

Oremus Lecture Talk #2: Before You Pray

January 12, 2025, Sts. Anne and Joachim Catholic Church

Jeremiah 29:11-14 (English Standard Version): For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

1. Summary of previous lectures

- a. “As the body cannot live without nourishment, so our soul cannot stay spiritually alive without prayer.” -St. Augustine
- b. Mission: Fall in love with God
- c. God’s search for man
 - i. “God calls man first. Man may forget his Creator or hide far from his face; he may run after idols or accuse the deity of having abandoned him; yet the living and true God tirelessly calls each person to that mysterious encounter known as prayer. In prayer, the faithful God’s initiative of love always comes first; our own first step is always a response. As God gradually reveals himself and reveals man to himself, prayer appears as a reciprocal call, a covenant drama. Through words and actions, this drama engages the heart. It unfolds throughout the whole history of salvation.” (CCC 2567)
- d. Goal is fifteen minutes a day with prayer on the Scripture passages from the workbook

2. Week 2: Before You Pray

- a. Three focal points for today
 - i. Find the right time to pray
 - ii. Have a plan in place for what you want to pray with before you start
 - iii. Pray with your desires.
- b. Time
 - i. “Each one of us needs time and space for recollection, meditation,, and calmness.... Thanks be to God that this is so! In fact, this need tells us that we are not made for work alone, but also to think, to reflect or even simply to follow with our minds and our hearts a tale, a story in which to immerse ourselves, in a certain sense ‘to lose ourselves’ to find ourselves subsequently enriched.” – Pope Benedict XVI
 - ii. Prayer in pockets of free time
 - iii. Dedicated time for prayer
 - iv. Regular time for prayer
 - v. Tithing of our time
 - vi. Priorities
 - vii. Discipline
 - viii. Practical pointers
 - ix. Authentic Commitments
- c. Plan
 - i. Have Scriptures ready ahead of time for prayer.
 - ii. Workbook (56 days of readings); or daily Mass readings, Sunday readings, slowly work through one of the Gospels, Psalms.
 - iii. Distractions
- d. Desires
 - i. What are the desires of your heart?

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- ii. Why are you here, instead of somewhere else?
- iii. If the object of one's desire is a relationship with God, to know his blessing and his love, then the struggle to pray cannot fail but instead ends in that gift of ourselves to God, who already knows our weaknesses.
- iv. How does God look upon me?

3. Moving forward

- a. If the last seven days were a great consolation, keep going
- b. If the last seven days were indifferent or challenging, don't be discouraged
 - i. Prayer is your own, no need to compare with others.
 - ii. Discouragement is the evil one sneaking in
 - iii. The Father desires to bless your prayer
- c. If you were not able to pray as consistently as desired, be at peace, don't be discouraged.
 - i. Again, discouragement is the evil one sneaking in.
- d. If you were not able to pray at all, here is a new beginning!
 - i. Resolve again today to reaffirm that commitment to prayer.

4. Homework

- a. Pray with the following passages, one a day
 - i. Day 1: Matthew 11:28-30
 - ii. Day 2: Isaiah 55
 - iii. Day 3: Isaiah 43:1-7
 - iv. Day 4: Mark 10:46-52
 - v. Day 5: Isaiah 26:8-13
 - vi. Day 6: Matthew 18:12-14
 - vii. Day 7: Revisit a passage that spoke well to you this week.
- b. With the prayer, answer the questions:
 - i. The "strongest" thought or feeling during my prayer was...
 - ii. My heart "rested" when...
 - iii. I sensed the Lord was telling me...
 - iv. I ended the prayer wanting...