

November 7, 2022

Dear CRE student,

We missed you at CRE on October 31<sup>st</sup>! So that you keep up with the other people in your group, we ask that you complete the following:

1. Pray the following prayer:

Lord Jesus, you are the eternal Son of God. The Father knows you. He loves you. He gives all of Himself to you. Before time began and before the world was created the Father gave everything to you and you gave everything to Him. Now, in this hour and throughout our lives, you share your relationship with the Father with us. Help us to accept this gift. We pray to the Lord.

A Reading from John 15:13-16

*No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.*

Being a Christian is not about following a set of rules. Christianity is about a relationship with God. It is about a friendship with Christ Jesus. Friends talk with each other. They hang out together. They laugh together. They have times that they are together, but quiet, just enjoying each other's company. They take turns revealing their thoughts, feelings, and experiences with each other. This is what friends do. This is also what a friendship with Jesus looks like. During Year One of Equipped for Life with a focus on "Encounter" we were reintroduced to Jesus. Now it is time to grow in friendship with Jesus. Let's pray for our time together during this session that we would grow in that friendship.

Prayer Leader:

Jesus, we thank you for choosing us. We thank you that you love us so much that you give everything to us, including your relationship with the Father. We thank you that you have invited us to be your friends. We pray that through our time together now we may learn how to grow in our friendship with you. We ask this through Christ who is Lord, for ever and ever. Amen.

2. Access the slide show used here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/v59coz5tezs7nv/Session%202%20friend%20with%20Christ%20slides.pptx?dl=0>

Starting at slide 8 -28, indicate whether each image is representing something that is spiritual or not spiritual.

After determining what is spiritual, read the following:

All the way back when we began “Encounter” we introduced this quote from St. Augustine.

“You have made us for yourself, oh Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.”

As we experienced back at the beginning of “Encounter”, our spirituality is found in the way that we try to satisfy the restlessness that everyone experiences. A Christian spirituality is trying to satisfy that restlessness through a friendship with Christ. Just like any relationship, a friendship is something that we develop. It grows as people spend time with each other. The way that we spend time with Jesus is in prayer. During this session, we are going to talk about growing our Christian spirituality through personal prayer.

3. Friendship with Christ: Prayer

Answer the following questions:

Before we talk about prayer and how to grow in friendship with Christ, let’s talk about how we have prayed in the past.

1) Did you ever ask God for a toy or for a device for Christmas? What happened? Did you get it?

2) Have you ever been in a situation where you have asked for help? What was the situation? Was it for a test? Were you in trouble? Was there a problem with someone in your family or with a friend? Have you ever prayed for help because of relationship problems? What happened?

3) How often would you say you pray? Here are the options: 1) every day 2) a few times a week 3) once a week 4) a few times a month 5) once a month 6) rarely 7) never

4) When you do pray, what do you do? Do you pray one of the prayers of the Church like the Our Father or the Hail Mary? Do you find yourself just talking to God?

Look at slide 32 depicting the prayer funnel. This is an image that helps us to think about our relationship with God and our conversations with God.

First, at the top level, we have a material want or need. We may have no way of getting it on our own. Because of that, we ask someone who is more powerful than us to help us get

whatever it is. Prayers such as these are certainly good. Philippians 4:19 says that God will supply our needs. But for a true friendship this should not be the only way we pray.

Second is the level of asking for help. We are moving deeper in our relationship with God because when we ask for help, we are admitting that we are dependent on God. We are not so powerful that we can do everything on our own. We saw that St. Augustine said that we are restless until we rest in God. When we ask God for help, we are saying that we are lacking something that God can supply. God wants us to ask Him for help because 1 Peter 5:7 says that we give our anxieties to God because He cares for us. But for a true friendship this should not be the only way we pray.

