

# Catholic Prayers and Devotions

## Session Focus

This session focuses on treasured and traditional forms of Catholic prayer and devotion. The Catholic Church has a rich tradition of prayer, including Eucharistic adoration, Liturgy of the Hours, novenas, and prayers to patron saints. All of these prayer paths lead us to intimate communion with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit and all call us to be Christ-like in the world.

“In the living tradition of prayer, each Church proposes to its faithful, according to its historic, social, and cultural context, a language for prayer: words, melodies, gestures, iconography. The Magisterium of the Church has the task of discerning the fidelity of these ways of praying to the tradition of apostolic faith; it is for pastors and catechists to explain their meaning, always in relation to Jesus Christ” (CCC 2663).

## Learning Objectives

This session on Catholic prayers and devotions guides learners of all ages to...

- understand the Trinitarian nature of Catholic prayers and devotions and comprehend the role of saints in Catholic spirituality (know-what).
- value the importance and potential of Catholic prayers and devotions, both communal and individual (know-why).
- Practice Catholic devotions and prayers as part of the discipline of discipleship (know-how).

## Session Overview

**Part 1. (30 minutes)      Gathering and Opening Prayer Service**

**Part 2. (30 minutes)      All Ages Learning Experience: Sharing Our Catholic Prayers**

**Part 3 (90 minutes)      In Depth Learning Experience: Catholic Prayers and Devotions**

- Learning Format: Activity Centers - participants rotate through selected activities in the same room or in separate rooms.

**Part 4. (5–15 minutes)      Sharing Learning Experiences**

**Part 5. (5 minutes)      Closing Prayer Service**

## Design for In-Depth Learning: Learning Activity Centers

The Learning Activity Center Format provides structured learning activities at a variety of stations or centers in a common area. Learning activity centers are self-contained learning experiences, focusing on a specific topic or theme. They include brief presentations by the facilitators, interactive and experiential activities, group discussion and sharing. Each center can utilize a different learning method, such as drama or role play, creative arts, prayer, ritual, film, games, demonstrations, exhibits, and music.

One of the best ways to envision a Learning Activity Center Format is to imagine visiting a children's museum or one of the Epcot pavilions at Walt Disney World in Orlando. You will find a variety of interactive, experiential exhibits, media presentations, and staff-facilitated learning activities.

Learning Activity Centers can be used with all age groups. They can be developed for an intergenerational audience or for particular age groups, such as families with children or adolescents or adults. Learning Activity Centers can also be utilized in the families with children learning program within the Age Group Format.

## Scheduling

Learning Activity Centers are designed to be conducted within a 20-30 minute timeframe. Depending on the session design, this will allow three or four learning periods to be offered during the In Depth Learning Experience.

Here is a sample schedule with four rounds of learning centers:

- 6:00 Hospitality and Dinner
- 6:30 Part 1. Gathering and Prayer  
Part 2. All Ages Learning Experience
- 6:50 Round 1: Learning Activity Centers
- 7:15 Break (move to next center)
- 7:20 Round 2: Learning Activity Centers
- 7:45 Break (move to next center)
- 7:50 Round 3: Learning Activity Centers
- 8:15 Break (move to next center)
- 8:20 Round 4: Learning Activity Centers
- 8:45 Part 4: Presenting the Home Activities (no small group sharing)  
Part 5: Closing Prayer

