

# Thomistic Prayer

The main emphasis in this type of prayer is on orderly progression of thought. Close attention to the process of rational thinking is required as your intellect leads from one proposition to another until you draw a logical conclusion – perhaps ending in some resolution or ethical demand. Thomistic prayer may seem more like study and reflection than “real prayer”; however, if the steps of *lectio divina* are followed, this will be much more than merely an intellectual exercise.

Thomistic prayer is not complete when it is confined solely to the rational processes. You also need to respond with feeling and personal involvement, involving the heart as well as the head. Also, you will need to pause from time to time to allow your intuition to contribute new insights or inspirations.

All four steps of the *lectio divina* will be used, but the main emphasis will be on the orderly progression of thought from cause to effect in the meditation step of the prayer. The reading step may or may not involve a direct reading of the Bible but may simply begin with some point of teaching of the Bible that has been further developed by theological reflection.

In this type of prayer, you will take a virtue, fault, or truth and “walk around it,” studying it from every possible angle. It may be easiest and most helpful to approach the subject of your prayer with the seven questions: what, why, how, who, where, when, and with what helps. For example, you might take the virtue of faith as your prayer subject. You then ask: What do we mean by faith? What is entailed in the practice of faith? What are the reasons to justify the pursuit of faith? Why should I have faith? What is the value of it? How might I practice faith? When and where should it be practiced? Who are the edifying biblical or historical examples of its practice?

Your prayer in the Thomistic style, in this example, would conclude with suitable

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resolutions of how you are going to practice the virtue of faith. It will be helpful if you take some short scriptural phrase or another appropriate saying as a “spiritual bouquet” or mantra which you will repeat through the day as a centering prayer. This will help you continue the prayerful reflections begun during your formal prayer time.

### PRAYER SUGGESTION

Read Matthew 6:19-24. How does this teaching of Jesus differ from the generally accepted practice and teaching of today’s world? How far are you willing to go to follow Jesus in his teaching about true riches? In what ways are you trying to serve two masters? In your life, who are the different masters that determine what you do, how you act, where you spend your time, your money, your energy? What practical changes do you need to make in your present life in order to bring it more into accord with the teachings of Jesus?

### ANOTHER SUGGESTION

Read Matthew 13:44-46. Where have you discovered the hidden treasure of God’s kingdom? Are you willing to sell everything in order to possess it? What does “selling” mean if it’s applied to something intangible like a bias, a commitment, or a perspective? Have you disposed of everything else in order to obtain it? What else must you rid yourself of? Do you sufficiently appreciate the hidden treasure of God’s kingdom? What must you do to better appreciate this hidden treasure, this pearl of great price?

*Instead of gathering knowledge, you should clear your mind. If your mind is clear, true knowledge is already yours. —D. T. Suzuki, Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*