed to develop a solid prayer life.

Chapter 6: “Praying with the Scriptures”

- The learner will establish connections between reading and praying the Scriptures.
- The learner will identify key scriptural texts that are significant to his or her continual faith development.
- The learner will develop an understanding of the Scriptures as a useful tool in deepening her or his prayer life.

Chapter 7: “Praying Together: An Intergenerational Session”

- The learner will expand her or his knowledge of communal prayer expression.
- The learner will develop the skills necessary to transform daily experiences into prayerful and prayer-filled moments.
- The learner will experience communal prayer.

Chapter 8: “Catholic Prayers and Devotions”

- The learner will be reminded of (and in some cases introduced to) the traditional prayers and devotions that are part of the Catholic heritage.
- The learner will gain an understanding of the value of familiar ritual and repetitive prayers and their association with Catholic Tradition.
- The learner will be offered the opportunity to discover the ways that traditional prayers are a part of his or her family history.

Chapter 9: “The Lord’s Prayer: God’s Glory”

- The learner will identify the reasons we pray the Lord’s Prayer and its potential to change us.
- The learner will understand the opening address as a means to place themselves in the presence of God and in the right frame of mind.
- The learner will explore the first three petitions, which address the glory of the Father, the sanctification of his name, the coming of his Kingdom, and the fulfillment of his will.

Chapter 10: “The Lord’s Prayer: Human Need”

- The learner will recognize the final four petitions of the Lord’s Prayer as Jesus’ answer to the desires of the Christian heart.
- The learner will understand the need to boldly ask for nourishment, healing of sins, and the victorious struggle of good over evil.
- The learner will acknowledge a dependence on God for all essential things needed to sustain life.

How to Use This Manual

You may present the material in this manual in its entirety, or you may select sessions and activities that you think will be best for the young people with whom you work. The sessions and activities are not sequential, so you may organize them in the way that is most appropriate for your situation.

Each session begins with a brief overview, a list of expected outcomes, and a list of recommended background reading that includes corresponding *CFH* pages, related *Catechism* paragraphs, scriptural connections, and *CYB* article connections. All articles are excerpted from the first edition of the *CYB*. The next element is a suggested schedule, which is to be used as a starting point and modified according to your circumstances. A checklist of the preparation required, including all materials needed, is the next part of the presentation of every session. A complete description of the session procedure is then provided, including a core activity, session extensions, prayer experiences, and options and actions. The procedure descriptions are formatted as follows.

STUDY IT! A Core Session and Session Extensions

Each session can be expanded and customized to meet your schedule and the needs of your group. All the sessions begin with a core activity that should be used before any other activity in the session plan. Core sessions are structured for a 40- to 45-minute time frame and correspond to the content in the *CFH*. You may expand the sessions by using additional activities known as session extensions. These strategies vary in length from 10 to 60 minutes. Session extensions are intended for further development and study of the session theme and topics.

All the learning strategies in this manual are based on the praxis method of experience, analysis, and reflection, in dialogue with the Scriptures and Tradition, leading to synthesis of new learnings and insights. Variations are often suggested, including ideas for gender-specific groups and for larger or smaller groups.

Some manuals include sidebars that suggest specific *CFH* connections, and all manuals incorporate sidebars that suggest specific musical selections from *Spirit & Song* (Portland, OR: OCP Publications, 1999). The lists in those sidebars are not exhaustive; music resources are available from a variety of music publishers, and a Bible concordance will provide additional citations if you want to add a more substantial scriptural component to a session. *The Saint Mary's Press Essential Bible Concordance* offers a simple, user-friendly index to key words in the Bible. Some of the sessions provide a list of media resources—such as print, video, and Internet—for more exploration. Family approaches provide simple, follow-up suggestions for family learning, enrichment, celebration, prayer, and service. In addition, all

the activities can be enhanced by the creativity and expertise of the adult leader.

Because catechesis requires personal reflection, a Journal Activities sidebar with questions and suggestions for deeper analysis and reflection is provided in most sessions. Although those questions and suggestions may be used for oral discussion, it is recommended that they be employed to prompt a written exercise. An ongoing journal, reflection papers, or letters to themselves or God can help the participants process the material and activities, making connections to their own lives.

PRAY IT! Prayer Experiences

Each session includes opportunities and suggestions for prayer focused on the session's theme. Prayer forms include guided meditation, shared prayer, music, silence, prayers by young people, reflective reading, and experiences created by the participants. The PRAY IT! component gives the young people an opportunity to bring their insights and concerns to God in prayer. The time frame for prayer experiences varies from 5 to 20 minutes.