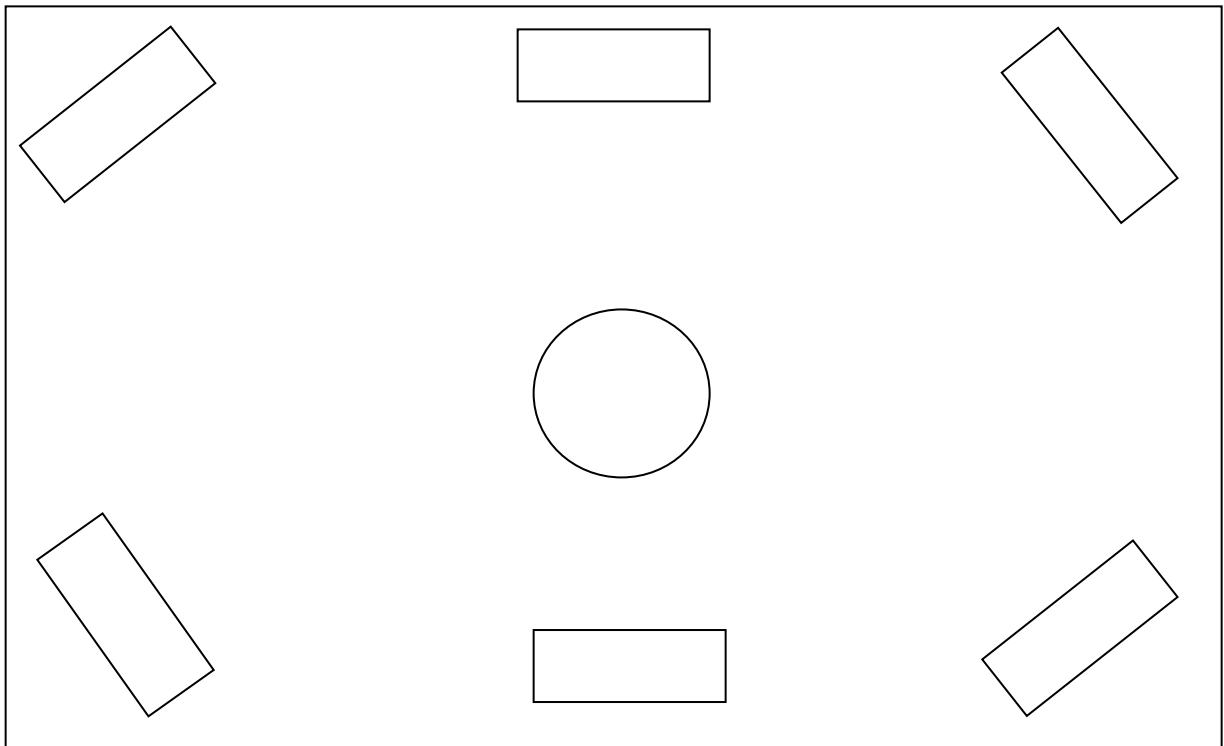
Here is a sample schedule with three rounds of learning centers:

- 6:00 Hospitality and Dinner
- 6:30 Part 1. Gathering and Prayer  
Part 2. All Ages Learning Experience
- 7:00 Round 1: Learning Activity Centers
- 7:25 Break (move to next center)
- 7:30 Round 2: Learning Activity Centers
- 7:55 Break (move to next center)
- 8:00 Round 3: Learning Activity Centers
- 8:25 Break (gather in intergenerational groups)
- 8:30 Part 4: Sharing Learning Reflections and Home Application
- 8:50 Closing Prayer

## Organizing the Activity Centers

There are two ways to set up activity centers: one large room, or multiple break-out rooms.

If you arrange all of the learning centers in one large meeting gym or parish hall, set-up the centers around the outside of the room (see example). The center space can become a storytelling center with a carpet or chairs for children to sit. The example below shows six different learning centers plus the storytelling center. You may still need separate rooms if you have a learning center that focuses on prayer (worship space) or shows a film (meeting room).



Keep in mind the following when organizing in one room:

- Make sure there is adequate space between learning centers so that people are not interrupted by the activity at other centers.
- Set-up each learning activity center with tables and chairs (or carpeted floor space) for participants to listen, discuss, and create. Children and teens can use the floor, but adults will need chairs.
- Assign each learning center a number and post the number on the wall and floor at each center.

If you arrange learning centers in multiple rooms such as meeting rooms, classrooms, parish hall, gym, worship space, assign one learning center to each space. This format resembles a conference where people move from room to room for each session. Place the learning center name outside each room and develop a list of centers with locations, and a map if necessary, so that people can easily find the correct room.

## Organizing Groups

Once you have determined how many learning centers you will offer, you can organize participants accordingly. If you offer four learning centers, you can organize the participants into four groups of equal size and assign each group a specific sequence that they will move through the learning centers. Assign a number to each learning center and an alphabet letter to each group, then describe how they will move through the centers: Group A: 1-2-3-4; Group B: 2-3-4-1, Group C: 3-4-1-2, and Group D: 4-1-2-3. If you offer three learning centers, there would be three groups rotating among the three learning centers. Keep families together in one group.

