

# LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by

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## The ACTS of Prayer

What is prayer? It is a conversation with God. Sometimes we can rely on the formal prayers of our tradition to help us with this conversation, but sometimes we want to express something to the Lord and none of the formal prayers seem to fit the bill. What do we do then?

If prayer is a conversation with God, then we should feel comfortable enough to speak to God the way we might speak to a close friend. After all, there is no one who is closer to us or knows more about us than God. As St. Augustine said, "You, however, are more intimate to me, than my most intimate thought." [*Confessions* 3.6.11] There is nothing that we can tell God that He doesn't already know. However, we express ourselves in prayer to acknowledge to ourselves what is in our hearts.

Some people have no trouble expressing themselves to God as if speaking to a close friend, but others feel like they're never really sure what to say during prayer. For this, we can turn to our tradition again. The Church has given us a mnemonic to help us structure our prayer. For those who need a little help, we can use the acronym ACTS to plan our prayer. ACTS stands for Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving and Supplication.

**Adoration** is the acknowledgement of who God is. God is the Creator and we are His creation. Adoration helps to remind us of how much greater God is than we are. Jesus Himself began with Adoration in the prayer He gave us, the Our Father. "Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy Name..."

In the face of the awesomeness of God, we might then express our own humility. It is during this moment of prayer that we would enter into

**Contrition.** Again we can turn to the Our Father for an example: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." We might express where we have fallen short of the love of God and love of neighbor that Jesus commanded for us.

The next movement of our prayer would then be **Thanksgiving.** We give thanks for all that God has done for us this day and in our lives. God loves us so much and is intimately connected to us. He wants us to have joy in our lives. The moment of Thanksgiving allows us the opportunity to acknowledge all that God means to us personally.

Finally, we may have certain requests of the Almighty God. This is the time for **Supplication.** This is the kind of prayer with which we are most familiar. "Give us this day our daily bread." It is here that we ask God for the many things that we need, the requests that only He can answer.

In addition to ACTS, there are other prayer methods that help give structure to our prayer. Some have used the "Prayer Process" of Matthew Kelly with great results. This process has been mentioned in several of his books and can be found on his website: <https://dynamiccatholic.com/learning/the-prayer-process>

During this week, try adding impromptu prayer into your routine by one of these methods or by just talking to God. Next week, we'll begin to focus on the other half of the conversation - listening.