LIVE IT! Options and Actions

This manual can be a springboard for connections with other youth ministry experiences. Therefore all its sessions include additional strategies to support the learning process. Those activities provide good follow-up for the STUDY IT! core activities, and allow for age-appropriate assimilation of the material. They might include off-site events, intergenerational ideas, parish involvement, prayer and liturgical celebrations, service options, and social action.

Session Talk Points

To encourage and support the growth of family faith, each session offers a “take home” handout that presents talk points, to encourage ongoing conversation about the session's topics. The handout includes a summary of the session content, which is taken directly from the corresponding chapter of the *CFH*. Participants can also use the handout with small community groups, with peer groups, and for personal reflection. With this material available on a CD-ROM, you can customize it and choose a means of delivery that works best for your situation.

Handouts and Resources

All the necessary handouts and resources for a session are found at the end of that session in the manual. They are also found on the accompanying CD-ROM, in both color and black-and-white versions. The black-and-white materials may be customized to suit your particular needs.

Teaching This Course

Preparing Yourself

Read each session or activity before you facilitate it; then use it creatively to meet the needs of the young people in your group. Knowing your audience will help you determine which strategies will work best for it. Some of the activities require preparation. Allow yourself adequate time to get ready.

All the sessions include presentations of key concepts and teachings. The session plans offer guidelines for these talks. Preparing for those presentations is vital to the success of each session. You will want to review relevant content in the *CFH* and the *Catechism*. Spend time putting these presentations together so that they are clear and hold the attention of the participants.

Standard Materials

To save time, consider gathering frequently used materials in bins and storing those bins in a place that is accessible to all staff and volunteer leaders. Here are some recommendations for organizing the bins.

Supply Bin

The following items appear frequently in the materials checklists:

- *The Catholic Youth Bible*, at least one for every two participants
- *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*, at least one for every two participants
- masking tape
- cellophane tape
- washable and permanent markers (thick-line and thin-line)
- pens or pencils
- self-stick notes
- scissors
- newsprint
- blank paper, scrap paper, and notebook paper
- journals, one for each participant
- index cards
- baskets
- candles and matches
- items to create a prayer space (for example, a colored cloth, a cross, a bowl for water, and a vase for flowers)

Music Bin

Young people often find profound meaning in the music and lyrics of songs, both past and present. Also, the right music can set the appropriate mood for a prayer or an activity. Begin with a small collection of tapes or

CDs in a music bin, and add to it over time. You might ask the young people to put some of their favorite music in the bin. The bin might include the following styles of music:

- *Prayerful, reflective instrumental music*, such as the kind that is available in the adult alternative section of music stores. Labels that specialize in this type of music include Windham Hill and Narada.
- *Popular songs with powerful messages*. If you are not well versed in popular music, ask the young people to offer suggestions.
- *The music of contemporary Catholic artists*. Many young people are familiar with the work of Catholic musicians such as Steve Angrisano, Sarah Hart, David W. Kauffman, Michael Mahler, Jesse Manibusan, and Danielle Rose.

Also consider including songbooks and hymnals. Many of the musical selections suggested in Total Catechesis are taken from the *Spirit & Song* hymnal, published by Oregon Catholic Press (OCP). If you wish to order copies of this hymnal, please contact OCP directly at www.ocp.org or by calling 800-548-8749. Including copies of your parish's chosen hymnal is a suitable option as well. You might also check with your liturgy or music director for recordings of parish hymns.

Some Closing Thoughts

As a catechist you have taken on an exciting and profoundly important task. We hope you find this material helpful as you invite young people into a deeper relationship with the marvelous community of faith we know as the Catholic Church. Please be assured of our continual prayers for you and the young people you serve.

Your Comments or Suggestions

Saint Mary's Press wants to know your reactions to the materials in the Total Catechesis series. We are open to all kinds of suggestions, including these:

- an alternative way to conduct an activity
- an audiovisual or other media resource that worked well with this material
- a book or an article you found helpful
- an original activity or process
- a prayer experience or service
- a helpful preparation for other leaders
- an observation about the themes or content of this material

If you have a comment or suggestion, please write to us at 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1318; call us at our toll-free number, 800-533-8095; or e-mail us at smp@smp.org. Your ideas will help improve future editions of Total Catechesis.