If you offer more than three or four learning centers, allow people to choose the learning centers they are going to experience. Remind them that if a particular center is crowded, they can move to another center and then return to their first choice in another round. Families with children should stay together because the activities require parents to work with their children.

## Staffing

Each center is facilitated by a team of facilitators/catechists who guide the participants through the activity plan. The teaching team facilitates the overall learning plan for the center: making presentations, guiding learning activities, organizing discussions, and so on. The number of team members needed depends on the complexity of the activities and the number of participants at a learning center. Teams should have at least two or three people, but some centers will require five or six people. Older adolescents can also serve as members of the teaching team, and are especially valuable in facilitating creative activities and dramatic presentations.

To present the focus of each learning activity center, ask the teaching teams to present a very brief overview of what they will be doing in each center. Give each participant the list of learning activity centers with short descriptions, a schedule, and the locations of the centers.

## Materials Needed

Each learning activity center has special environment suggestions. Consult the activity plans for specifics.

### Gathering

- Name tags
- Opening Prayer Service –Liturgy of the Hours corresponding to the liturgical calendar for the day of the learning session(s) or the simple version included in the handouts.
- Bible (used throughout)

### All Ages Learning Experience

- Prayer cards and binder rings for each household or participant

### In-Depth Learning Experience

- Handouts
- The materials participants will need are identified in each Learning Activity Center plan.

### Closing Prayer Service



# Session Plan

## Part 1. Gathering (10 minutes)

### Registration and Hospitality

- Welcome people and ask them to sign in for the program.
- Provide name tags or invite people to make their own.
- Consider the following activities for participants as they wait to eat or wait for others to finish their meals:
  - Invite them to decorate their group's tablecloth (white butcher paper) with words and symbols that respond to the statement "My favorite Catholic prayers are..."
  - Invite them to share what they know about novenas, Eucharistic adoration, and liturgy of the hours.
- Invite people to share a meal; depending on time of day, the program may end with a meal instead.

Welcome the participants to the program and introduce the theme of the session, using the words below or your own words.

This session focuses on treasured and traditional forms of Catholic prayer and devotion. The Catholic church has a rich tradition of prayer, including Eucharistic adoration, Liturgy of the Hours, novenas, and prayers to patron saints. All of these prayer paths lead us to intimate communion with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit and all call us to be Christ-like in our world.

## 1. Group Formation

This program utilizes a learning activity center format. Six learning centers are developed for your use. Each activity lasts from 20-30 minutes. Once you have determined how many learning centers you will offer, you can organize participants accordingly.

See Part Three for specific instructions for organizing Learning Activity Center groups.

## 2. Opening Prayer Service

You are encouraged to pray the Liturgy of the Hours for the Opening Prayer. Use the prayer for the day, copied for participants to follow. If you wish to use a simplified version of the Liturgy of the Hours, below is an example. Print the first handout: Liturgy of the Hours – A Simple Option if you decide to go this route.

Depending on the experience level in praying Liturgy of the Hours, walk the participants through the details of how to pray in this manner before beginning prayer.

# Liturgy of the Hours

## Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

## Invitatory

God, come to my assistance, Lord make haste to help me.  
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. Amen

## Psalm

119:129-136

Side A

Your decrees are wonderful;  
therefore my soul keeps them.

Side B

The unfolding of your words gives light;  
it imparts understanding to the simple.

Side A

With open mouth I pant,  
because I long for your commandments.

Side B

Turn to me and be gracious to me,  
as is your custom toward those who love your name.

Side A

Keep my steps steady according to your promise,  
and never let iniquity have dominion over me.

Side B

Redeem me from human oppression, that I may keep your precepts.  
Make your face shine upon your servant, and teach me your statutes.

Side A

My eyes shed streams of tears because your law is not kept.

## Doxology

Glory be to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen

**Scripture**

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. (Titus 2:11-13)

**Canticle of Zechariah** (Morning Prayer)

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:68-79).

**Canticle of Mary** (Evening Prayer)

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever”(Luke 1:46-55).

**Doxology**

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. Amen

**Intercessions**

Prayerfully offer at this time prayers of intercession for the needs of the church, the world, your local community, your family and friends.

**Lord's Prayer**

Our Father . . .

**Closing Prayer**

God of all goodness, we praise and thank you for calling us to prayer this day. May all that we do give glory to your name that all may come to know you and your love for them. Amen.

