



WEEK ONE

SPF: Say Prayers Frequently

INTENTIONAL PRAYER

We have been created with both body and soul. As food feeds the body, prayer feeds the soul. Thus, prayer is necessary for our survival. When we pray, we enter into a conversation with God. We ask Him for forgiveness, guidance, and strength. We thank Him for His many blessings. We ask Him to take care of those who are in need. We bring our prayers to life through our worship in the church and in the home, both as a family and as individuals. As we begin our summer journey to *Soak Up the SON*, we need to begin our journey with prayer.

Lord Jesus, You traveled with the two disciples after the resurrection and set their hearts on fire with Your grace. Travel also with us and gladden our hearts with Your presence. We know, Lord, that we are pilgrims on this earth, seeking the citizenship that is in heaven. During our journey surround us with Your holy angels and keep us safe from seen and unseen dangers. Grant that we may carry out our plans and fulfill our expectations according to Your will. Help us to see the beauty of creation and to comprehend the wonder of Your truth in all things. For You are the way, the truth, and the life, and to You we give thanks, praise, and glory forever. Amen.

—Prayer Before a Journey

Now read and discuss the following, adapting as needed depending on the age of your child(ren):

If we pray, and learn little by little to live in the spirit of prayer, we create an atmosphere in which children taste prayer and God's presence. If we dwell in this spirit, even without words, even before children can speak, they can acquire a natural taste for prayer, and the desire to know God.

-Sister Magdalen

How is prayer present in our home?

The affairs of the world are so numerous that they could hardly be completed in a hundred years, and so important that they will not allow any kind of delay. To our misfortune, only God-pleasing works can be set aside without fear, some until morning, some until next year, and some even until old age, for which reason it often happens that they remain unfulfilled.

-St. Anthony of Optina

When do you pray as individuals... as a couple... as a family?

Prayer has wings, which can take you to the invisible, the transcendent and the incomprehensible. You can pray with words of mouth but also with silent heartbeats. You can pray in church but also in the kitchen, the bedroom of your house, or in your car on your way to your task. You can pray with a loud voice but also with sighs and tears. - Fr. Demetrios J. Constantelos

Where do you pray?

What then is prayer? Prayer is the raising of the mind and heart to God in praise and thanksgiving to Him and in supplication for the good things that we need, both spiritual and physical. The essence of prayer is therefore the spiritual lifting of the heart toward God.

—St. Theophan the Recluse

How do you pray? Do you always use a prayer book, say a particular prayer, or do you just use your own word?

Pick one area of your prayer life that you want to build on this summer. Commit to it daily—decide when, where, and how. Keep it simple—better to commit to one thing consistently than to set goals that are overly ambitious. If regular prayer is new to your home, consider meeting with your parish priest for guidance. Check out our resources to help you and your family in your prayer life.

Dive In: Media Fast

Many of us are constantly plugged in to computers, tablets, and smartphones in a quest to be constantly “connected.” And while these electronic marvels can, in fact, efficiently access information, facilitate communication, and offer a myriad of entertainment options, a mindful schedule of “a time and a place” appropriateness should be considered. Unfortunately, there can be a temptation to swap valuable face-to-face connections with family members for excessive—and isolating—screen time.

And just as the Church prescribes fasting as a self-denying way to grow closer to God, your family can set aside time to “fast” from the aforementioned list of electronics (and the TV, too!) for time spent together. Make the expectations clear, and allow for any pressing exceptions. The duration can be as short or long as you choose. During the break, determine an activity that will encourage family bonding. When the fast is complete, talk about how it went. Was it difficult to stop texting your friends for those three hours? How might it become a frequent practice in the home to initiate healthier media consumption—to prioritize family connections over electronic ones?

Going Deeper

Over the centuries, much has been said and written about the Jesus Prayer. And with good reason! In a concise manner, praying “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner” (or one of its variations) helps us to follow the Apostle Paul’s exhortation to “pray without ceasing” (Thessalonians 5:17). The greatest commandment—that we love God with all of our heart, soul,

mind, and strength—requires from us a steadfast effort to keep Him in the forefront of our conscience—and this is through the work of continual prayer. The more we pray, the more we are mindful to live according to God’s will.

While it can be often identified as the inaudible, repetitive, and intuitive petition of monks and nuns, the Jesus Prayer—and its grace—is certainly afforded to those of us living outside the monastic vocation. If the prayer isn’t familiar to your family, begin a conversation that will introduce it into your life of prayer. We may not repeat the prayer, like the autobiographical narrator of *The Way of a Pilgrim*, thousands of times per day, but with mindfulness it can be frequently offered, with the voice or silently, in our eternal journey to union with God!

This simple guide by Dr. Albert S. Rossi will help get you started: www.svots.edu/saying-jesus-prayer.

Take pictures, and don’t forget to share with us! #soakuptheSON

Vitamin D: Silence

Finding silence is a challenge in our fast-paced world. But it is so vital to our physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Read the following quotes and discuss the questions that follow.

Let us always guard our tongue; not that it should always be silent, but that it should speak at the proper time. —St. John Chrysostom

- How do we determine when to speak?
- Do we give much consideration to our thoughts?
- How can we try to give more thought and prayer before we speak to help us ascertain that we are speaking at the proper time?

A man may seem to be silent, but if his heart is condemning others, he is babbling ceaselessly. But there may be another who talks from morning till night and yet he is truly silent, that is, he says nothing that is not profitable. —Abba Pimen

- How can we be silent with our mouths but still babbling?
- How can we talk and be silent?
- How can we work to quiet our minds?

Silence prepares a soul for prayer. Stillness—how beneficially it acts upon a soul. —St. Nikon

- How can silence prepare our soul for prayer?
- What is the difference between silence and stillness?
- How can stillness be beneficial to our soul?
- How can we find more time to practice both?

