

Praying with the Holy Spirit for Families



The language of prayer is a mystery, the mystery of the encounter between the human soul and its Creator, the invisible God. Indeed, we scarcely need St. Paul to remind us that “we do not know how to pray as we ought” (Romans 8:26). So many of the circumstances of our lives can defy our poor power to respond in prayer. How do we sing of God’s goodness? How do we lament our deepest sorrows? How do we extoll God’s glory? What is the language that can express our love of God and our reception of God’s love for us?

The Holy Spirit can speak for us through the Scriptures. The Word of God is alive because it was written under the inspiration of the Spirit. When we take those words upon our own lips, the Spirit speaks anew through us. Many traditional hymns and contemporary worship songs take their lyrics directly from the Scriptures too. Whether we speak or sing biblical texts, we can offer back to the Father, by the Spirit, God’s own perfect words.

Sometimes our prayer is beyond being captured by any words. This is when the prayer of our hearts can be made by the Spirit in a language beyond our understanding, “with sighs too deep for words” (Romans 8:26). Try the following exercise that can help us to trust the Holy Spirit to pray in and through us.

Prayer Exercise

Come into a space of quiet. Become present to our ever-present God. Invite God to be with you.

Become aware of your breath. The very act of breathing is an expression of the presence of God, who sustains our lives at this moment and every moment. Remember, in Hebrew, Spirit, and breath are the same word, *ruah*.

At our Baptism and Confirmation, God sends his Spirit to reside in us. As you sit in the quiet, notice how you experience the Spirit residing in you. Where in your body do you come to know the active presence of God? In your heart? Your mind? Your gut? Be aware of this truth: God lives in you by the Spirit, here, now.

Continue for as long as you feel called to be in the stillness, aware that God is with you. What might the Spirit be praying in and through you? Set words completely aside. Listen.