The third is when a change happens in a relationship. Perhaps you have seen this with a parent, grandparent, or another adult in your family. When we are young, we may not see them as people who are very interesting. To this point, they have just been there to take care of us. But there comes a realization that they are interesting. They have thoughts, feelings, motivations, or they even have desires for our life. We become interested in them and want to know them on a different level as Isaiah 55:6-9 says. This is the maturing of a relationship, and this is what happens to us with God.

The fourth might be the hardest level. Like so many things that are hard, it is worth it. Many people can talk to God on a very deep level. They can feel very close to Him, like a friend. They are in touch with their thoughts, with their feelings, and they feel God's love for them. They accept God's invitation to tell Him everything about our life because He deeply loves us and cares for us. However, prayer can be a monologue rather than a dialogue. Being quiet. Being still just as Psalm 46:10 reflects. Listening for God goes against the grain of what we are used to. But it is worth it.

The fifth level of prayer is when we begin to commune with God. We are content to just be with Him. Words fail us because we are coming to know God and we are allowing God to know us. We can sit and enjoy Jesus's company as Revelation 3:20 says.

Answer the following questions:

- Where do you think you are on the prayer funnel?
- Do you drift back and forth between levels?
- Which level do you find yourself in most, do you feel ready to go to a deeper level?

#### 4. Your Brain on Prayer

Read the following:

The Church teaches that grace perfects nature. Another way to say it is that what comes to us by nature, a relationship with God makes better. A community of friends is good, but when God becomes the center of the friendships, the friendships get better. Our bodies come to us by nature, but God makes even our bodies better. In looking back at the different levels of prayer, scientists have done studies on the effects this kind of prayer has on the brain. When we listen attentively to God's voice, when we are still and know that He is God, something happens in different parts of the brain.

These are the effects of quiet prayer on the brain:

- Creates more focus
- Develops more self-awareness
- Speed of thinking increases
- Memory increases
- Emotions are better regulated
- Compassion and empathy increases
- More calm in the face of problems
- Stimulates chemical production for greater efficiency

#### 5. Closing Prayer

The first step in prayer is to pray for your prayer. Ask God to be with you and to guide you as you pray.

The second step is reviewing your day. Reflect on what the past day has been like.

- When did you wake up?
- What was the first thing you did?
- What was the first thing you did on your phone?
- Who was the first person you were in touch with this morning?
- What did you eat for breakfast?
- Did you interact with your family at all?
- When did you get to school?
- Who was the first person you hung out with when you got to school?
- What happened in your morning classes?
- Who did you hang out with at lunch?
- What happened in your afternoon classes?
- What did you do after school?

- Did you have any after school practices, rehearsals, or meetings?
- How did you interact with social media?
- What did you do before you came here?

Now that we have reviewed our day, let's move to step three: thanksgiving. Give thanks to God for the good things that are in your life.

The fourth step is admitting our shortcomings. Ask God to forgive anything that needs to be forgiven.

The fifth step is looking toward tomorrow. What is on your mind as you look to tomorrow? Is there a worry that you have? Do you have a need? Is someone you care about in need of something? Are you excited about something? Ask for the grace to cooperate with God's purpose for the day.

The final step is the step of listening to God. Set a timer to allow yourself 2-3 minutes of silence.

The sixth step brings us deeper into the funnel that we talked about earlier. This is where we listen to God. You have given thanks to God. You have prayed for forgiveness. You have asked for His help. Now let's listen to what He has to say in return. With your eyes remaining closed, imagine Jesus is sitting with you. When we listen for God, we pay attention to our thoughts. Do our thoughts go in a particular direction? We pay attention to our feelings. Is there a feeling that is emerging? We pay attention to our intuition. Do we have a sense about something? How is God speaking to you? What does He say in return?

As a final challenge, pray like this one full week. Set aside 10 minutes before you go to bed to pray the six steps. The best way to pray is for them to put your phones away or to silence them. Pray each night.

Please complete and submit by our next class. You may email it to [rotramelm@stjohn23rd.org](mailto:rotramelm@stjohn23rd.org) or turn it in to your catechist/small group leader.

Peace and Blessings,

Maureen Rotramel  
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