**Blessing**

May the Lord bless us, protect us from evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

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

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen

## Part 2. All Ages Learning Experience: Sharing Our Catholic Prayers (30 minutes)

The All Ages Learning Experience is a brief introduction to some of the traditional prayers and devotions of the Catholic Church. Each prayer or devotion is presented to the participants in the form of a small card, followed by a large group presentation by someone who shares briefly how that prayer or prayer form has enriched their lives.

### Preparation

Print Handout #1 (enough cards so that each participant gets one full set, that is, all six prayers from the handout). The prayer cards are held together using a binder ring. Note: additional prayers will be attached to the prayer rings in Part Three In-depth Learning Experience.

In advance, recruit six teens and adults to prepare a brief two or three-minute sharing on their personal experience with each of the prayers, one faith sharer per prayer on Handout #1.

They can prepare their remarks in response to these questions:

- When do you/When did you (since prayers like the angelus may be a past experience for many adults) pray this prayer or prayer form?
- Why do you value this prayer or prayer form?
- How does this prayer or prayer form help you live out your life of faith?

### Materials

- Binder rings—One binder ring per participant
- Prayer Cards as derived from Handout #1

Distribute the first prayer card to the participants and invite them to place it on the binder ring you have provided.

Give them a few minutes to read the prayer and the details about it on the reverse side.

Invite them to listen to a brief faith-sharing about the prayer by the volunteer recruited before the session.

Conduct the same process with the next prayer card, and the next, until all the prayers have been distributed and explored. Prayers to be distributed and explored:

1. Meal blessing
2. Novena to St. Martin de Porres (or create one for your parish's patron saint)
3. Hail Mary
4. Eucharistic Adoration
5. Glory Be
6. Angelus



Close the All Ages Learning Experience by introducing the In Depth Learning Experience and its connection to some of the prayers discussed here. Invite a table leader for each activity to share what their learning experience will be.

### Part 3. In Depth Learning Experience: Catholic Prayers and Devotions (90–120 minutes)

Introduce each center by having a team member who is conducting the center provide a brief overview of what is going to happen at the center. If you wish, give each participant or family the list of learning activity centers with short descriptions, a schedule, and the locations of the centers.

Each learning center is designed for 25–30 minutes, allowing everyone to participate in three or four learning activities. Guide multiple small groups through the learning activity centers, allowing the small groups to select new learning activity centers after 30 minutes. Each activity is designed for any age group/family groups.

- Activity 1. Trinitarian Nature of Catholic Prayer
- Activity 2. Movement and Prayer
- Activity 3. Eucharistic Adoration and Holy Hours
- Activity 4. Vocal Prayer: Shared Scripture
- Activity 5. Saints and Catholic Spirituality
- Activity 6. St. Hildegard Celebrates Creation

## Activity 1. Trinitarian Nature of Catholic Prayer

This learning activity center explores the Trinitarian nature of Catholic prayer and invites participants to decorate a home cross.

### Preparation

Copy Handout #2 for activity leaders.

Gather a variety of crosses of various styles and shapes to display. Include a cross from Central America that depicts images of the people there and their bright colors—in their tradition the images portrayed on the cross depict how they see the life and death of Jesus evident in the life around them. Display the crosses on the table or mount them on a foam core or poster board for display.

Place the Bible in a central place on the prayer table.

### Materials

- Variety of crosses from difference cultures.
- Small wooden cross, suitable for decorating (about 8 inches high)—one for each household, or teen, or adult.
- Decorating supplies such as markers, colored pencils, stickers, etc.

## Activity Plan

Introduce the activity by sharing:

At the heart of Catholic prayer is the Trinity – God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus. Perhaps one of the greatest mysteries that Catholics ponder, the Trinity is included in all of the central prayers and rites of Catholicism. A simple understanding of Trinity is that God is revealed to us in three different persons, thereby providing us with three ways to be in relationship with God. When we pray, sometimes we find ourselves in conversation with God the Father, sometimes we find ourselves in conversation with Jesus, and sometimes we seek the wisdom and energy of the Holy Spirit. We begin and end prayer in the name of all three.

To remind ourselves of the Trinitarian nature of our prayer, we are going to create a home cross using words and symbols to depict important elements of the Trinity.

Distribute the crosses to each household or participant.

