

Praying with young people

Young people can often find the act of praying a challenge. Their world can be so full and loud with the variety of activities they take on outside of their formal education.

Therefore, enabling young people to find time and space to pray, and helping them to see the value of stillness and prayer is an important aspect of their formation as young Christians. As Cardinal Basil Hume says in his book, 'To be a Pilgrim',

"One of the best definitions of prayer is the one in the catechism: "Prayer is the raising of the mind and the heart to God". Better perhaps to say: Prayer is trying to raise our hearts and minds to God."

To be aware of themselves, of God and to connect in their own way by making the considered decision to try and pray are key to establishing a prayer life.

The desire for their own sacred space: Young people can often desire their own space in which to pray. Some maybe self-conscious in large group situations where they feel forced to contribute or pray a certain way. Encouraging young people to find their own 'sacred space' is key to enabling them to be still, be aware and connect with God.

The desire for security and regularity: Young people can often feel more secure in a regular group setting such as a parish youth group. Being with their peers with a common cause or aim can help them feel part of that community and connected to God through the cause or prayer. Encouraging young people to find time for prayer with their peers is an important aspect of their prayer life.

This contradiction is an indication that young people are all different, unpredictable and connect with God in many different ways and in different situations. There is a joy to be found in this that should be encouraged and celebrated.

Pope Francis writes in *Amoris Laetitia* (18) that; 'The Gospel goes on to remind us that children are not the property of a family but have their own lives to lead.' Giving young people the freedom and encouragement to find the style and time of connection to God – prayer, empowers them take responsibility for their faith.

Tips:

- Make use of space in your venue, separating an area off for prayer.
- Use different styles of prayer so that young people experience a variety. (e.g. creative, silence, devotional, praise and worship, lectio divina)
- Give witness to your own prayer life as catechists, the joys, struggles and the
- Be clear about when prayer is taking place and be consistent in your approach
- Encourage connection with other young people in your parish and prayer intentions.
- Establish prayer together before & after sessions and surround important moments of celebration in prayer.

Resources & links:

Books:

- YouCat prayer book available from ctsbooks.org
- The Catholic Youth prayer book. Saint Mary's press
- The book of uncommon prayer. Steven L. Case. Zondervan Publishing

Websites:

- Online prayer justpray.uk
- Daily prayer: sacredspace.ie & prayingeachday.org
- Catholic Youth Work forum resources: catholicyouthwork.com/latest-resources/prayer/
- CAFOD resources for young people: cafod.org.uk/Education/Young-people

Interesting Twitter feeds:

- Pope Francis @pontifex
- Cardinal Tagle @CardinalChito
- Bishop Robert Barron @BishopBarron
- CAFOD prayers @CAFODprayer
- CYMFed Flame Catholic Young people gathering @FlameCongress
- Clifton Diocese Youth Ministry @cliftonyouth

Instagram feeds:

- @instapray
- @churchmemes
- @franciscus