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Praying the Lord's Prayer

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This paper suggests ways in which one may be enabled to better pray the Lord's Prayer – a prayer that many classical expositors have treated as “a compendium of the whole gospel concerning God, humankind and salvation”.¹ It will be argued that the Lord's Prayer can be accommodated in the three major expressions of prayer in the Christian tradition: vocal, meditative, and contemplative.² General principles for praying the Lord's Prayer are also presented.

The Lord's Prayer

For the purpose of this paper, the Matthaean version of the Lord's Prayer is used. While the exact date of the prayer cannot be determined, it originates perhaps in the first century, in a Syrian milieu, possibly not far from Matthew's own community”.³ If the prayer was, according to Jones, “originally taught and dictated by Jesus, it is the only instance of such a procedure on his part; and if he did so it is surprising that his followers should have felt free to adapt it, either by embellishment (Matthew) or abbreviation (Luke)”.⁴ Jones' insight supports the idea that the prayer is not a set liturgical form that Jesus himself prayed or asked his disciples to pray, but is a model that illustrates prayer from a responsive heart – or, as Gruenler states, “the type of prayer appropriate to the person who worships deeply without hypocrisy”.⁵

¹ C. P. M. Jones, “The New Testament”, in *The Study of Spirituality*, ed. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward Yarnold, SJ (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 74.

² *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 711.

³ Jones, “The New Testament”, 71.

⁴ Jones, “The New Testament”, 71.

⁵ R. G. Gruenler, “Lord's Prayer”, in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2d ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2001), 702.

The prayer may be outlined as follows in Table 1:

Table 1. Outline of the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)

Outline	Petitions	Mega-themes
Introduction	"Our Father in heaven" – the introduction recognizes the intimate relationship between believers and the family of God, which is above the transitory existence on earth. ⁶	Father
Three petitions to the Father for his glory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● First petition: "Hallowed by your name". ● Second petition: "Your kingdom come". ● Third petition: "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven". 	Name Kingdom God's will
Four petitions to the Father for human needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● First petition: "Give us this day our daily bread". ● Second petition: "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors". ● Third petition: "And do not bring us to the time of trial". ● Fourth petition: "Rescue us from the evil one". 	Provision Forgiveness Protection Deliverance

Source: *Holy Bible with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books: New Revised Standard Version* (New York: HarperCollins, 1989), 11-12.

Vocal Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

To begin with, vocal prayer may be defined as that prayer which is made by using words or some approved form of words, which we read or recite.⁷ The *Catechism* assures believers that vocal prayer is an essential part of the Christian life – and that “to his disciples, drawn by their Master’s silent prayer, Jesus teaches a vocal prayer, the Our Father”.⁸

⁶ Gruenler, “Lord’s Prayer”, 702.

⁷ Dom Vitalis Lehody, “Of Prayer and Especially of Vocal Prayer”, in *The Ways of Mental Prayer* (Dublin: Gill, 1949; reprint, Tan Reprint, 1999), 5 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 712.

Lehody comments favourably:

Vocal prayer is not to be despised, for, if well made, it pays to God the homage of our body as well as that of our soul. A heart full of devotion pours itself out quite naturally in words and signs which express externally its interior sentiments; on the other hand, when there is need to excite such sentiments, these pious formulas fix the attention of the mind, and call forth the devotion of the heart.⁹

Based on this definition and description of vocal prayer, the Lord's Prayer is suited for this type of prayer.

However, cautions Lehody, "we must not confine ourselves to reciting the words with our lips; it is necessary that we should raise to God our mind by attention, our heart by devotion, and our will by submission".¹⁰ The *Catechism* likewise emphasizes that "the heart should be present to him to whom we are speaking in prayer".¹¹

When the Lord's Prayer is vocalized, it is also internalized to the extent that one becomes aware of him "to whom we speak".¹² Related to this thought, is what St. Ignatius taught as a manner of vocal prayer that is meditated.¹³ Lehody summarizes this method of praying – partly vocal, partly mental – as follows: "It consists in taking any vocal prayer, the *Pater* [for example], . . . and in meditating upon the words of this prayer, quitting the first word to pass on to the second, only when the former ceases to afford us any more thoughts or affections".¹⁴ In this way, as the *Catechism* also concurs, the vocal prayer develops into a preliminary form of contemplative prayer.¹⁵

⁹ Lehody, "Of Prayer and Especially of Vocal Prayer", 5-6.