1

AT A GLANCE

Introduction to Prayer

Study It

Core Session

- ◆ Praying All Ways
(40 minutes)

Session Extensions

- ◆ Personal Prayer Survey
(25 minutes)
- ◆ How Do We Pray?
(15 minutes)
- ◆ Telling Our Stories of Prayer
(30 minutes)

Pray It

- ◆ Walk with Me, Lord
(10 minutes)

Live It

- ◆ Youth prayer book
- ◆ Prayer-a-thon
- ◆ Prayer in the Bible
- ◆ Prayer in the news

Overview

Most people define prayer simply as talking to God. To pray is to speak to the Almighty, to let God know who we are, what we think, how we feel, or what we need. Prayer also invites us to sit with and listen to what God has to say to us. The participants in this session may have given little thought to defining prayer or understanding how it works in their life. Prayer is just something they do, forget to do, or choose not to do. This session invites the participants to look at prayer more carefully and to expand their definition of it.

Outcomes

- ◆ The learner will establish prayer as an essential way of building a closer relationship with God.
- ◆ The learner will understand prayer as a responsive relationship with God.
- ◆ The learner will explore prayer as covenant, communion, and gift.
- ◆ The learner will understand that everyone is called to prayer.

Background Reading

- ◆ This session covers pages 304–307 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*.
- ◆ For further exploration, check out paragraph numbers 2559–2566 and 2590–2591 of the *Catechism*.
- ◆ Scriptural connections: Matt. 21:18–22 (Whatever you ask for in prayer, you will receive.), Eph. 6:18 (Pray in the Spirit at all times.), Phil. 4:6 (Do not worry, the Lord is near.), James 5:15–16 (Pray for one another.)
- ◆ *Catholic Youth Bible* article connections: “I Believe; Help My Unbelief!” (Mark 9:14–29), “Unanswered Prayer” (Mark 11:24), “Can You Hear Me, Lord?” (Luke 18:1–8)



Core Session

Praying All Ways (40 minutes)

Preparation

- Gather the following items:
 - copies of handout 1, “Introduction to Prayer,” one for each participant
 - newsprint
 - markers
 - masking tape
 - one copy of resource 1, “Prayer Questions,” cut apart as scored
 - blank index cards, one for each participant
 - pens or pencils
 - a variety of craft items
 - small prizes (optional)
- Review the summary points in steps 4 and 8 of this session and the relevant material on pages 304–307 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth (CFH)*. Be prepared to share the information with the young people.

1. Divide the participants into small groups. Announce that each group is to prepare an advertisement that encourages people to communicate with God and turn to prayer. Each presentation should not be longer than 1 minute. The advertisement can be created in one of the following forms:

- a T-shirt, designed on newsprint
- a billboard ad, presented in still-life poses
- a commercial for television or radio
- a Web site, with participants acting as icons, computer screen, pop-up ads, and pages

Allow about 10 minutes for the participants to prepare their advertisements.

2. Invite each group to present its ad to the large group. Post the ads on the wall as each group makes its presentation. You may want to award prizes for the most creative ad, most convincing ad, and so on.

3. Discuss with the participants the following questions:

- Given what was presented, what conclusions can you draw about the concept of prayer?
- If you could choose only a few words to describe prayer, what would they be?

TryThis

- ◆ Videotape the presentations so that the groups can play them back and watch themselves. The video could be used as a beginning activity for a younger group. For example, the senior high participants could create advertisements for a junior high discussion on prayer. This video would also be of great interest to parents. If parents of teens are gathered for any reason, it would be a terrific meeting opener.
- ◆ If your time is limited and you need a brief activity, consider conducting an activity using these sentence starters: “Prayer is . . .” and “Prayer is not . . .”

VARIATION:

Gender Groups

Have each gender group create an ad that would make prayer highly appealing to people of that gender. Discuss the differences between masculine and feminine approaches to prayer.

4. Conduct a presentation on the definition of prayer, using key phrases from the preceding step and the bullet points below, which are taken from pages 305–307 of the *CFH*:

- Prayer can become alive and vital when you experience it as a deep, personal relationship with God.
- A classic definition of prayer says, “Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God” (*CCC*, number 2590). In other words, in addition to words, prayer involves your mind and heart.
- Sometimes when you pray, you might experience insight, like a bright lightbulb going off in your head. More often when you raise your mind to God in prayer, your intellect is shaped so gradually and gently that you only notice the change over time.
- When you allow yourself to open your heart in friendship to God, you can hear God’s voice within saying, “I love you!” When this happens you experience the power of prayer to heal you and to help you become more loving in all your relationships.
- Everyone is called to prayer. This is because the desire for God is built into us; it is a response to God who first and tirelessly calls us to encounter him through prayer.
- In prayer God reveals himself to you, and you learn about yourself. This reciprocal call between God and humankind has been going on throughout the whole of salvation history.
- Prayer is a central way that God has revealed himself to humankind and shown us who we are.

