

PRAYER EXERCISE – BREATH - PRAYER

The Catechism of the Catholic Church underscores the need for prayer to have a bodily expression, given our fundamental unity of body and soul. The breath is one such bodily expression that has venerable roots in Christian prayer dating back to the Hesychasm of Greek Orthodoxy. Breathing is also one of the most fundamental acts of being human and is sanctified by God's own action at two important points in the Scriptures. It carries the gift of God for existent life (Genesis 2:7) and supernatural life (John 20:22). It may be interesting to consider that, through Baptism and Confirmation, we have a share in Jesus' own breath. This breath is the breath of love, peace, compassion, and wholeness that is Jesus' gift to us from within the love of the Holy Trinity.

This brief prayer exercise offers an invitation to bring to heart, mind, and soul the gift of this invisible grace, the love of God, in our physical, daily action of breathing in and out. Often our breath is subject to our internal anxiety and worry; may it also be transformed by God's good news in Jesus!

There are as many different ways to pray with the breath as there are types of prayers. See which one God is calling you towards today. As you breathe in and breathe out, feel free to "voice" into the breath-prayer any tone of emotion or feeling that corresponds to where you are with God, and yourself, in the moment. For instance, if you are breathing in Jesus' peace, you may want to express your longing for that peace, or your exhaustion, or your anticipation of Jesus' gift in the act of breathing.

The Spirit of God will supply all that we need in this prayer, and more than we can imagine in its offering. The below are only meant to be examples.

Prayer of Praise

Breathe In...Jesus, you are my Lord and my God,

Breathe Out...And I praise You.

Prayer of Supplication

Breathe In...Jesus, I need,

Breathe Out...Your holy grace.

Prayer of Intercession

Breathe In...Jesus, please pray,

Breathe Out...For my loved one.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Breathe In...Jesus, I thank You,

Breathe Out...For blessing me today.

Prayer of Lament

Breathe In...Jesus, how long,

Breathe Out...Until I see you?

Prayer of Presence

Breathe In...Jesus, I am here,

Breathe Out...To be by Your side.

*As shared by Erik Ranstrom, Ph.D.
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