¹⁰ Lehody, "Of Prayer and Especially of Vocal Prayer", 8.

¹¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 712.

¹² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 712.

¹³ Dom Vitalis Lehody, "Equivalentents of Meditation", in *The Ways of Mental Prayer* (Dublin: Gill, 1949; reprint, Tan Reprint, 1999), 172 (page citations are to the reprint edition). Note: Lehody further comments as follows: "St. Ignatius teaches it in his "Exercises"; St. Teresa extols it, especially in her "Way of Perfection", and describes in very great detail the means to succeed in it" (page 172).

¹⁴ Lehody, "Equivalentents of Meditation", 172-173.

¹⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 713.

Meditation and the Lord's Prayer

Lehody, in *The Ways of Mental Prayer*, isolates four elements comprising meditation: considerations (reflections), affections, petitions, and resolutions.¹⁶ Expressed in another way, as in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, meditation involves thought, emotion, desire, and imagination.¹⁷

Accordingly, in relation to the Lord's Prayer, a person can begin to meditate (that is, consider and reflect) with heart and mind on its mega-themes – Father, name, kingdom, God's will, provision, forgiveness, protection, and deliverance – as Table 2 suggests.¹⁸

Table 2. Meditation¹⁹ on the Lord's Prayer

<u>Lord's Prayer</u>	<u>Mega-themes</u>	<u>Meditation: Reflections</u>
Our Father in heaven	Father	● God's supremacy, compassion, and care.
Hallowed be your name	Name	● The lives of people, and the created world, honouring the name of the Father who is their Creator.
Your kingdom come	Kingdom	● God's eternal sovereignty realized in the world.
Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven	God's Will	● The needs and desires of Gods' people found within the sphere of the Father and the Kingdom.

¹⁶ Dom Vitalis Lehody, "Body of the Meditation", in *The Ways of Mental Prayer* (Dublin: Gill, 1949; reprint, Tan Reprint, 1999), 120 (page citations are to the reprint edition). Also in Dom Vitalis Lehody, "Mental Prayer – Its Object", in *The Ways of Mental Prayer* (Dublin: Gill, 1949; reprint, Tan Reprint, 1999), 13 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

¹⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 713.

¹⁸ Michael Ramsey, "Teaching the Disciples", in *Be Still and Know* (London: Fontana, 1982; reprint, Cowley, 1992), 29 (page citation is to the reprint edition).

¹⁹ Lehody, "Body of the Meditation", 120. Note: As stated earlier in the paper, Lehody gives four components for meditation – considerations (reflections), affections, petitions, and resolutions. In this table, only considerations (reflections) are presented.

Give us this day our daily bread	Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● God's gracious providence so ordering things that there will not be want or worry about the coming day. ● The new age and its heavenly provision being present here and now in the tasks of today and tomorrow. ● Unselfishness, brotherhood, and compassion shown toward fellow human beings near and far.
And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors	Forgiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● God forgiving his people, knowing that they must be forgiving themselves. ● Any unforgiveness confessed to receive God's forgiveness.
And do not bring us into temptation	Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● God's people not brought into temptation that they cannot bear. ● Believers delivered from the tribulation – the catastrophic trial prior to the Messianic age.
But rescue us from the evil one	Deliverance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The people of God protected from the evil one. ● God's people not snatched by the evil one for his own evil ends and purposes.

Source: Michael Ramsey, "Teaching the Disciples", in *Be Still and Know* (London: Fontana, 1982; reprint, Cowley, 1992), 27-35 (page citation is to the reprint edition).

Such meditation (considerations and reflections) will then give rise to affections, petitions, and resolutions.

