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| **How To Pray Spontaneously!** |

Have you ever been called upon at short notice (or no notice!) to lead prayer at the beginning or end of a meeting?  How does this make you feel?  Do you look pointedly at your feet when volunteers are sought for this task?  Do you envy those women among us who can pray so eloquently and appropriately?

This handout is designed to help you to become more comfortable praying (spontaneously!) with others.  You will find some options for beginning prayer and closing prayer which other women have found useful as well as methods and phrases to help you direct prayer.  We hope that it will give you the confidence to try your hand at leading prayer in your homes, councils and parishes.

**Getting Started**

Good job!  You actually volunteered!  Now you have several pairs of eyes upon you, plus a few people who are still chatting and moving around.  Invite them to prepare themselves for prayer.  Show them, by your posture, that you are ready to begin.  Often, in small groups, it is sufficient to bow your head and remain still.  Use one of the following phrases:

  Let us stand as we prepare to pray…

  I invite you to be still, to free your mind of external distractions…

  Let us place ourselves in the presence of God…

  Let our hearts and minds be still, as we prepare to pray together…

  Let us spend a few minutes in silent prayer…

Wait for silence, and then begin.  Make the Sign of the Cross, slowly and reverently.

**Consider your group and the specific reason for their gathering**

As you begin, you may want to address the reason for your gathering by using one of the following phrases:

  We gather this evening as members of St. Peter Council of Catholic Women…

  Jesus, you taught us that where two or three are gathered in your name, you are with us…

  Heavenly Father, we ask you to…

  Almighty God and Father, we ask you to bless our gathering…

**Give thanks and praise!**

When we begin to pray, it is wise to offer God thanks and praise.  One of the following phrases may help you:

  We thank you for your saving love…

  We thank you for this day…

  We thank you for our friends and families…

  We thank you for the opportunity to serve others…

  We thank you for the opportunity to meet together as brothers and sisters in Christ…

  We give you thanks and praise for your steadfast love…

**What are you asking for?**

After giving praise and thanks, we can turn to God and place before Him our needs.  The following phrases can be helpful in beginning such requests:

  We ask you to be with us as we…

  We ask you to guide our work…

  We ask you to bless…

  We ask you to send your Spirit…

  Touch our minds and hearts that we will be enlightened to the needs of your people.

  Lord, please bless our efforts…

  We ask you to bless this food we are about to eat, that it will energize us to walk in Your Way and to do Your Will.

**Is this a special occasion?  Or a specific feast day?**

If today is a special occasion or we a celebrating a specific feast day, it may be helpful for you to remember this occasion as part of your prayer.  The following phrases may help you:

  We remember especially today those who have died, may they rest in peace.

  We remember especially today our families, friends, and neighbors.

  We remember especially today those preparing for the priesthood or religious life.

  We remember especially today for the leaders of our church, especially Father…our pastor.

**Conclusion**

The following phrases can help you bring your prayer to a conclusion:

  We make this prayer in Jesus’ name.

  We ask these things through Christ, our Lord.  Amen.

  We ask Mary, our Mother to intercede for us as we pray, “Hail Mary…”

  Let us say together…the prayer that Jesus taught us, “Our Father…”/ the “Prayer to Our Lady of Good Council.”

**Remember**

Keep your prayer brief; this is usually intended to be a spontaneous prayer and not a full-scale prayer service.  Speak clearly and at a slightly slower pace than normal conversation.  Do not be afraid to pause in between sentences; this will give you a little time to think!

Know your group.  If this is a group which meets on a regular basis you will know how comfortable they are with, for example, holding hands during the “Our Father,” or sharing a “sign of peace.”  A more diverse group may be unaccustomed to such actions and, therefore, feel uncomfortable.

Volunteer ahead of time so that you will have a little preparation time.  Offering vocal spontaneous petitions is a great beginning.  Write your prayer down if this will make you feel more confident.  You may wish to practice out loud at home adding this spontaneous prayer to your own private prayers.  After all, prayer is really a conversation between you and God.

Make notes when you hear other people pray or when you read from prayer books.  These will give you examples for your own prayer.  Above all, give it a try.  The Spirit will guide you.  Good luck!

If you are confident with this type of prayer, share your gift/skills with other women in your affiliations and encourage them to give spontaneous prayer a try. By doing this you **support, empower and educate** your sister in Christ.