



Why Dominican?

Presentation Notes for Candidacy Module 5: Personal Prayer and Contemplation

Objectives: At the end of this session, the Candidate will be able to:

1. Understand more fully that prayer begins with an awareness of God.
2. Understand more fully that all religions consider prayer an essential connection to a Supreme Being /God.
3. Understand more fully that personal prayer consists of many forms including silent, vocal, artistic, formal, and spontaneous and have many purposes such as praise, thanksgiving, and petition.
4. Understand more fully that no one form of prayer is “better” than another.
5. Understand more fully that spiritual growth through prayer does not proceed in a linear fashion toward excellence or holiness of some sort, but often revisits several stages of development.
6. Understand more fully that prayer is a connection to God within a person and also outside a person.
7. Understand more fully that for a Dominican, prayer necessarily leads one into contemplation and then into guided action.

Materials: access to any material necessary in step 10 below.

Prayer/Contemplation: Jeremiah 33:2-3

Note: Be sure to allow sufficient time for the practice activity/activities and sharing at the end of the session.

Study:

1. Begin the session by telling the candidates that the session will focus on the sharing of personal experiences about prayer in order to deepen everyone’s understanding of the many possibilities of connecting with God one on One rather than as a community. Encourage the participants to connect the discussion to specific parts of the materials that were read whenever that is appropriate. Open the discussion by asking the participants to share their

reactions to Fr. Richard Rohr's article on transformation and how it might relate to prayer.

2. Continue the discussion by asking the participants to share their first thoughts in answer to the question "When do you consider yourself praying?" Encourage a variety of answers.
3. Encourage critical thinking in answer to the question "Is someone praying when he or she is walking or reading or singing or dancing or drawing?"
4. Arrive at the conclusion that prayer includes becoming aware of God and an intention, either initiated by God or by the person, to connect with God in some way.
5. Reinforce the idea that prayer is practiced by all religions. In the United States, the first Thursday of May has been legislated as a National Day of Prayer. Briefly discuss the types of prayer engaged in by those of other religions about which participants might be familiar.
6. Draw on the experiences of the participants and information from the material read to discuss ways of becoming more aware of God during our routine activities.
7. Ask each person to share ways in which he or she carves out prayer time at unexpected times of the day or in unexpected circumstances.
8. Ask participants to describe particularly meaningful types of prayer in which they engage. If no one mentions the Rosary, please include this traditionally Dominican prayer in the discussion.
9. Suggest that prayer connects us to God, perhaps through a particular time or event, and then encourages us ultimately to some kind of action within ourselves or for the benefit of others.
10. Select from the following to demonstrate and share the variety of prayer forms as well as the possibilities for contemplation:
 - a. the canticle from the Book of Daniel 3: 52-90
 - b. a well-known hymn such as *All Creatures of Our God and King* available at <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/a/c/acoogak.htm> ; other hymns available at this site as well
 - c. a decade of the rosary using the format of the Dominican rosary
 - d. the Our Father
 - e. a representation of a painting by Fra Angelico (a listing is available at http://www.artchive.com/artchive/F/fra_angelico.html)
11. Although the session is designed to focus on personal rather than communal prayer, the first part of options a through d should be prayed in community.

12. Ask the participants to make personal jot notes on how he or she meditated on what was presented. Encourage thoughts as well as art, etc. An example might be a reflection on “Everything growing from the earth, bless the Lord” from the verses from the book of Daniel that lists or draws wheat and fruit and trees and flowers as all created by God that in turn, bless the Lord.
13. Encourage the sharing of these meditations.
14. Revisit the fact that for a Dominican, prayer must be deeper than simply “talking” to God or thinking about God-things. Ask the participants to think more deeply about how what was shared might be relevant to his or her personal circumstances and perhaps lead to a possible action or apostolate. Continuing with the example above, a person might consider
 - a. planting a personal garden as a way to increase time devoted to prayer or
 - b. connecting to the personal use of more earth-and-environmentally friendly gardening products or
 - c. joining a local project on better care of creation through promoting local farm or market initiatives that insure a fair wage as well as environmentally safe products.
15. Ask participants to share any obstacles they faced while engaging in this activity. Brainstorm possible solutions based on others’ working through similar problems.

Community: Prayer is a very personal topic so the sharing of one’s prayer life, both the successes and the obstacles, will naturally build a sense of community. Be careful in the guiding and sharing to foster the idea that there is no right way or wrong way to pray!

Apostolate: Prayer leads to meditation and meditation to contemplation and action. Be mindful that an individual’s contemplation or apostolate may encourage others to follow the same leanings.

Conclusion: Developing the intention, time for, and pattern of prayer is essential for a Dominican. Prayer and contemplation provide the foundation for study, the building of community, and discerning an apostolate. Prayer and contemplation fuel active participation in liturgical celebrations and preaching.

Follow-up: Distribute the Candidacy Module 5 Word Cloud. Explain that this word cloud is a visual representation of the most frequently used (and therefore, most important) words in this module. Encourage the participants to reflect on this visual aid in-between meetings. Occasionally ask participants to share their journey in prayer as part of other study sessions. Notice “transformation” as it appears to be occurring in

future sessions, being careful not to suggest that the person was not in a “good place” beforehand.

Assignment: Distribute the Study Guide for the next study session.