Firstly, as one considers the introduction and seven requests in the Lord's Prayer, certain *affections* will arise from the reflections.²⁰ "Our Father", for example, may prompt love, gratitude, confidence, and humility.²¹ "Your kingdom come" might call forth a certain contempt of this world and a longing after eternal realities.²² "Forgive us our debts" could bring about regret for the past and possibly remorse over the present.²³

²⁰ Dom Vitalis Lehody, "Prayer of Meditation – Compendium of the Method", in *The Ways of Mental Prayer* (Dublin: Gill, 1949; reprint, Tan Reprint, 1999), 89 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

²¹ Lehody, "Prayer of Meditation, 90.

²² Lehody, "Prayer of Meditation, 90.

²³ Lehody, "Prayer of Meditation, 90.

Secondly, the affections and feelings engendered will then lead to *petitions*. For the Lord's Prayer, the seven petitions may well echo one's own fervent yearnings and desires. "Hallowed by your name", for example, may be a heartfelt petition "to be holy and blameless before him in love" (Eph 1:4).²⁴ "Your will be done" might yield a petition to truly do what is pleasing to the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit.²⁵ "Do not bring us into temptation" could bring about a plea not to choose a particular course of action that leads to sin.²⁶

Thirdly, the affections and petitions ought to lead to firm resolutions – which ideally need to be put into practice during the same day.²⁷ Lehody counsels that "one single resolution, precise and thoroughly practical, suffices, provided only that it be kept".²⁸ "Give us this day our daily bread", for example, may lead to a firm resolution not to give sway to "nagging worry and preoccupation"²⁹ over one's finances.

To sum up, having come into the Divine presence – into the realm of the Father – one can reflect on one or more of the requests in the Lord's Prayer, then acknowledge and experience appropriate feelings in relation to the request(s), form suitable petitions, and end by making one or more firm resolutions.³⁰

In reviewing the foregoing pattern of meditation, one should bear in mind a principle that Keating states: "Jesus did not teach a specific method of meditation . . . We should choose a spiritual practice adapted to our particular temperament and natural disposition. . . The Spirit is above every method or practice".³¹ Lehody likewise advises that the four elements of meditation described should not be enslaving and can have their

²⁴ *New Revised Standard Version*, 258. Also, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 739.

²⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 744.

²⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 751.

²⁷ Lehody, "Prayer of Meditation", 103. Note: In giving this guideline for implementing resolutions on the day they are made, Lehody is drawing on St. Francis of Sales in his book, *Devout Life*.

²⁸ Lehody, "Prayer of Meditation", 90.

²⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 746.

³⁰ Lehody, "Prayer of Meditation", 90-91.

³¹ Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart* (New York: Continuum, 1992), 113.

sequence altered through the movement of grace.³² He reminds readers that “prayer is more the work of the heart than of the head; it should, therefore, be simple, effective, and sincere”.³³

Before closing this section on meditation, the use of mantra and the Lord's Prayer will be addressed.

The term, mantra, used in this context will be as Casey defines – “a mantra is a short formula of prayer chosen because it adequately characterizes one's real status before God”.³⁴

When the introduction and seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer are stated as shown in Table 3 below, it can be argued that their form would be suitable as mantras.

Table 3. “Mantric Form” of the Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven.
Hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done.
Give us this day our daily bread.
Forgive us our debts.
Do not bring us into temptation.
Rescue us from the evil one.

Source: Holy Bible with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books: New Revised Standard Version (New York: HarperCollins, 1989), 11-12.

³² Lehody, “Prayer of Meditation”, 96-98.

³³ Lehody, “Prayer of Meditation”, 99.

³⁴ Michael Casey, “The Pilgrim's Lament”, *Tjurunga* 13 (1977): 365. Note: Casey writes that “the idea of using a short and simple prayer-form very often is almost universal both inside and outside Christianity” (page 364).

“A good mantra”, states Casey, “contains three elements: the subject (the person praying), an object (God), and a relationship (our desire for God or his saving action in our regard)”.³⁵ When applied to the “mantric form” of the Lord’s Prayer in Table 3 above, these three criteria fit each statement.

