

DRYNESS IN PRAYER

How can we overcome dryness in prayer?

Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.
(Rom 12:12)

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.
(Col 4:2)

Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, (Eph 6:18)



Dryness in prayer is a common affliction among even the most devoted Christians. Persistence and vigilance are necessary to overcome this.

Dryness, or aridity, in prayer—the sense that our prayers are ineffective, that they lack feeling, or that we don't have the words to pray—occurs from time to time within almost everyone who prays regularly. Even some of the holiest men and women have spoken of dryness in their own prayer lives. St. John of the Cross wrote of his “dark night of the soul,” and Bl. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa), the twentieth-century nun known for her selfless work for the impoverished and dying in India, explained that she had long periods of feeling distant from God even in her prayer. It is a phenomenon we often associate with prayer of petition: God may hear our praise and thanksgiving, but when our requests go unanswered, we sometimes feel he is not listening to us. (Cf. CCC 2729, 2734–2735)

Dryness characterizes the distance we feel from God when we do not feel his presence or interest in us or when we feel we are not generating enough passion or confidence in our prayers. At times we do not believe that we are praying effectively because we lack the right words, as if God would answer us if only we were eloquent enough. What is more at issue is whether we are praying “as we ought”: if we are asking for the right things, if we are coming to God seeking to fulfill our passions rather than submit to his will in all humility. (Cf. CCC 2735–2737)

The key to fruitful prayer is always perseverance and vigilance, steeped in true faith and humility. Our dispositions in prayer affect its effectiveness; only complete abandonment to the will of God will ultimately satisfy us. We must seek constant conversion of heart, forever conforming our hearts and wills to the will of God and trusting that like a loving Father he will always give us what we truly need. (Cf. CCC 2730–2733, 2754)

The *Catechism* addresses this question in paragraph 2754.