Using Handout #2, guide the participants in the creation of their home cross.

On the top portion of the vertical beam of the cross write words or draw images that describe who God the Father is for you.

On the lower portion of the vertical beam of the cross write words or draw images that describe Jesus for you.

On the horizontal beam of the cross write words or draw images that describe how you see the Spirit of God and Jesus visible in the people and world around you.

Conclude the session with this prayer:

“Lord, you are blessed and the source of every blessing. Be with us now and whenever we use this symbol of our faith. May we strive always to be transformed into the likeness of Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen” (*Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*, p. 308).

## Activity 2. Movement and Catholic Prayer

This learning activity center explores how movement is a part of Catholic prayer and offers participants a simple rite of movement to begin or end their day.

### Preparation

Participants will need adequate physical space to be comfortably guided through the movement prayer that is part of this activity.

Follow the guidelines in Handout #3: cut into cards and hole-punch each card to attach to the prayer ring given to participants earlier. Give one card to each participant.

### Materials

- Handouts
- Scrap paper and pens for the movements and gestures list

### Activity Plan

Invite participants, in pairs or triads or households, to create a list of all the actions and movements Catholics do as part of their prayers and rituals. For example, the Sign of the Cross and standing for the proclamation of the Gospel during liturgy are two movements or gestures Catholics participate in as they pray.

Once they have completed their lists, move from group to group inviting them to name for the whole group a movement or gesture from their list until all the movements and gestures have been named. Make sure the group lists include such things as lying prostrate from the Rite of Ordination, holding hands or lifting hands during the Our Father, bowing, marking our mind, lips, and heart as the Gospel is proclaimed, liturgical dance, and so on. How many unique movements and gestures in total can the group name?

Then share:

Catholic prayer is embodied prayer—that is, it is prayer that often includes many gestures and movements. We kneel, we sign ourselves, we clasp our hands in prayer. Our physical postures help us to keep in front of us what is important and help us to embrace our human form and celebrate its goodness.

As the *Catechism* states, “Whether prayer is expressed in words or gestures, it is the whole man who prays” (2562).

As part of this learning experience we are going to explore a morning prayer ritual that can be used to begin our days.

Lead the participants through the morning prayer ritual steps below. Tell them that they will receive a copy of this prayer at the end of the learning activity to attach to their prayer ring.

1. Stretch your arms as far above your head as you can reach and thank God for the gift of a new day. Invite participants to repeat after you, "Thank you, God, for this day."
2. Stretch both arms out on each side (form your body into the shape of a cross). Invite participants to repeat after you, "May I reach out with love to all people."
3. Stretch your arms out in front of you, waist high. Give to God all that you are and have, and ask God to open your heart to receive all that is offered to you this day. Invite participants to repeat after you, "May I give generously and receive humbly."
4. Place your hands over your heart as a gesture of desiring union with God in all moments of your life. Invite participants to repeat after you, "May God and I be of one heart."
5. Lastly, invite participants to bow in adoration and humility to God who has given all and who holds us in his love. Invite participants to repeat after you, "Thank you, God, for your good gifts."
6. Close this movement prayer together by inviting participants to make the Sign of the Cross.

In groups of two or three, ask participants to discuss these questions:

- Was the prayer comfortable for you? Why or why not?
- Does movement help you pray? Why or why not?

Give the participants the movement prayer card to attach to their prayer ring and share with them the following:

Sometimes we feel more comfortable praying with movement when we are alone. Also, as in most things, comfort comes with practice. Here is a copy of the movement prayer that we just prayed (Handout #3) in case you would like to do it at home or share it with others. It is the whole person who prays and praying with movement can engage our hearts and minds when they do not feel like praying.

## Activity 3. Eucharistic Adoration and Holy Hours

This learning activity center explores the meaning of Eucharistic Adoration and provides the participants with a prayer experience with the Blessed Sacrament.

### Preparation

This learning activity center needs to happen either in the church's Eucharistic chapel or in the area of the church where the tabernacle is located. Simple decoration of the tabernacle, as is custom for the parish (e.g., with candles and flowers), is all that is needed.

If possible, begin the learning in an area other than where the tabernacle is located, such as the welcome area of the church or in the back pews, so that you can explain to participants what will be taking place and outline for them the expected behavior.

Process quietly to the tabernacle prayer space.