In selecting and using mantras, one should be guided by other needed characteristics of mantras. First, a mantra must start with oneself.³⁶ Second, it must express and reveal something of one’s deepest aspirations and yearnings – since a mantra is “an echo of the prayer constantly carried within the heart”.³⁷ Third, as Casey explains, “having brought us to an understanding of ourselves, the mantra must also provide a bridge which will carry us closer to God”.³⁸

In reviewing the introduction and seven petitions of the Lord’s Prayer in the light of the three integral features of mantras, the parts of the Lord’s Prayer could be selected as mantras.

Contemplation and the Lord’s Prayer

For the purpose of this paper, and in an attempt to simplify concepts, contemplation will refer to “a more simple form of prayer, in which the mind begins to be silent in order to let the heart speak”(or, *affective prayer* according to Lehody).³⁹ The work of the mind is diminished more and more, without, however, suppressing it.⁴⁰ By contrast, more and more of the time is “a conversation of the heart with God”.⁴¹

³⁵ Casey, “Pilgrim’s Lament”, 365. Note: Casey elaborates that “at times one or other of these elements may be merely implicit, but it is good – especially at the beginning – that all three aspects of prayer be present” (page 365).

³⁶ Casey, “Pilgrim’s Lament”, 366.

³⁷ Casey, “Pilgrim’s Lament”, 366-367. Note: Casey later elaborates on this thought by writing that “at different times in our lives we come across a few words which speak to us very intensely, seeming to contain our whole life within them and causing us to be saturated with the healing unction of grace” (page 367).

³⁸ Casey, “Pilgrim’s Lament”, 366.

³⁹ Dom Vitalis Lehody, “Of Affective Prayer”, in *The Ways of Mental Prayer* (Dublin: Gill, 1949; reprint, Tan Reprint, 1999), 178 (page citations are to the reprint edition). Note: Lehody refers to this as “affective prayer” (pages 178-179).

⁴⁰ Lehody, “Of Affective Prayer”, 179.

⁴¹ Lehody, “Of Affective Prayer”, 179.

Included in this definition of contemplation is that the activity of the intellect is lessened to the point where it “gradually comes to be contented with almost a thought, a memory, a glance; with contemplating, rather than meditating” (or, *prayer of simplicity* according to Lehody).⁴² In other words, prayer becomes much simpler, to point of becoming “a simple loving look”.⁴³

Initially, Lehody places both aspects of this type of contemplative prayer (“affective prayer” and “prayer of simplicity”) under the overall category of meditation.⁴⁴ Later, however, he concedes to using the term “contemplation” when defined in a wide sense as follows: “[It] is a prayer consisting of a simple, loving look upon God or upon the things of God; it is not occupied in seeking for the truth, like meditation; it possesses it [truth] and rests in it with love”.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the issue of definition is not a completely straightforward one.⁴⁶

Continuing in relation to contemplation – more specifically, active or acquired contemplation, in contrast to passive or infused contemplation⁴⁷ – Lehody states the “the whole essence of active contemplation is contained in these two words: *it looks and it loves* . . . it is a simple attention, a memory, a look, an intuition”.⁴⁸ Two elements are important: love always accompanies the look, and knowledge accompanies love.⁴⁹

⁴² Dom Vitalis Lehody, “Prayer of Simplicity”, in *The Ways of Mental Prayer* (Dublin: Gill, 1949; reprint, Tan Reprint, 1999), 190 (page citations are to the reprint edition). Note: Lehody refers to this as “prayer of simplicity” (page 190).

⁴³ Lehody, “Prayer of Simplicity”, 191.

⁴⁴ Lehody, “Of Affective Prayer”, 178-179.

⁴⁵ Lehody, “Prayer of Simplicity”, 192.

⁴⁶ Note: Lehody also states that “as long as our prayer is merely in process of being simplified, and is only imperfectly freed from reasonings . . . it does not deserve the name of contemplation” (Lehody, “Prayer of Simplicity”, 197.)

⁴⁷ Lehody, “Prayer of Simplicity”, 196. Note: Lehody concedes that “authors differ considerably in explaining these terms” (page 196). He then goes on to state that “in our opinion, *acquired* contemplation is that to which a person may raise himself by his own industry with the help of the ordinary graces of prayer”.

