**Introduction to Pillar Four—Prayer**

1. **Introduction**
   1. Aims of this session
      1. Provide a transition from the other Pillars
      2. Identify some of the unique qualities of Christian prayer contained in the Introduction to Prayer
      3. Examine the prayer of some of the prominent figures of the Old Testament
      4. Formulate a goal(s) for your own prayer life
   2. Author and Organization of Part 4: Prayer
2. **Transition from Part III and Overview of Part IV**
   1. The Pillars form an organic unity in the life of the faithful through a vital relationship with God (CCC, 2558)  
        
       “...This mystery, then, requires that the faithful   
      believe in it, that they celebrate it and that they live from it   
      **in a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God. This** **relationship is prayer”** (2558)  
        
      “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which give life a new horizon and a decisive direction” (Pope Benedict, *Deus Caritas Est*)  
        
      E.g.: Abraham, as a man attentive to God who entrusts all into His loving hands.
   2. Thus the necessity of prayer:  
      St. Teresa of Calcutta: “How can we last even one day living our life without hearing Jesus say “I love you”—impossible. Our soul needs that as much as the body needs to breathe the air” (Langford, *Mother Teresa’s Secret Fire*, 55).
3. **“What is Prayer?” (2558)**
   1. St. Therese of Lisieux: “For me prayer is a surge of the heart…a simple look…a cry of recognition”  
        
      “But it would be wrong to think that ordinary Christians can be content with a shallow prayer that is unable to fill their whole life. Especially in the face of the many trials to which today's world subjects faith, they would be not only mediocre Christians but "Christians at risk". They would run the insidious risk of seeing their faith progressively undermined (St. John Paul, *Novo Millenio Ineunte*, 34)
   2. “Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God” (St. John Damascene, 2559)
4. “**Humility is the foundation of prayer” (2559)**
   1. Analogy from St. Augustine: “If you wish to reach high, then begin at the lowest  
      level. If you are trying to construct some mighty edifice in height, you will begin with the lowest foundation. This is humility. However great the mass of the building you may wish to design or erect, the taller the building is to be, the deeper you will dig the foundation” (Sermon 69.2)
   2. Humility is accepting the truth about ourselves--most fundamental is the acceptance of: “I am not God, but am a creature dependent on God and made to love and serve Him.” He is the center, not me.  
        
      It is “thinking less about yourself, not thinking less of yourself….We see ourselves less and less and God more and more…. This is our supreme joy. Pride has ingrown eyeballs. Humility stares outward…” (Peter Kreeft, *Back to Virtue*, 102-3).
   3. “He who humbles himself will be exalted” (2559) is taken from the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee (Lk. 18:9-14). Note the “ingrown eyeballs” of the Pharisee at prayer in contrast with the humble stance of the Publican. Who truly prays?
   4. St. Teresa of Calcutta: “God cannot fill what is full.—**He can fill only emptiness**—deep poverty…” (*Come Be My Light*, p.275), cf. “Man is a beggar before God” (2559)
5. **Prayer as RESPONSE in the Dialogue of Prayer**
   1. (CCC, 2560) refers to John.4:6-29, the narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan Woman:

[**6**] Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. [**7**] There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink" [**8**] for his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. [**9**] The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. [**10**] Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."  
  
[**11**] The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water? [**12**] Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?"[**13**] Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, [**14**] but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."[**15**] The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.”[**16**] Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."[**17**] The woman answered him, "I have no husband."  
  
Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, I have no husband'; [**18**] for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband; this you said truly."  
  
[**19**] The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet… I know that the Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things."[**26**] Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he." [**27**] Just then his disciples came. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but none said, "What do you wish?" or, "Why are you talking with her?"[**28**] So the woman left her water jar, and went away into the city, and said to the people, [**29**] "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"

B. We have, in this narrative, a paradigm of prayer:

* + 1. Christ initiates: “It is he who first seeks us and asks us for a drink” (2560).
    2. Our personal history, the ‘stuff of our lives’ is often the starting point of prayer (e.g. asking for what we need, giving thanks for how we’ve been blessed) Other starting points: His Word, Encountering Him in the sacraments, creation
    3. She responds and a conversation ensues. Prayer is not a monologue!
    4. Christ leads her to deeper levels of self-understanding as well as revelation of himself.
    5. As the 7th man in her life, **the true and perfect Lover** for whom she has longed, he meets her true thirst, for she goes off, leaving her jug, to proclaim his wonders (verses 28-9).   
         