5. Divide the participants into small groups of four to six people. Distribute to each group one of the questions from resource 1. In addition, distribute a blank index card and a pen or pencil to each participant. Instruct one member of each small group to read the question aloud. Ask the group members to individually write their responses on their index cards. Allow a few minutes for reflection and writing.

6. Invite the participants to share their responses with their small group and then to discuss the following questions:

- What are the similarities in the responses?
- What are the differences in the responses?
- Do you have a question for someone else in your group regarding his or her response?

7. Instruct each small group to write a sentence or two that combines all the participants’ thoughts. Invite each group to share its response with the large group.

8. Continue the presentation portion of the session by using key phrases from steps 6 and 7 and the bullet points below, which are taken from page 306 of the *CFH*:

- According to the Scriptures, it is the heart that prays.
- Biblically speaking, the heart is your hidden center, the place of decision and truth where, as a person made in God's image, you speak to God, live in God's presence, and hear God speak to you. The heart is where your relationship with God unfolds.
- You were made to receive a special kind of signal, a communication with God in Christ that springs from the Holy Spirit. Prayer is this living relationship, this communion.
- The Catholic Church teaches that only when we approach God in prayer with humility are we able to receive the gift of this vital and personal relationship.
- Humility means that we are honest about who we are, that we acknowledge our weaknesses and sins as well as our gifts.

9. Conclude by asking the participants to brainstorm questions they have about prayer or something they would like to explore in future gatherings. Record their answers on newsprint. Let them know that you will consider their questions in the planning, preparation, and presentation of future sessions. Also remind them that the content of this session is drawn from the first half of chapter 31 of the *CFH*. Encourage them to read and review it in the next few days.

Session Extensions

Personal Prayer Survey (25 minutes)

Preparation

- Gather the following items:
 - paper in four different colors
 - an opaque bucket
 - six paper grocery bags
 - one copy of resource 2, "Prayer Survey," cut apart as scored
- Cut papers of four different colors into pieces that are approximately 2 inches by 3 inches. For purposes of illustration, the colors designated here are green, yellow, blue, and pink. You will need five pieces of each color for each participant. Place these papers in a bucket.
- Attach each question from resource 2 to a separate grocery bag.

TryThis

Distribute an index card to each participant and invite individual reflection on questions about prayer or topics for further exploration. Collect the cards at the end of the activity.

TryThis

Circulate all the question bags after explaining the activity but before initiating any discussion. As the first person finishes a bag, hand him or her the next bag.

1. Introduce the activity by explaining that you would like to conduct a short survey to help the participants reflect on their own prayer life and what they think about prayer. Then explain the procedure in the following way:

- Hold up the paper grocery bag with the first question on it and read the question. Then read the possible responses, indicating their respective color codes. Also show the participants the bucket with the colored pieces of paper inside it.
- Tell the young people that you will pass around the question bag and the bucket. They are to reach in the bucket and choose a piece of paper in the color that indicates their response to the question. With their hand still in the bucket, they are to wad up the piece of paper. Then, trying to conceal its color from others, they are to put the paper ball in the question bag. You may want to demonstrate the procedure.

2. Read the first question and its possible responses again and then pass around the question bag and the bucket. When the bag gets back to you, empty the contents, count the number of balls for each response, and write the appropriate number beside each response on the bag. Announce the results and use the following questions for discussion. Repeat this procedure for all six questions.

- What surprised you?
- What did not come as a surprise?
- [For use with questions that have “other” as a possible answer.] What do you think the person who chose “other” had in mind?

(This activity is adapted from Judith Dunlap with Carleen Suttman, *Praying All Ways*, pp. 19–20.)

How Do We Pray? (15 minutes)

Preparation

- Write the word *prayer* on small pieces of paper. Fold the papers so that the word is hidden. You will need one for each participant.

1. Distribute one piece of folded paper to each participant. Ask the young people to look at the word written on their slip of paper but not to let anyone else see it.

2. Instruct the group to stand in a circle large enough so they have some room around them to move, yet can still see one another. Tell the participants that when you give a signal, they are to strike a pose to describe the word or phrase on their paper. They are to hold the pose in “freeze frame” style until you tell them to sit down. Do not tell the participants that they all have the same word on their paper. Invite those who are able to see

TryThis

Consider designating a few participants to serve as observers during the freeze frame activity. Invite their input and observation during the discussion period.

without breaking their pose to look around for a minute before you ask everyone to sit down.

3. Reveal to the participants that everyone had the same word. Then discuss the following questions:

- In looking around the room, what ways did you see prayer depicted?
- Why did you depict prayer the way you did?
- What can we learn about prayer from this activity?

Note the following key point from page 307 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*:

- Because prayer arises from our being made in God’s image, it is far less about the right words and techniques and far more about being who God made us to be: people who desire to be in relationship with the one who called us into existence.

