

In the *Our Father*, Jesus teaches us to forgive others from our hearts as we ask God to forgive us. We can't pray the *Our Father* earnestly and still hold a grudge; we can't say this prayer meditatively and lovingly and not forgive hurts and injury. Forgiveness is basic. Harboring resentment is self-destructive as well as destructive to a relationship with others.

GETTING 'STRAIGHT WITH GOD'

We are apt to neglect it, but in no other area of marriage is it so important to become one as in the spiritual. Praying together can deepen this oneness. Christian marriage counselor Dr. Gordon Beckstead, founder of *Inspirational Tape Library*, says, "More and more I've found that if troubled couples can get straight with God, their problems will straighten out. If a couple will spend several minutes a day praying together about things that are a problem in their family it will make all the difference."

"Share your encounter with Christ and you will find your marriage richer for it."

A FEW HINTS:

- ◆ Don't reject the other's invitation to pray. Agree gracefully. Put down your book. Forego part of a TV program. Postpone the shampoo that can't wait or the children's homework that must be done *now*.

- ◆ If you have an evening planned get your prayer time in before the evening's activities begin.
- ◆ Don't let the devil trick you into being embarrassed or too shy to pray aloud with your spouse.
- ◆ Arrange a quiet spot where you can withdraw from distractions. When his apostles had no leisure Jesus said to them. "Come by yourselves to an out-of-the-way place and rest a little" (Mk 6:31).

Why not establish this way of relating to God and to each other? You'll want to make it a daily part of your lives together.

SUGGESTED MODEL

Lord on this day we give you thanks for:

Lord, knowing that you listen to us, we ask for the following needs:

End with the Our Father.

**CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF DALLAS
MARRIAGE MINISTRIES**

Couples Who Pray Together...

WHY?

HOW?



"Again, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matthew 18:19-20

COUPLES WHO PRAY TOGETHER

How many of you pray together at home as a couple?

How many of you pray aloud in your own words?

The questioner was Father Francis MacNutt, and those being questioned were married couples on retreat.

Father MacNutt believes that sharing prayer — conversational prayer if you will, talking with God in your own words — can be a way of deepening communication for a couple. “In prayer you draw closer to God. In sharing an inner spiritual experience you inevitably draw closer to one another.”

Father Charles Gallagher, S.J., a prime developer of Marriage Encounter in the United States, says, “It’s a shame that married people too often limit their prayer life to an individual activity. No area of our life do we keep so much to ourselves in married life as we do our prayer life.”

Writing in “Love Center,” his column in the national Catholic weekly *Visitor*, Father explains why couples ought to pray together. “First of all,” he explains, “going to him with the one he has given you to love totally and exclusively is especially pleasing to him. Secondly, one of the great values and graces we have to bring to our spouse is our spirituality. Our Father really wants us to share with one another what he means to us and how his Son is guiding our lives. **He doesn’t want us to keep him private.**”

SHARING PRAYER THOUGHTS

Why then, do we hesitate to share our spiritual life with the one closest to us? Tradition may be the answer. In the past, few of us learned to pray aloud in our own words in the presence of another. We grew up with family prayers learned at our mother’s knee. Of course all our lives we pray in our own words in praise and thanksgiving at joyous times, in desperation and penance at others. We leave the confessional with a song in our heart. Yet, rarely are we accustomed to sharing our prayer thoughts.

Another reason for our reticence is shyness. Through embarrassment or lack of trust we fear exposing our innermost thoughts. We fear to open up. World famous Swiss psychiatrist Paul Tournier says it is precisely in the area of religion that we are most fearful of showing our real feelings. In his book *To Understand Each Other*, Dr. Tournier writes that expressing “their innermost convictions, their own relationship to God... Is the highest tie binding a couple together, yet it is rare.”

If we want to pray aloud with one another, how do we begin? We can start by wanting to share not only popular prayers but informal prayer in our own words. We can share the thoughts that come from reading God’s Holy Word, from contemplation, from meditation.

Know that Jesus is with you. Pray with candor, with humility. When you pray with your partner share your hopes,

your fears, your doubts, your needs. Jesus makes it easy for us. He says, “Ask believing” (Mk 11:24; Mt 21:22), “ask with persistence” (Lk 11:8).

ALL THINGS IN HIS NAME

In our own case, we pray for each other, for patience and strength in facing life together. We pray for wisdom in business decisions; for help in dealing with neighbors or with in-laws, with the building contractor and plumber. We pray together when plans go awry, in times of temptation, irritation or sorrow.

We pray for our kids. We have prayed aloud while doing dishes, while cleaning the basement. My husband says he learned to pray aloud as a youth while plowing behind a team or using a walking cultivator. He says he would pray and sing all the parts of High Mass he could recall.

We have prayed sitting on the sofa in the living room, at a picnic on a blanket. One memorable Sunday we said the rosary by the side of a small lake while sailboats lazily followed the breeze.

We have prayed on our knees, on our feet, sitting or lying down. Posture isn’t important. Attitude is. Putting your affairs in God’s hands is prayer. Unburdening your hearts to Jesus is prayer. A song of praise is prayer, so is a sigh of thanksgiving. Skipping and dancing and leaping before the Lord is prayer. Sitting quietly and letting God fill your inner being is prayer.