       “Prayer is the encounter of God’s thirst with ours” (2560).

1. **“It is the heart that prays (2562).**
   1. The heart is “the dwelling place where I am…[my] hidden center…the place of decision” and where my treasure lies, the seat of my most significant relationships (2562-3).
   2. Prayer is a heart-to-heart exchange. "If our heart is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain” (2562).
2. Our memorized prayers or those we might read (e.g. the Psalms, or Liturgy of the Hours) become prayer as we engage our hearts.
3. Moses was boldly honest/vulnerable: “He balks, makes excuses, above all questions: and it is in response to his question that the Lord confides his ineffable name, which will be revealed through his mighty deeds” (2575)
4. Methods (including Lectio Divina) are merely means to engage the heart in loving exchange. We may need to leave the method behind in order to follow the Holy Spirit and truly express what is in our hearts. “What do you really want to say to Me?” “Responding to God in love” is the ultimate “method.”
5. The Psalms give us many examples of one who prays from the heart. Praying the Psalms regularly (Liturgy of the Hours) can help us pray from “where we are” and allow God to lead us into His heart through praise.
6. St Teresa of Avila counsels: “Do whatever will stir up love” (*Interior Castle* 4:1:7) in your prayer,that is, do what you need in order to enter into a heart to heart exchange with God that will carry you into the day.

VII.  **Christian prayer is Trinitarian, Christological, and Ecclesial (2564-5).**

Prayer is directed to the Father, springing forth from the Holy Spirit, in union with Christ,

our teacher, our model, and head of his Mystical Body, the Church. “He prays for us as our

priest, prays in us as our Head, and is prayed to by us as our God. Therefore let us

acknowledge our voice in him and his in us” (St. Augustine, as quoted in CCC, 2616).

Ecclesial: Prayer is not only rooted in the Church; it is able to build up the whole of the

Church (e.g., Moses’ intercession for the Israelites in battle.)

1. **Conclusion** 
   1. Prayer is efficacious! Prayer has the power to “restore man to God’s likeness and enables him to share in the power of God’s love that saves” (2572).
   2. If you haven’t begun, now is the time! Try:  
      The Psalms. “Pointing to Christ, prayed by Christ, and fulfilled in Christ, “the Psalms have been an essential and permanent element of the prayer of the Church” (2597); The Gospels.

Apps: iBreviary, Laudate   
  
“It is extremely important to begin with great determination “(St. Theresa of Avila, *Way,* 23)

* 1. Lest you feel you are not doing it well, St. Teresa of Calcutta counsels that it is not insights and feelings that make for “successful prayer” but our faithfulness to taking it.  
       
     Goals:

“The important thing [in prayer] is not to think much but to love much and so do that which best stirs you to love” (St. Teresa of Avila*, Interior Castle,* IV).

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| **Psalm 86** (Abbreviated) **A poor man's prayer in time of trouble** |

*All: You, Lord God, are slow to anger, abounding in love.*

Turn your ear to me, Lord, and hear me,

  for I am poor and destitute.

Keep my life safe, for I am faithful;

  O God, save your servant, who trusts in you.

Take pity upon me, O Lord,

  for I call to you all the day long.

Make your servant’s heart glad,

  for to you, O Lord, I have raised it.

For you, Lord, are gentle and mild:

  you are kind to all those who call on you.

Let your ears hear my prayer, O Lord!

  Turn to the voice of my pleading!

O Lord, teach me your paths,

  and I will come to your truth.

Make my heart simple and guileless,

  so that it honors your name.

I will proclaim you, Lord my God,

  and give you praise with all my heart.

I will give glory to your name forever,

  for your great kindness is upon me:

  you have rescued me from the deepest depths.

And you, Lord, are a God of compassion,

  full of mercies, patient and true.

Look upon me, have mercy upon me,

  give your strength and protection to your servant.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

  as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

All: *You, Lord God, are slow to anger, abounding in love.*