Using Handout #4, prepare a "Prayer with the Blessed Sacrament" card for each participant or household.

### Materials

- Prayer cards from Handout #4

## Activity Plan

Distribute the Eucharistic adoration prayer card and give them time to attach it to their prayer ring.

Then share:

This learning activity center will be an experience of Eucharistic adoration. We will be moving as a group to the tabernacle area of our church where the Eucharist is reserved as a place to be with Christ in prayer. Before we do that, I would like to share with you a little bit about Eucharistic adoration and give you a few guidelines for our prayer experience there.

As Catholics we are invited to gather in private prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, the Eucharist, in order to celebrate Christ's presence there and to be nurtured in our relationship with him. We believe that Christ is truly present there, just as he is present in His word, in creation, and in the community of the Church.

As we gather in prayer there, I will guide you through four simple steps that you can use to pray before the Blessed Sacrament. We will be praying alone, together! What I mean is that we will each be invited to pray quietly in our heart as we sit together with the Blessed Sacrament. It is important that we respect each other's space and sit quietly so that we do not disturb one another.

The first few minutes that we gather in prayer I will invite you to think about how you experience Christ in the celebration of Eucharist with your parish community.

We will then take a few minutes to quietly ponder in our hearts how we see Jesus revealed in the world around us—people, places, events.

We will then listen to a Scripture passage about Eucharist.

Finally, we will spend some time placing our needs in God's hands and then thanking him for our time in prayer with Jesus.

Any questions? (Make sure participants understand what will be taking place.)

Please join me in silence as we move to the tabernacle area for our time of prayer there.

Once everyone is comfortable in the tabernacle area, guide them through the prayer experience using the following steps:

1. Invite participants to reflect on their experience of Christ in the Eucharist/celebration of Mass and how they are nurtured and challenged through their participation in Eucharist.
2. Invite participants to reflect on the many ways that they see Jesus revealed in the world around them: people, places, events.
3. Read Luke 9:10-17 aloud to the participants then invite them to ponder what the passage says to them about Eucharist.
4. Invite the participants to present, out loud, their needs and the needs of others to Jesus.
5. Invite the participants to close the group's prayer time by offering prayers of gratitude for the time they were blessed to spend in prayer with Jesus. Close by praying together a Glory Be.
6. Invite them to leave the tabernacle area quietly and to return to the other learning centers.

## Activity 4. A Form of Lectio Divina

This learning activity center explores a process of group contemplation on a Scripture passage that could be used by households or small communities. Scripture is an important element of Catholic prayer and devotion, for as the *Catechism* says,

“The Church forcefully and specially exhorts all the Christian faithful . . . to learn 'the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ' (*Phil* 3:8) by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. . . . Let them remember, however, that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that a dialogue takes place between God and man. For 'we speak to him when we pray; we listen to him when we read the divine oracles'" (2653).

### Preparation

Develop a prayer space with a circle of chairs and a prayer center containing a bible, a candle, and a large bowl of water.

Prepare Handout #5 as directed.

Select a short Scripture passage—one from a church event being prepared for, if suitable, or a reading from the upcoming Sunday. Select the passage based on these criteria:

1. It is easy for all participants to understand.
2. It is no longer than 8-12 verses.
3. It contains imagery or words that will speak easily to the group.

Or consider using one of these passages:

- Luke 5:1-11 The Call of Simon the Fisherman
- John 6:16-21 Walking on the Water
- Romans 8:35-39 What Will Separate Us from the Love of Christ

### Materials

- Prepare Handout #5.
- Large bowl of water, Bible, candle

## Activity Plan

Invite participants to sit comfortably on a chair with their feet flat on the floor (if they can reach it) and their hands resting on their lap. If the floor is carpeted, some participants may choose to lie flat on their backs with their hands resting by their sides.

Share with them that this learning center is going to be a group experience of praying with Scripture using the following process.

I will read aloud a Scripture passage, and you will have a few minutes of silence to pray with it and to ponder in silence what it might be saying to you.



The same passage will be read again, followed by a few minutes of silence, after which you will be invited to speak out loud a word or two from the Scripture passage that is echoing in your heart, or that stands out for you in some way.

(Using the bowl of water, touch the center of it to create some ripples.) The sharing of the Word can be compared to a stone being thrown into a pool of water – once a word is spoken, wait for the ripples to end before you share your word.