⁴⁸ Lehody, “Prayer of Simplicity”, 192-193. Note: Lehody adds that “the light has come, the convictions are well founded, the evidence is such, that the things of God are perceived almost as we perceive first principles; we remember, we look, we attend, and this is enough” (page 193).

⁴⁹ Lehody, “Prayer of Simplicity”, 193.

Finally, as Lehody notes, “the object of contemplation is God in himself or in his works; God is the primary object; the things of God are its secondary object”.⁵⁰

As far as the Lord's Prayer, one's reflections would become shorter and less numerous – that is, one could go through the introduction and seven petitions by merely glancing at them, rather than by meditating on them.⁵¹ This would prompt or excite in one's soul acts of love, gratitude, humility, and other affections or feelings, as shown in Table 4.⁵²

Table 4. Contemplation on the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)

<u>Outline</u>	<u>Introduction/Petitions</u>	<u>Affections</u>
Introduction	Father	Love ⁵³
Three petitions to the Father for <i>his glory</i>	Name Kingdom God's will	Holiness ⁵⁴ Righteousness, peace, joy ⁵⁵ Surrender ⁵⁶
Four petitions to the Father for <i>human needs</i>	Provision Forgiveness Protection Deliverance	Gratitude ⁵⁷ Contrition ⁵⁸ Vigilance ⁵⁹ Freedom ⁶⁰

Source: *Holy Bible with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books: New Revised Standard Version*, 11-12; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 726-756.

⁵⁰ Lehody, “Prayer of Simplicity”, 194.

⁵¹ Lehody, “Of Affective Prayer”, 187.

⁵² Lehody, “Of Affective Prayer”, 187.

⁵³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 736. Note: The *Catechism* states that “praying ‘our’ Father opens to us the dimensions of his love revealed in Christ . . . God’s care for all men and for the whole of creation has inspired all the great practitioners of prayer; it should extend our prayer to the full breadth of love whenever we dare to say ‘our’ Father” (page 736).

⁵⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 738. Note: The *Catechism* states that “the holiness of God is the inaccessible centre of his eternal mystery . . . God was to manifest his holiness by revealing and giving his name, in order to restore man to the image of his Creator” (page 738).

⁵⁵ *New Revised Standard Version*, 218. Romans 14:17 states that “For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but *righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*” [emphasis mine].

⁵⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 744. Note: The *Catechism* states that “we ask our Father to unite our will to his Son’s, in order to fulfil his will, his plan of salvation for the life of the world” (page 744).

⁵⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 745. Note: The *Catechism* states that “Jesus teaches us this petition, because it glorifies our Father by acknowledging how good he is, beyond all goodness” (page 745).

⁵⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 749. Note: The *Catechism* states that “our petition begins with a ‘confession’ of our wretchedness and his mercy” (page 749).

⁵⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 752. Note: The *Catechism* states that “he [Christ] urges us to *vigilance* of the heart in communion with his own. Vigilance is ‘custody of the heart’” (page 752).

⁶⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 754. Note: The *Catechism* states that “when we ask to be delivered from the Evil One, we pray as well to be freed from all evils, present, past, and future, of which he is the author or instigator” (page 754).

This contemplative prayer, described here, is at a higher level than meditation in relation to the affections.⁶¹ Lehody describes the process, regarding the affections or feelings, as far as the heart is concerned – and this process would apply in relation to the Lord's Prayer:

It [contemplative prayer] enters upon them [affections and feelings] at the very start, without the necessity of making its way to them by a process of reasoning; all therein is prayer, for the soul ceases not to adore God, to thank him, to ask pardon, and to beg for grace; pious colloquies naturally flow from a heart where love is already burning, from a will practised in virtues. Prayer is no longer a laborious conversation, it is an affectionate and familiar outpouring of the soul into the bosom of her Well-Beloved.⁶²

Using contemplation for the Lord's Prayer, one sees, "as it were by intuition, but in a most vivid, real way", the petitions made and resolutions to be taken.⁶³ Lehody suggests a way in which the effectiveness of praying the Lord's Prayer in such a manner can be measured: "There can be no doubt, however, that the effusions of your heart in prayer have been sincere and fruitful, if they have left you zealous in the discharge of all your duties [as expressed in the Lord's Prayer]".⁶⁴

⁶¹ Lehody, "Prayer of Simplicity", 200.

