



## The Catechism on Prayer

This month, we move away from some of the key documents of the Second Vatican Council to the other document highlighted for the Year of Faith—the Catechism of the Catholic Church. In Section IV, it offers thoughts on prayer and spirituality and over coming months, we will explore some of the teachings we can find there.

After reminding us that prayer is God's gift to us—our thirst for God born of God's thirst for us, the Catechism then asks

**'Where does prayer come from? Whether prayer is expressed in words or gestures, it is the whole person who prays. But in naming the source of prayer, Scripture speaks sometimes of the soul or the spirit, but most often of the heart (more than a thousand times). According to Scripture, it is the heart that prays. If our heart is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain.'**

**The heart is the dwelling-place where I am, where I live; according to the**

Semitic or Biblical expression, the heart is the place "to which I withdraw." The heart is our hidden centre, beyond the grasp of our reason and of others; only the Spirit of God can fathom the human heart and know it fully. The heart is the place of decision, deeper than our psychic drives. It is the place of truth, where we choose life or death. It is the place of encounter, because as image of God we live in relation: it is the place of covenant.' (2562-3)

Prayer is something that happens deep within us. We might express it with words or gestures—or writing or drawing—but ultimately, it is what comes from our hearts that counts. Jesus himself quotes the prophet Isaiah to make this very point:

This people honours me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.

It is clear that he took this seriously and his own prayer life showed us the power of this deep loving prayer between God and himself.

*Take some time out and think about when you noticed a difference between just saying the words of prayers—and the kind of heart prayer that the Catechism describes here.*

**'In the New Covenant, prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their Father who is good beyond**



measure, with his Son Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit. The grace of the Kingdom is "the union of the entire holy and royal Trinity . . . with the whole human spirit." Thus, the life of prayer is the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God and in communion with him. This communion of life is always possible because, through Baptism, we have already been united with Christ.' (2565)

It is easy to forget the great dignity given to us by our baptism when we were baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We often start and close our prayer and Mass times with a Sign of the Cross which reminds us both of Jesus' love for us and of being in communion with the Trinity. Sometimes , though, we make the Sign of the Cross quickly and do not really notice what we are saying and doing,

*Think about the great privilege you have of being untied with Christ and drawn into communion with the Trinity of life. How might you make the Sign of the Cross a more significant part of your prayer?*

**'Prayer is Christian insofar as it is communion with Christ and extends throughout the Church, which is his Body. Its dimensions are those of Christ's love.'**

This reminds us that, though our prayer is deeply personal and rooted in our hearts, it is not private or for ourselves. Through prayer, we are called far beyond ourselves—to the farthest reaches of Christ's love. Impossible for us—but not for God.

*When have you felt your prayer reaching out to other people or situations?*

You can find links to this section of the Catechism at this website: [www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_INDEX.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM)

### Contact Details

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## Coming up at local Centres for Retreats and Prayer

### Centre for Prayer and Mission 1 Antrim Gardens, Seaham

**Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> September**

The Year of Faith:  
Looking back, looking forward

**17<sup>th</sup> September**

Faith or Belief? In what? In whom?

**24<sup>th</sup> September**

We stand on the shoulders of giants:  
Our debt to Peter and Paul

**1<sup>st</sup> October**

Weakness of Faith:  
Jonah the Prophet  
*For more information,  
contact Sister Michael*  
(0191) 5813249

[marymichael.lee7@googlemail.com](mailto:marymichael.lee7@googlemail.com)

### Minsteracles

#### Thursday 12 September

10-4

Open House

Part of the Heritage Open Days  
scheme

**11-13 October**

The Growing Edge

As part of the Year of Faith theme  
“On the Margins”

Weekend with Margaret Silf

Contact: 01434 673248  
[info@minsteracles.org](mailto:info@minsteracles.org)

## Mini-Pilgrimages: The Last Lap!



**T**he last of the mini-pilgrimages for the Year of Faith organised by the Diocesan Evangelisation Team will take place on **Sunday 22 September at 3.30 pm** in **Durham Cathedral**.

Durham Cathedral has been a place of pilgrimage for over a thousand years, and held one of the greatest shrines of pre-Reformation England, that of St Cuthbert. It is also home to the tomb of St Bede.

Sr Michael says, ‘**It will be a special occasion with procession, prayers at the tombs, sung Vespers (modified) and sermon given by Bishop Seamus.’**

Whilst there, you might like to add a few bricks to a Lego model of the Cathedral being built to help to raise funds for a new treasury. Or you might like to begin or end your pilgrimage with the River Prayer Walk, linked to the Lindisfarne Gospels here: [www.rcdhn.org.uk/spirituality/walks/formspirit\\_durham.php](http://www.rcdhn.org.uk/spirituality/walks/formspirit_durham.php)

If you have not made it to any of the other mini-pilgrimages, perhaps this is the one for you. And, if you have made it to all the rest, make sure you get your last stamp on your Pilgrims’ Card!

## Prayer Station of the Month...

**S**eptember brings us to the beginning of the end of summer and the beginning of the beginning of autumn. It is one of the threshold times of the year, leading us up to the equinox when day and night are of equal length.

It is a time of harvest—many fruits are ripening now and farmers and gardeners are busy gathering crops ahead of the cold weather. Many rose bushes will be producing brightly coloured rosehips—and they form the basis of this month’s Prayer Station.

Bring a few rosehips into church/ school and put the text alongside. These hips did not exist this time last year but, over the

“How great are your works, O Lord”



Psalm 92:5

Choose a rosehip.

In your mind's eye,  
go back through its life...

from non-existence this time last year  
through bud—flower—fruit.

Spend time reflecting on its colour—  
texture—smell—  
the wonder of its being...  
the potential for life within it.

How does this little rosehip’s life-cycle  
reflect your own?

course of the winter, spring and summer, the rose has put forth leaves—buds—flowers and, finally, these last glorious signs of the promise of new life.

Hidden within the buds are seeds . Depending on your circumstances, you could invite people to open a rosehip and find the seeds—and to think about how many seeds are hidden within us. In order to germinate, these seeds will endure the cold and wet of winter—and possibly the digestive system of a bird or wild animal! For some of us—the seeds of new life will not come easily—but they are there.

Be prepared to replace your rosehips once or twice as they are likely to dry out.