# Lesson 1

## Mind and Heart to God

Prayer and the Old Covenant (Nos. 2558-2597)

### Introduction

In this first lesson you will read and then hear a lesson about what prayer is in its basic sense and then what the first part of the economy or the history salvation, the Old Testament, what we have called the Age of the Father, has to teach us about prayer As you will have heard in the introductory lesson for this course, the first portion of this pillar of the Catechism is arranged in accord with the three parts of the economy of salvation, which are the Age of the Father, the Age of the Son, and the Age of the Holy Spirit, or the age of the Church in which we are now living These three phases of the economy remind us that our faith is fundamentally Trinitarian in substance and form Recall that paragraph 234, after reminding us that the Trinity is "the central mystery of Christian faith and life," tells us that the whole history of salvation is identical with the history of the way and the means by which the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, reveals himself to men "

That means that God's way of revealing Himself in the Bible and the Church's Tradition is in keeping with who He is He has impressed Himself on our history in a threefold way that makes that history revelatory of who He is Since what God reveals is intended to aid us in coming into an intimate relation with Him, it makes sense that He would reveal to us how to pray well in that history, too

As you have already heard, prayer is a very important part of our relationship with God Without it, our relationship with Him is entirely one-sided He is in constant relation to us already by holding us in being and raining blessings of all kinds on us, while we often respond to Him only barely, if at all To overcome our unwillingness to respond to Him, God calls out to us from the very beginning of creation to enter into covenant with Him It is that covenantal relationship – our half of it – which is served by our prayer The Catechism refers to the whole economy (and we could say this especially about the first phase, that of the Old Testament) as "a covenant drama" (No 2567) The enduring drama of history is whether we will respond to God or not, and, so, whether we will rise or fall This first lesson will tell us about the prayer of the early patriarchs and prophets and that perennial part of both Jewish and Christian prayer, the Psalms We could do no better than to begin right away in reading and praying these as a part of our daily response to God's many blessings

Start out with prayer...
In your daily prayer time during the next week read and meditate upon Psalm 119 This longest of the Psalms is 176 verses long and runs the gamut of prayer from praise to lament Take as many verses each day as you feel led to pray over, but read the whole of it for next time

## Reading Assignment

Carefully read all of the following selections:

**From the** Catechism

Nos 2558-2565 On what prayer is

Nos 2566-2597 On prayer in the Age of the Father

**From Scripture**

Matthew 6:5-8

**For further reading**

Second Vatican Council, The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium Chapter 5 "The Universal Call to Holiness in the Church" (This can be accessed at http://www vatican va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_ const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en html)

## Homework Assignment

### Nos. 2558-2565 – On What Prayer Is

1. How does the final pillar on Christian Prayer fit into the overall themes of the Catechism as expressed in the titles of the first three pillars?

2. a. Read John 4:5-30 in conjunction with Nos 2560-2561 How is the life-changing encounter between Christ and the woman at the well a perfect "living metaphor" for prayer?

b. The Catechism reminds us that the Lord longs for relationship with us; "his asking arises from the depths of God's desire for us" (No 2560) How might this truth change or deepen both the quality and quantity of your prayer time?

3 a. The "heart" takes on special significance within the language of the Bible in relationship to prayer. Within this rich tradition, what does the "heart" symbolize?

b. Read Matthew 15:8-18 and 22:37 How does this full-bodied understanding of the "heart" deepen your understanding of these verses?

## Nos. 2566-2597 – On Prayer in the Age of the Father

4. According to Nos 2566-2569, What is the relationship between prayer and Creation?

5. There are four important Old Testament figures discussed in Nos 2570-2583 (Abraham, Moses, David or Elijah)

a. Which one do you identify with the most and why?

b. What particular truth(s) about prayer is discovered through that person's personal story?

6. The Psalms have been called the "masterwork of prayer in the Old Testament "

a. Why were they so important to Israel's story and why do they remain significant for us today?

b. Identify your favorite Psalm and discuss why it is important to you and your relationship with God.