Then discuss how prayer takes place in many ways and in many settings and cannot be limited to one place or posture. Note that in future sessions the participants will have an opportunity to learn about and experience a variety of prayer styles, forms, postures, and settings.

(This activity is adapted from Maryann Hakowski, *Sharing the Sunday Scriptures with Youth: Cycle C*, pp. 134–135.)

Telling Our Stories of Prayer (30 minutes)

Preparation

- Gather the following items:
 - three copies of resource 3, “In Touch with God”
 - blank sheets of paper
 - pens or pencils

1. Designate three readers and have each of them read a story from resource 3.

2. Comment to the participants that young people like themselves wrote these stories. Each story speaks of one person’s way of recognizing and being in touch with God. Our goal in prayer is to do just that—to invite God into the ordinary and the extraordinary moments of our life.

Ask the participants to take a few minutes to call to mind their own example of being in touch with God. Distribute paper and pens or pencils and allow the young people some quiet time to write about their experience.

3. Invite the participants to share their stories in either the large group or in small groups. Be sure to note the many ways in which communication to and with God can occur.

TryThis

Incorporate the participants’ stories into a prayer service, or publish some of the stories (with the participants’ and their parents’ permission) in your youth newsletter, parish bulletin, or on your parish Web site.

Spirit & Song connections

- ◆ “Here I Am, Lord,” by Dan Schutte
- ◆ “The Lord Upholds My Life,” by Jeffrey Roscoe
- ◆ “Seek Ye First,” by Karen Lafferty
- ◆ “With All I Am,” by Mike Nelson and Michael Anthony Perna

Mediaconnections

Invite the participants to do an Internet search using the key words *Catholic prayer* to see how many kinds of prayers they can find.

Familyconnections

Invite the participants to ask their parents and grandparents to show them any prayer books they have and to tell them the story behind each book.

Pray! It

Walk with Me, Lord (10 minutes)

Preparation

- Should you want to use music with this prayer, choose from the selections listed under *Spirit & Song Connections* in this session. If you choose other music, be sure it reflects the theme of journeying with God.
- Recruit readers for the prayer and give each a copy of handout 2, “Take My Hand and Walk with Me.”

Gather the participants and invite them to join in the prayer by responding, “Take my hand and walk with me.” Lead the prayer as it appears on handout 2.

LIVE! it

Options and Actions

- **Youth prayer book.** Invite each young person or small group to create a page for a youth prayer book. Provide each participant or group with a piece of stationery. Each page of the prayer book should include a scriptural reference, a few questions for reflection, and a personally written prayer. Invite the participants to also decorate the page. Collect the pages to create a book. Consider scanning and sending individual pages or the compilation to the participants via e-mail or posting them on your parish Web site.
- **Prayer-a-thon.** Involve the entire parish community in a twenty-four-hour prayer vigil organized by your group. Have the young people designate a sign-up Sunday, or develop a phone chain so they can extend an invitation to parishioners. The event could offer parishioners or other young people an opportunity to participate in a variety of prayer forms and styles. Consider choosing a particular topic of concern as a focus for the event or inviting families to submit prayer requests.

- **Prayer in the Bible.** Invite the small groups to conduct a biblical search of the scriptural connections listed in the Background Reading section of this session. Ask them to discuss what each passage teaches about prayer.
- **Prayer in the news.** Invite the religion editor of your local newspaper to come and discuss stories about the power of prayer. Or send the participants on a newspaper, magazine, or Web site search to find stories about the power of prayer.

JournalACTIVITIES

- ◆ How has an awareness of God changed your life?
- ◆ Write a letter to a nameless friend, describing the benefits of or the power of prayer in your life.
- ◆ What is your first memory of prayer? What were the circumstances? Who were you with? Where were you? What do you remember feeling?
- ◆ What can you do to make every day a living prayer?

Introduction to Prayer

This session covers pages 304–307 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*. For further exploration, check out paragraph numbers 2559–2566 and 2590–2591 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Session Summary