⁶² Lehody, "Prayer of Simplicity", 200.

⁶³ Lehody, "Prayer of Simplicity", 201.

⁶⁴ Lehody, "Prayer of Simplicity", 202.

Other Principles in Praying the Lord's Prayer⁶⁵

Praying the Lord's Prayer specifically, or other prayer generally, is governed by a number of principles that emerge from scriptural examples and metaphors.

One metaphor is that of the desert. Finding the desert involves *separation*, and implies *solitude* and *silence* – a worthy climate for prayer.⁶⁶

Separation includes not being conformed to this world's pattern of thought, but striving consciously to have the mind of Christ.⁶⁷ A person needs to be able to question and criticize the beliefs, values, and philosophy of society – and to be willing to be influenced, evangelized, and shaped by the Gospel.⁶⁸ Casey lists the following features of Western society that should be subjected to reflection and criticism: a loss of a sense of the sacred; approaching religion as a choice rather than a reality; life seen only as a functional reality with no transcendence; a progress and achievement mentality; an immediate gratification syndrome; modern minds devoid of a philosophy of life (“homeless minds”); impersonalisation; and an “opting out” syndrome.⁶⁹

In a world that emphasizes group processes, one needs a measure of solitude in which growth can occur. Jesus himself prayed in solitude.⁷⁰ Casey lists a number of strategies whereby a degree of solitude can be experienced: introducing an element of control into one's life (a mastery over instincts); carving out time in which God can enter one's life, transform it, and divinize it (time control); recognizing and dismantling

⁶⁵ Michael Casey, *Growth in Prayerfulness*, read by the author, Broken Bay Institute, 1979, CD. Note: The notes in this section are based on a 12-part series of tapes on the subject of “Growth in Prayerfulness” produced by Father Michael Casey in 1979 at what is now the Broken Bay Institute in Pennant Hills, NSW, in Australia. Father Michael Casey is a Cistercian monk of Tarrawarra Abbey in Victoria.

⁶⁶ Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #1)*.

⁶⁷ Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #1)*.

⁶⁸ Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #1)*.

⁶⁹ Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #1 and Tape#2)*.

⁷⁰ Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #2)*.

dependencies in life; confronting and dealing with one's limiting psychological make-up; and becoming aware of the presence of mystery in life.⁷¹

Silence does not come easy in a world of endless noise and self-expression – rather, one needs to stop and reflect in order to allow the possibility of growth through being quiet and silent.⁷² Casey enumerates a number of factors to consider in pursuing silence: guarding against the sins of the tongue; limiting empty and trivial conversations; being aware of the influence of residual images and emotions from prior conversations; and curtailing the large amount of time consumed in speech.⁷³

In sum, the call to prayer involves a degree of separation to step back from society, solitude to be freed from one's limitations, and silence to grow in sensitivity.⁷⁴

Furthermore, an overarching principle pertaining to prayer, one that has been lost during the past few hundred years, is that prayer is of the heart – in other words, the heart is the site of prayer.⁷⁵ Often people concentrate on external aspects of behaviour and experience – and fail to put down roots into their deepest stratum, or centre of their being, for there God will be found.⁷⁶ Believers are sharers in the divine nature, and God dwells in their heart.⁷⁷ In reality, prayer comes up from the heart, from the sub-conscious, and bursts briefly into consciousness.⁷⁸ Prayer takes its origin, not on the level of thought or imagination, but entirely from the level of the heart.⁷⁹ Consequently, prayer cannot simply be a religious ritual and be divorced from the reality of one's being.⁸⁰ In other words, since

⁷¹ Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #2)*.

⁷² Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #2)*.

⁷³ Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #2)*.

⁷⁴ Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #2)*.

⁷⁵ Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #3)*. Note: Casey further states that this is not a specifically religious construct. Not only Christians have hearts! In human life, it is important to recognize that religion is fundamental in the human reality.

