

# NOTES ON PRAYER

C.f. *Opening to God* and *Experiencing God* by Fr. Thomas Green (Ave Maria Press).

**PRAYER = opening up to God for a personal encounter of love, through both real experience and sincere dialogue.** This kind of prayer is meant to be both achievable and normal for the average Catholic. It leads us to personal transformation by means of ongoing spiritual healing and growth, as our thoughts, feelings, and choices come more in line with all that is Beautiful, Good, and True. When we pray this way it uncovers our truest desires to be completely in communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, completely in Love with God, completely available to His wonderful designs, especially as an instrument for bringing souls back to His Heart of Mercy, and completely transformed by Grace.

## Experiencing God: The 3 Stages of Prayer

1. **Getting to Know God** (Using the intellect; for gaining insights and understanding; like the newness/awkwardness of a courtship)
2. **From Knowing to Loving** (Using feelings; increased dialogue with wonderful consolations; like the excitement of a honeymoon)
3. **From Loving to Truly Loving** (Using the will; entering into a fully trusting surrender; like allowing love to be purified and go deeper in midlife)

An analogy for how we can open up to God in prayer is the **RADIO RECEIVER**: In order to listen to, enjoy, and appreciate beautiful music, we first need an atmosphere of quiet. The equipment itself also needs to be in good working order to receive the signal coming in. Finally, it helps to have some level of music appreciation. “**Coming to quiet**” could include taking a walk around the block, deep breaths, writing down what’s on our mind to look at it later, listening to sacred music, or repeating the Jesus Prayer. Making ourselves ready to receive what God has for us includes **the Examen prayer** (to notice those areas in our lives where we are not responding to God’s love), the reception of **the Sacrament of Reconciliation** (to get the spiritual healing we need), and **suitable Penances** (to counteract our wounds and obstacles). “Music appreciation” would be ongoing spiritual formation, primarily through good spiritual reading.

At first, prayer seems laborious and boring, with the need to dig deeper. After 1-2 years, there will be a breakthrough; becoming easy and joyful. Then, at a certain point, our experience of prayer will turn into dryness, because our thoughts and feelings are no longer being employed, with God now at the level of the soul, for the sake of authentic, lasting personal transformation.

**The truest sign that we are on the right track will always be putting God’s love into action and manifesting the Fruit of the Holy Spirit: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity (CCC 1832).**

Bottom line: as we grown in prayer, we’ll need to listen more and speak less. It takes time, patience, trial and error. Learning to pray with the Sacred Scriptures is the great and all-important journey from the head to the heart and on towards the enduring joy of holiness.