I will read the Scripture passage a final time, and you will then be invited to briefly share with each other what challenge or insight the passage presents to you.

We will close by praying together the Glory Be.

Ask participants if they have any questions, then guide them through the process just as you described it to them. You may choose to begin the process with a song to help the group focus, such as “Open my Heart, Lord” (Jesse Manibusan) or a simple *Taizé* chant.

After they have experienced the process, invite their comments and reflections about the experience.

Give each participant a copy of the prayer card, Handout #5: Vocal Prayer: Sharing Scripture, as a guide to praying this way at home.

## Activity 5: Saints and Catholic Spirituality

This learning activity center explores the role of saints in Catholic spirituality. Participants will be invited to read about a saint and then create a prayer to that saint.

### Preparation

Place a variety of saint pictures around the learning space, including patron saints of your parish and other parishes in the area.

Participants need copies of saint stories or story books about the saints lives or access to online websites with the lives of the saints.

### Materials

- Saint pictures
- Blank cardstock, cut to the same size as the other prayer cards attached to participant prayer rings, hole-punched in the left-hand corner. These will be used to write their prayer to a saint.
- Scrap paper and pens

## Activity Plan

Share the following:

Do you have pictures of loved ones in your home? Most of us do. We place them in plain view to remind us of those who are important to us. The same can be true with saints. You may be drawn to a particular saint because of his or her gift to the Church, and you may have an icon, statue, or painting of that saint in your home. The image reminds you of that saint's witness.

In the Catholic tradition, saints are seen as mediators of God's mercy and compassion. A mediator is someone who brings two people or two groups together. Jesus is the central mediator in our faith, for as God incarnate he brought humanity and God together. Mary, as the Mother of God, is also seen as a mediator. Saints also are mediators because they can bring us closer to God. We do not worship them; we simply honor them for challenging us with their holiness, and showing us that an intimate relationship with God is possible.

Invite participants to read together (or to repeat after you) the prayer to St. Martin de Porres. They will find the prayer on one of the cards that they were given in the All Ages Learning Experience.

St. Martin, patron saint of social justice, call forth from us hearts open to the needs of those around us. Help us to live simple lives and to share our resources with others. Bless us with courage to reach out to the poor and to spend time in solidarity with them.

Call us to prayer, that our hearts may be transformed to love and serve others. Amen.

Share with the participants that the prayer was created by someone who read about St. Martin's life and his work with the poor. From his life story, the writer created a prayer connected to St. Martin's witness and passions.

Invite the participants to choose a saint (in whatever form you are providing them – handout, card, book, internet) that is of interest to them. Challenge them to read about the saint and then to write a prayer to that saint. Encourage them to write the prayer on scrap paper first, and when satisfied with their prayer, to write it on the card stock that they can attach to their prayer ring.

Parents and young children should work together on this activity.

## Activity 6. St. Hildegarde Celebrates Creation

This learning activity center explores nature as part of Catholic prayer and spirituality.

### Preparation

Develop a prayer space that celebrates nature—plants, water, fire, and so on.

Copy Handout #6 for participants.

There are two ways to offer this learning center. You can invite the participants to go for a ten-minute walk around the church grounds and neighborhood, and then ring a bell for them to return for the remainder of the learning activity. Or you can facilitate the entire learning experience indoors using pictures of nature.

### Materials

- Nature items
- Nature pictures if you are selecting the indoor option.
- Blank cardstock cut to the same size as the other prayer cards attached to participant prayer rings, hole punched in the left-hand corner.
- Scrap paper and pens
- Handout #6 for activity leaders and participants/families.

## Activity Plan

Begin by sharing:

The Catechism says that “God speaks to man through the visible creation. The material cosmos is so presented to man's intelligence that he can read there traces of its Creator. Light and darkness, wind and fire, water and earth, the tree and its fruit speak of God and symbolize both his greatness and his nearness” (1147).

St. Hildegarde of Bingen was the Abbess and foundress of a Benedictine religious community. She was an author, a theologian, a prophet, a preacher, a musician and composer, a poet and artist, a doctor and pharmacist. Hildegarde is honored as a visionary whose ecological and holistic spirituality speaks prophetically to our time. She had a wide understanding of the cosmos as a whole and of the human place in it. Human beings, she wrote, are the universe in microcosm, made of the same elements that constitute the world. But within the great cosmos human beings are the thinking heart, called to be co-creators with God in shaping the world.”