- Prayer can become alive and vital when you experience it as a deep, personal relationship with God.
- A classic definition of prayer says, “Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God” (CCC, number 2590). In other words, in addition to words, prayer involves your mind and heart.
- Sometimes when you pray, you might experience insight, like a bright lightbulb going off in your head. More often when you raise your mind to God in prayer, your intellect is shaped so gradually and gently that you only notice the change over time.
- When you allow yourself to open your heart in friendship to God, you can hear God’s voice within saying, “I love you!” When this happens you experience the power of prayer to heal you and to help you become more loving in all your relationships.
- Everyone is called to prayer. This is because the desire for God is built into us; it is a response to God who first and tirelessly calls us to encounter him through prayer.
- In prayer God reveals himself to you, and you learn about yourself. This reciprocal call between God and humankind has been going on throughout the whole of salvation history.
- Prayer is a central way that God has revealed himself to humankind and shown us who we are.
- According to the Scriptures, it is the heart that prays.
- Biblically speaking, the heart is your hidden center, the place of decision and truth where, as a person made in God’s image, you speak to God, live in God’s presence, and hear God speak to you. The heart is where your relationship with God unfolds.
- You were made to receive a special kind of signal, a communication with God in Christ that springs from the Holy Spirit. Prayer is this living relationship, this communion.

- The Catholic Church teaches that only when we approach God in prayer with humility are we able to receive the gift of this vital and personal relationship.
- Humility means that we are honest about who we are, that we acknowledge our weaknesses and sins as well as our gifts.
- Because prayer arises from our being made in God's image, it is far less about the right words and techniques and far more about being who God made us to be: people who desire to be in relationship with the one who called us into existence.

(The summary point labeled CCC is from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for use in the United States of America, number 2590. Copyright © 1994 by the United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with permission.)

(All summary points are taken from *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*, by Brian Singer-Towns et al. [Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2004], pages 305–307. Copyright © 2004 by Saint Mary's Press. All rights reserved.)

Talk Points

- What is your first memory of prayer? What were the circumstances? Who were you with? Where were you? What do you remember feeling?
- Where and from whom did you first learn to pray? What did you learn? How do you pray now?
- Make a top-ten list of the reasons why prayer is essential in your life.
- Discuss the most powerful prayer experience you have ever had.
- When you think about prayer as a relationship, which areas of that relationship need attention?
- Name all the different ways you and your family or friends have prayed together.
- Consider designating a certain time each day or each week to gather together in prayer.
- Write a letter to a nameless friend, describing the benefits of or the power of prayer in your life.

Prayer Questions

If you made a list of ways to develop good friendships, what would it include?

If God knows all our thoughts, why do we have to tell God what we need?

What words, images, or thoughts come to mind when you hear the word *covenant*? What about the phrase *prayer as covenant*?

What words, images, or thoughts come to mind when you hear the word *communion*? What about the phrase *prayer as communion*?

What words, images, or thoughts come to mind when you hear the word *gift*? What about the phrase *prayer as gift*?

How does prayer change things?

Where in the Scriptures are we taught how to pray?

Who are the people you know who live a life of humility? What about those people makes them humble?

Prayer Survey

1. Why do some people almost never pray?

They do not believe in God. (green)

They do not have time. (pink)

They do not think that prayer works. (yellow)

other (blue)

2. What percentage of teens say that they pray frequently?

17 percent (green)

28 percent (yellow)

42 percent (blue)

78 percent (pink)

3. How often have you prayed in the last month?

daily (yellow)

weekly (blue)

seldom (pink)

never (green)

4. Does prayer always get positive results?

yes (blue)

no (yellow)

5. In what situations do you most often pray?

when I feel alone (pink)

when I need help (blue)

when I am scared (green)

other (yellow)

6. If people pray often, will it affect the way they live?

yes (green)

no (pink)

In Touch with God

An experience I had with God occurred while I was jogging with my dog on the sandy shoreline early one summer morning at Seaside Beach. My dog had stopped to sniff out some seaweed and refused to leave it alone. While I was waiting for him, I was struck by the stillness and beauty of the ocean that surrounded me. It caused me to think of the greatness of God. (Lynn Pompili, in Carl Koch, editor, *Dreams Alive: Prayers by Teenagers* [Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1991], page 76. Copyright © 1991 by Saint Mary's Press. All rights reserved.)

One day my sister's boyfriend caught a virus and passed away. He was only nineteen years old and full of life. The day after he died, I went to his wake. I was standing there just looking at him. I had been to many wakes before, but nothing like this one. . . . Then this strange and unusual feeling came over me, as if nothing were wrong. I felt as if God were in the room, standing next to me. (Rosalie, in Carl Koch, editor, *Dreams Alive: Prayers by Teenagers* [Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1991], page 60. Copyright © 1991 by Saint Mary's Press. All rights reserved.)

This morning while stopped at a red light I impatiently flipped through the radio stations for a song I liked. My thoughts about the day were cluttered with anticipation and worries. When unable to find what I was listening for, in a huff, I clicked off the radio. As I sat there I realized that silence would be a beautiful song. There were no words to sing, no notes to hum, and no squabbles to distract me. In a moment, I found myself at ease in your presence. (Maria Wickheiser, in Carl Koch, editor, *More Dreams Alive: Prayers by Teenagers* [Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1995], page 95. Copyright © 1995 by Saint Mary's Press. All rights reserved.)

