



Ever wonder how to pray more intimately with your husband? Wish you were spiritually closer to your wife? Couples can learn a great deal from the Mass about how to pray together as husband and wife and how to deepen their intimacy at the same time. This is because the Mass is the perfect prayer between Christ and His bride, the Church. Spouses who want to learn how to pray together can begin by following the same basic structure of the Mass. So let's first look at how the People of God—the Church—pray during Mass and then we will explore four simple steps for praying with your spouse.

Structure of the Mass

The Mass consists of four parts, which include the Introductory Rite, the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the Concluding Rite. In the Introductory Rite the Church comes together, makes the Sign of the Cross, and asks God for forgiveness, which prepares our hearts for deeper union with God. Next is the Liturgy of the Word, which is when we actively listen to the readings from scripture. This time can be likened to a conversation between Christ and the Church. Christ speaks to us in the readings, and we sing psalms to God from our hearts. Then, in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, Christ and the Church exchange their love with each other. Through the changing of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, Jesus is made substantially present to us. He then gives Himself to us in the Eucharist. At the same time, we receive Him and give ourselves back to Him, deepening an intimate union. Finally, the Concluding Rite reminds us to go in peace, glorifying the Lord with our lives.

Four simple steps

Praying with one's spouse by following the structure of the Mass can be simple and enriching. Here is a four-step process.

Step One: Reconcile and Rejoice

First, set time aside weekly for just the two of you. Come together in a comfortable place or hold hands on a walk. Make the Sign of the Cross and take a moment to focus on being present to each other and to God, as is done at the start of the Mass. As you begin, take time to reconcile. Talk about how you might have hurt each other during the week. Then apologize and offer forgiveness. This will allow

you to approach God with open hearts and to be united as you pray. Once you have reconciled, rejoice by offering a short prayer of thanksgiving to God.

Step Two: Discover God Together

Step Two is modeled on the Liturgy of the Word. After reconciling and rejoicing, spend time discovering God together. There are a number of ways to do this. For example, you could read the Bible and talk about the passage. If you don't know where to begin in the Bible then a good option is to read the Gospel passage that will be proclaimed at the next Sunday Mass. You can find Sunday readings at the USCCB's Daily Readings.

An additional option is to read the Psalms, which have been called the "book of prayer." The Psalms express sorrow and joy, fear and hope, longing for God, and praise. By scanning the titles of each Psalm you and your spouse will easily find one that you can relate to. Pray it slowly aloud and then discuss how it stirs your emotions or what it leads you to think about.

Another way to approach God together can simply involve talking about what is on your hearts and minds. What are you thankful for this week? What challenges are creeping up in your life? What do you need from each other and from God? Answer these questions honestly and then offer prayers of petition to God. Remember to give thanks as you see God faithfully answering your prayers.

Step Three: Share Your Love

Step Three relates to the Liturgy of the Eucharist. After discovering God together, you can deepen your prayer and intimacy by sharing your love with each other. Sharing your love in the context of prayer may include a kiss, resting in each other's arms, caring for an ill spouse, giving words of affirmation, or any other meaningful way you communicate your love. Again, have a thankful heart as your intimacy is deepened in the presence of God.

Step Four: Serve Each Other

As your time together draws to a close, remember to go in peace and to serve the Lord in each other. Prayer and intimacy never ends! Let your service and intimacy live on throughout every day, as you go about cooking, cleaning, listening, working, and so on. The fruit that will come from your prayer routine will bless your marriage, deepen your love for God and each other, and allow you to reflect the love relationship between Christ and his beloved spouse, the Church.