

# PRAYERFULNESS

Sr. Joan Chittister defines prayer as “an attitude toward life that sees everything as ultimately sacred; everything as potentially life-changing; everything as revelatory of life’s meaning. It is our link between the everyday and eternity.” Is this the way we would define our prayer? In order to do so, we would first need to recognize the power that prayer can have in our lives and perhaps change the way we approach prayer. Prayer is not a technique. We should not allow ourselves to be caught up in whether or not we are saying the right words or assuming the correct posture. Prayer is an attitude of mind, a quality of soul.

“True prayer is a way of life, not just a case of emergency.”

If prayer is indeed life-changing and our link with eternity, the focus of our prayer should reflect our willingness to invite God to change us or our world in ways that truly reflect God’s kingdom. We can pray for the environment. Can we pray for the willingness to not be caught up in a consumerist economy? We can pray for the health of loved ones. Can we pray for those with addictions or AIDS? We can seek God’s forgiveness. Can we ask God to have mercy on Vladimir Putin?

The purpose of our prayer is not to treat God as a divine vending machine, where we deposit the words or requests and then make our selection or choice of what the outcome should be or what “treat” we should receive. The purpose of prayer is, most of all, the turning over of our lives to God, the emptying of ourselves from all we consider important, allowing God to replace it with that which truly matters.

“I have lived to thank God that all my prayers were not answered.”

Jean Ingelow

“Never undertake anything for which you would not have the courage to ask the blessings of heaven.”

George C. Lichtenburg

For the next month we invite you to focus on prayerfulness – to pray for the virtue for yourself, to thank God for the gift, and to think of those you know who are examples of this virtue. We encourage you to call or write them, telling them you see the virtue of prayerfulness in them. For example:

- Persons who have truly turned their lives over to God; who are able to “Let go and let God.”
- Those who taught us our first prayers or first modeled for us a life of faith.
- Parents who include prayer as part of daily family life or who seek God’s strength and wisdom in raising their children.
- Someone who sees the suffering of others and recognized their role in that suffering.
- People who are willing to pray for all others.

## Prayer for the Virtue of Prayerfulness

Loving God, Thank you for giving me the gift of your Son who has shown me the path to you. I ask for the virtue of prayerfulness. Where once you taught your disciples to pray, teach me once again to approach you with an open heart. Give me the courage to empty myself before you and to truly turn my life over to you. Increase in me the desire to be shaped and changed according to your will. Teach me to pray beyond myself, to pray with the world in mind, and with the good of all your people at heart. Remove from me any desire to manipulate you or to take your place in the judgment of others. May my prayers and actions help change the world, beginning with me. Lord, teach me how to pray. Amen.