Take My Hand and Walk with Me

Leader: We begin our prayer with the sign of the cross.

Reader: When I need strength to face the challenges that each day brings . . .

All: Take my hand and walk with me.

Reader: When I need compassion to encourage those who are afraid or
anxious . . .

All: Take my hand and walk with me.

Reader: When I need clarity to know your word and live it . . .

All: Take my hand and walk with me.

Reader: When I need patience and understanding with my parents and family
members . . .

All: Take my hand and walk with me.

Reader: When I need creativity to lead me in new and exciting ways . . .

All: Take my hand and walk with me.

Reader: When I need peace to feel your presence within me . . .

All: Take my hand and walk with me.

Reader: When I am tired or weary of helping others to understand . . .

All: Take my hand and walk with me.

Leader: Let us pray together.

Reader:

God, no matter how bad things get, you are there to guide us, whether or not we realize it. You are a good friend whom we can always turn to. You illuminate the path to happiness. . . . God, be our guide and walk beside us. Light our path so that we do not wander off the road. Where there is confusion, show us the way, and where there is doubt, heal our ignorance. For this and our intentions, help us, God. (Pete Gleason, in Carl Koch, editor, *You Give Me the Sun: Biblical Prayers by Teenagers* [Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2000], page 98. Copyright © 2000 by Saint Mary's Press. All rights reserved.)

AT A GLANCE

2 Models of Prayer

Study It

Core Session

- ◆ Prayer in the Scriptures
(40 minutes)

Session Extensions

- ◆ Growing in Faith: An Exercise in Trusting
(20 minutes)
- ◆ Mary, Model of Prayer
(20 minutes)
- ◆ Prayer Role Models
(20 minutes)

Pray It

- ◆ Mary's Yes
(15 minutes)

Live It

- ◆ Unlikely heroes
- ◆ Prayerful models book
- ◆ Power of conviction
- ◆ Spiritual guides

Overview

Abraham is an example of someone who has unwavering trust in God. Throughout Abraham's moving and dramatic story, we see him growing in faith through prayer. This story challenges each of us to reflect on our own call to faith and the role that prayer plays in it. The stories of other biblical figures, like Moses, David, Mary, and even Jesus, emphasize our need to become people of prayer who rely totally on God. In this session the participants will explore the stories of these figures and find out what each one has to teach us about prayer and about how the gift of God's grace can transform us in ways that we or others would never have thought possible.

Outcomes

- ◆ The learner will understand the role of prayer in God's call to covenant.
- ◆ The learner will explore the notion of trust in God and reflect on the role of trust in her or his own prayer journey.
- ◆ The learner will share how he or she hears and experiences the call to prayer in his or her life.

Background Reading

- ◆ This session covers pages 308–313 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*.
- ◆ For further exploration, check out paragraph numbers 2568–2584, 2592–2595, and 2599–2622 of the *Catechism*.
- ◆ Scriptural connections: Exod. 3:1—4:17 (Moses at the burning bush), Num. 12:3,7–8 (the humility of Moses), Luke 11:5–13 (perseverance in prayer), John 14:10–14 (Jesus, the way to the Father)
- ◆ *Catholic Youth Bible* article connections: “Abraham and Sarah” (Genesis, chap. 12), “Ultimate Trust in God” (Gen. 22:1–19), “Eli Teaches Samuel

How to Pray” (1 Sam. 3:1–19), “Introducing David” (1 Samuel, chap. 16), “I Give Thanks for You” (Eph. 1:15–23)



Core Session

Prayer in the Scriptures (40 minutes)

Preparation

- Gather the following items:
 - copies of handout 3, “Models of Prayer,” one for each participant
 - newsprint
 - markers
 - masking tape
 - Catholic Youth Bibles* or other Bibles, one for every four participants
 - copies of handout 4, “Shema Israel: Hear, O Israel,” one for each participant
- On a sheet of newsprint, post the following questions:
 - How should we pray and for what might we pray?
 - Does God always hear our prayers?
 - What does God communicate to us in prayer?
 - What are the results of prayer?
- Review the summary points in step 6 and the relevant material on pages 308–313 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth (CFH)*. Be prepared to share the information with the young people.

1. Recruit someone to read Deut. 6:4–9. Explain that this passage is known as the Shema, the most famous declaration of faith in the Old Testament. It is a prayer that every faithful Jew prays at least twice a day, morning and night.