Hildegarde often used creation images to describe God:

“the breeze that nurtures all things”

“the rain coming from the dew causing the grass to laugh with the joy of life”

“the aroma of holy work.”

People often say that one of their favorite places to pray and to feel closer to God is outdoors. Whether that be quietly paddling a canoe down a river, hiking up a mountain trail, or enjoying the

beauty of the trees and flowers in one's neighborhood, God is found in the celebration and appreciation of the created earth.

Invite participants to name how God speaks through nature to them, or where they easily see God in nature.

Share with participants that in this learning center they will be praying with nature—either through a walk or by looking at a picture of nature.

### **Walk Instructions**

Invite participants to go for a walk outside on the church grounds or through the neighborhood. Tell them they will have about ten minutes to do so and that you will ring a bell when it is time for them to return. As they walk they are to quietly ponder the majesty and beauty of God in nature. When they return from their walk they will be invited to create a canticle of creation, a prayer of praise to God for the beauty of creation.

### **Picture Instructions**

Invite participants to select a picture from the collection of nature pictures. Invite them to spend a few minutes quietly reflecting on the beauty of God's creation and allow nature to speak to them of God's love and care for them.

### **Canticle of Creation Instructions**

Following their walk outdoors or their quiet reflection on a picture, read aloud to the group Daniel 3:62-68. Share with the group that this passage from Daniel is a canticle, a song of praise to God for creation.

“Bless the Lord, sun and moon;  
sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.  
Bless the Lord, stars of heaven;  
sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.  
Bless the Lord, all rain and dew;  
sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.  
Bless the Lord, all you winds;  
sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.  
Bless the Lord, fire and heat;  
sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.  
Bless the Lord, winter cold and summer heat;  
sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.  
Bless the Lord, dews and falling snow;  
sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever” (Daniel 3:62-68).

Pass the scrap paper and cardstock for their prayer ring to each participant or family with children. Invite them to write a canticle of creation based on their experience of praying with nature. Provide them with Handout #6 so that they can refer to the reading from Daniel as needed.

## Part 4. Sharing Learning Reflections (5–15 minutes)

Gather all participants at their tables and give them a blank prayer card that can be attached to their prayer ring and invite them to write a prayer for another “pray-er”. Once they have written the prayer, invite them to exchange their prayers and attach their newly received prayer to their prayer ring.

Ask each person in the table group to share several things they learned and/or created in their learning activity centers. They could share their home crosses and read to each other some of the prayers that they wrote and placed on their prayer ring.

Present the following information using the words below or your own words:

Think of everything we have done in this session to understand Catholic Devotions and Prayers. To help us take our learning from this session and live it in our lives and homes, reflect on the following questions and share your thoughts with your group.

- What new insights about Catholic Prayers and Devotions did you discover through this session?
- How will your learning influence your practice of prayer?

Invite participants to take several minutes for small group sharing.

## Part 5. Closing Prayer Service (5–10 minutes)

### Gather

Pray together the Hail Mary followed by the Glory Be, referring participants to their prayer rings if necessary.

### Listen

#### Reading One: A reading from the Letter of James

“Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective” (James 5:13-16).

#### Reading Two: A reading from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

“...the life of prayer is the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God and in communion with him. This communion of life is always possible because, through Baptism, we have already been united with Christ. Prayer is *Christian* insofar as it is communion with Christ and extends throughout the Church, which is his Body” (2565).

### Respond

Invite participants to hold out their prayer rings for a blessing:

Creator God, bless these prayer rings that we have created. May they be tools for us to renew our relationship with you, and to strengthen us to be your love in the world. Bless them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

**Go Forth**

Invite participants to pray together the prayer to St. Martin de Porres (found on their prayer ring), and challenge them to continue to pray the prayer for the next eight days like a novena.

**Novena to St. Martin de Porres**

St. Martin, patron saint of social justice,

Call forth from us hearts open to the needs of those around us.

Help us to live simple lives and to share our resources with others.

Bless us with courage to reach out to the poor and to spend time in solidarity with them.

Call us to prayer, that our hearts may be transformed to love and serve others.

Amen.

Close prayer with the Sign of the Cross.