⁷⁶ Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #3)*. Note: According to Casey, to understand this aspect of spirituality, a creative interaction is needed between psychology, anthropology, theology, and Scripture.

⁷⁷ Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #4)*.

⁷⁸ Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #4)*.

⁷⁹ Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #4)*.

⁸⁰ Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #4)*.

prayer has its origin in the sub-conscious, it is given – prayer cannot be produced or precipitated; one can only respond to it.⁸¹

Another foundational principle governing prayer is that the ground of prayer is not what one does – but what God has done; it is God's presence in one's life.⁸² God's self-revelation is the root of all relationship with God.⁸³ As a result, a person must do more than establish contact with their centre, but the seed of God's Word must be received and planted in the heart.⁸⁴ Prayer, then, cannot be generated by one's will, but comes through the Word of God – it is an automatic response of the heart produced by the spiritual food assimilated.⁸⁵

Finally, for the use of Scripture in relation to prayer, different ways exist to approach the Word of God.⁸⁶ Three time-proven methods are the exercise of sacred reading (*lectio divina*), the memorization of Psalms, and the use of short texts (mantras) which are an echo of the heart.⁸⁷

⁸¹ Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #4)*. Note: Casey elaborates further: The condition for prayer is not some technique, but non-activity. One needs to reduce conscious activity so that what is subconscious can surface. Prayer is not a manipulation of the organs of consciousness! As far as consciousness, prayer is nothing. It appears as sitting down, and doing nothing! But this is precisely what one should do. One needs to allow oneself to be vacant as far as the level of consciousness – so that the subconscious can surface. The presence of God, dwelling in the heart, can then impress upon a person. Prayer emerges in moments of restedness, in moments of non-activity. In a horizontal position! Often people comment on “resting in bed” was when something powerful happened.

⁸² Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #4)*.

⁸³ Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #5)*.

⁸⁴ Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #5)*.

⁸⁵ Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #5)*.

⁸⁶ Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #5)*.

⁸⁷ Michael Casey, *Prayerfulness (Tape #6)*.

Conclusion

Considering the Lord's Prayer in the context of the three main expressions of prayer – vocal, meditative, and contemplative – could these be approximately correlated with the degrees of progress in the Christian life? Such a correlation can only be tentative at best. The *Catechism* reminds one that “the Lord leads all persons by paths and in ways pleasing to him, and each believer responds according to his heart's resolve and the personal expressions of his prayer”.⁸⁸ Therefore, one must remain cautious in proposing a generalization as follows in Table 5:

Table 5. Correlation Between Christian Growth and Prayer

<u>Level</u>	<u>Prayer</u>	<u>Lehody⁸⁹ Model</u>
Beginners (purgative)	Vocal	Meditation
Proficients (illuminative)	Meditation	Affective Prayer
Advanced (unitive)	Contemplation	Prayer of Simplicity

Source: Lehody, Dom Vitalis. “The Elements of Success in Mental Prayer”. In *The Ways of Mental Prayer*. Dublin: Gill, 1949. Reprint, Tan Reprint, 1999.

⁸⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 711.

⁸⁹ Dom Vitalis Lehody, “The Elements of Success in Mental Prayer”, in *The Ways of Mental Prayer* (Dublin: Gill, 1949; reprint, Tan Reprint, 1999), 43 (page citations are to the reprint edition). Also in Dom Vitalis Lehody, “Prayer of Simplicity”, in *The Ways of Mental Prayer* (Dublin: Gill, 1949; reprint, Tan Reprint, 1999), 199 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

To conclude, this paper has examined praying the Lord's Prayer from the perspective of the three major expressions of prayer: vocal, meditative, and contemplative.⁹⁰ A number of overarching principles for praying (including the Lord's Prayer) have also been presented.

“In a word”, using Lehody's comments to summarize, “the [three] different kinds of prayer are so many various tools, which we take up or lay aside according to our need and advantage; if one serves us we make use of it; if it should prove rather a hindrance than a help, we should lay it aside for one more useful”.⁹¹

⁹⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 711.

⁹¹ Lehody, “Prayer of Simplicity”, 205.

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