Lead a brief discussion of the following questions:

- What are some of the rules and precepts that this passage presents?
- What would this passage have meant to a Jew in Jesus’ time?

2. Make the following comments in your own words:

- This prayer plays a major role in the life of a devout Jew. Faithful Jews begin and end life, as well as each day, with the Shema. They say the prayer frequently during the day. The Shema says that faithfulness to God alone brings his blessings, whereas infidelity to God and loyalty to different gods or idols brings his wrath.

- Many orthodox Jews still take verses 8 and 9 literally. They bind the words of the prayer to their hands and foreheads during prayer, and attach them to the front entrance of their home. It is a sign that they accept God as king, they accept God's love, and they vow to make sacrifices in order to return God's love. They accept the mandate to teach their children the prayer and the ways of God.

3. Ask the participants to think about this question:

- If people pray often, will it affect the way they live?

Explain that the Scriptures are filled with stories of people who prayed and found the peace, joy, hope, healing, and love that God promised. This, of course, includes the prayers of the Jews that we read about in the Old Testament. The Gospels and the New Testament also give us insights into and clues about the role prayer played in the lives of those we meet in the Scriptures.

4. Divide the participants into groups of four. Provide each group with a blank sheet of newsprint, a marker, and a Bible. Then assign each group one of the following sets of Scripture passages:

- Gen. 12:1–10, 13:1–18, 15:1–6 (the call of Abram and Sarai)
- Gen. 17:1–8, 17:15–22, 21:1–7 (God's covenant with Abraham and Sarah)
- Gen. 22:1–19 (the command to sacrifice Isaac)
- Exod. 3:1–15, 6:1–9 (Moses at the burning bush)
- 2 Sam. 7:1–29 (God's covenant with David)
- Matt. 6:5–14, 25–34 (concerning prayer)
- Matt. 26:36–42 (Jesus prays in Gethsemane)
- Luke 1:26–56 (Mary's Magnificat)
- Luke 11:5–13 (perseverance in prayer)
- John 14:1–14 (Jesus, the way to the Father)

Ask each group to read its assigned Scripture verses and discuss the questions you posted on newsprint. Explain that they will not find answers to all the questions in their passages, but challenge them to answer as many as they can. Allow about 10 to 15 minutes for small-group conversations.

5. Now ask each group to summarize the insights they gained from their assigned passages. They should note their insights on their blank sheets of newsprint. Allow about 5 minutes for this step. Note that someone in each group will need to serve as a presenter in the next step of this activity.

6. Invite each small-group presenter to come forward, provide a brief overview of the group's Scripture passage, and offer a summary of the insights the group has gained. During the presentations you will want to make sure the following key points, which are taken from pages 308–312 of the *CFH*, are discussed and noted:

- Prayer reveals the relationship between humankind and God that grows through historical events. The drama of prayer in the Old Testament reveals God's initiative, continually calling humankind deeper into relationship.
- Looking at some of the central characters in the Bible reveals the human heart at prayer.
- Abraham's response to God's call to be in a covenant relationship shows the attentiveness of the heart at prayer, making decisions according to God's will.
- Abraham and Sarah welcomed the mysterious presence of God, and their hearts, like God's, have compassion for all humankind.
- Abraham's faith does not weaken when he is asked to sacrifice the son that God gave him.
- Praying with Abraham's faithfulness can enlarge your heart to trust more fully in God.
- From the midst of the burning bush, God calls Moses to be his messenger. The heart of Moses balks because he feels unworthy and inadequate to the task. In his prayer conversation with God, Moses gradually agrees to a role that calls to mind Jesus Christ's role as mediator between God and humankind. As mediator Moses doesn't pray for himself, but intercedes for God's people, often conversing at length and face-to-face with God. Moses can be an example of what the humble heart does in prayer.
- The heart of King David at prayer expresses loving and joyful trust in God, submission to God's will, praise, and repentance.
- In the prayer of the prophets, we see the human heart complain and argue but never flee from a world in need of change. Instead the prophetic heart remains attentive to God's word, intercedes for an unfaithful world, and awaits God's answer.
- As children of God, we are all made to be in a close relationship with God. Through prayer you enter that relationship with God through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Mary also stands as a model of prayer for us. Before the Incarnation and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, her human heart was completely attuned to the will of the Father. From her we learn that we, too, are capable of such faith.
- As the Son of God who became human, Jesus prayed just as we do. As a child he learned the prayer words and rhythms of his people from his mother. In this way he was like many of us.
- The Gospels tell us that he prayed at decisive moments in his ministry, before his Father's witness to him in his Baptism and Transfiguration, and before the fulfillment of his Father's plan by his Passion. He also prayed at key moments involving his Apostles.