



DIOCESE OF
St. Augustine
Office of Family Life

A romantic couple is shown in a close embrace, nearly kissing. The woman has long, dark, curly hair and is wearing a light-colored sleeveless top. The man has a beard and is wearing a white button-down shirt. The background is softly blurred with warm, golden light and bokeh effects. A semi-transparent red banner is overlaid at the bottom of the image, containing the text.

Couple 
Prayer
Challenge



Introduction

Why the Challenge?

There is no analogy used more often in Scripture than marriage to express the depth of the love God has for us as his beloved. The Church is the bride of Christ, called to an intimate union with him, and the gift of marriage is a powerful witness of this love.

The sacrament is a constant source of grace for the husband and wife that helps perfect their love, strengthen their union, and sanctify them. For children, this union is their first and most profound experience of what it means to love and be loved.

Prayer is more than the elevation of the mind and a recitation of words but, as St. Therese of Lisieux says, a "surge of the heart," which draws us

into greater intimacy with God. Like the passionate desire between spouses, St. Augustine speaks of prayer as "the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him."

The ways in which a husband and wife express their love for one another then can be a guide for nurturing this surge of the heart and growth in their own prayer life.

Three expressions of prayer are outlined in the Catechism: vocal, meditation, and contemplation. The Couple Prayer Challenge is designed to guide a couple through each of these expressions by first presenting activities for the couple and then the following day offering prayer activities that correspond with a similar expression.

This challenge is not a contest or a rating of your prayer life.



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It is simply an opportunity for growth in both your relationship with each other and God at any stage of your spiritual journey.

How to Do the Challenge

The Couple Prayer Challenge is a week-long commitment to live the witness of the sacrament of marriage by deepening your relationship with one another and grow in intimacy with God.

Each day will guide you on a journey through three expressions of prayer: vocal, meditation, and contemplation. The challenge for each day will present five possible activities for you to choose from. You may do as few as one or as many as all five; how many you decide to do is entirely up to you. A scale of 1-3 stars is provided for

each day and you can track your progress at the end of the day by checking off all the activities you completed then looking at the key at the bottom and circling the corresponding number of stars. Completing 1 activity would grant 1 star, 2-3 activities would grant 2 stars, and 4+ activities would grant 3 stars.

Note: The activities should be chosen together as a couple and done together as a couple. You will not be making your own individual selections of what you will be doing for or with your spouse.

At the end of the six days, you may add up the total number of stars collected from each day and discussion questions are provided on the final day to reflect on your experience of the challenge. This rating is for your own reference and should not be compared against other couples.



Introduction

Expressions of Prayer

The many ways in which we encounter and communicate with God can be categorized under three major expressions: vocal, meditative, and contemplative. One is not more important than another and, in fact, they are all rooted in a common movement of our heart towards God. Some prayer, like the Mass, incorporate all three expressions.

Vocal

To hear “I love you,” or even those sacred words “I do” on our wedding day, stirs our hearts. This is because when we speak, we move interior thoughts, feelings, and desires into an exterior reality as something that can be received and responded to by others. This expression is an

essential part of relationship because it enables us to share ourselves and connect with another person. The power of vocal prayer is more than simply saying the proper words but the giving of one’s interior heart, with all its desires, as an exterior expression of ourselves to God.

Meditative

The marriage proposal is an extraordinary moment in a couple’s life. It’s a courageous step into the unknown, inspired by reflections on their past and a longing for a future given life by their imagination. Throughout their marriage, all the photos, keepsakes, and playful retellings of this moment serve to stoke their love for one another. Meditation engages similar creative faculties, with imagery, writings, or imagination, to help us understand more deeply the mystery of God’s



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love and discern what is being asked of us.

Contemplative

There are intense moments in relationships, moments when it feels like time stands still and the world around us fades. It may have been a first kiss, a first dance, or even being struck by each other's gaze. No words are spoken but in that moment a couple experiences each other intimately. Through contemplation we enter into silent stillness to fix our gaze entirely upon Christ, immersing the whole of ourselves in the embrace of an ever-present God and allowing him to dwell in our hearts.



Additional Resources

For additional information and guides for prayer, the Diocese of St. Augustine Office of Christian Formation recommends:

- [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#) (Part Four, Christian Prayer)
- [General Prayers and Devotions](#)
- [A Large Collection of Prayer Resources for Couples and Families](#)
- [Instructions for *Lectio Divina*](#)
- [Instructions for *Visio Divina*](#)
- [Prayer Enrichment Guide for Couples and Groups](#)
- [Prayer Opportunities and Online Retreats](#)

Visit family.dosafl.com/coupleprayerchallenge for more.

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Vocal

Day 1: Couple Activities

- Find 3 opportunities throughout the day to say “I love you.”
- Write a “thank you” card to your spouse, expressing what you appreciate most, and read it aloud.
- Write 2-3 qualities you appreciate about your spouse and post them somewhere prominent like the bedroom door or bathroom mirror.
- Create a small craft, such as a picture, poem, or object, that reminds you of your spouse and share.
- Create a music playlist of songs that remind you of your spouse, play for them, and share why you chose those songs.



1 Item



2-3 Items



4+ Items



Vocal

Day 2: Prayers

- Say “grace” before each meal.
- Say an “Our Father,” “Hail Mary,” and “Glory Be,” together.
- Pray the Litany of the Holy Family.
- Spend 10 minutes in open prayer together. Don't use any formal prayers but simply spend the time expressing to God what you're thankful for, what's challenging you, and any petitions for assistance.
- Sing a hymn or praise and worship song together as a couple.



1 Item



2-3 Items



4+ Items



Meditative

Day 3: Couple Activities

- Go through old photos together and share your favorite memories.
- Play a game together (preferably co-operative instead of competitive).
- Take a walk together after dinner.
- Do a household chore together (such as dishes or laundry).
- Dance together.



1 Item



2-3 Items



4+ Items



Meditative

Day 4: Prayers

- Pray a rosary together.
- Pray the Stations of the Cross together.
- Pray *Lectio Divina* on today's Mass readings together or *Visio Divina* on an icon or sacred image.
- 15-minutes of imaginative prayer on today's Gospel reading and share your reflections with one another.
- Do a daily examen together.



1 Item



2-3 Items



4+ Items



Contemplative

Day 5:

Couple Activities

- Find 3 opportunities throughout the day to hug each other.
- Turn off all electronic devices from 6:00 PM until bedtime (tv, phones, consoles, etc.).
- Hold hands whenever you're out together.
- Cuddle together on the couch.
- Do a gaze exercise and share what thoughts and feelings about the person came to mind afterwards.

Instructions: Sit facing one another in a comfortable position. You may hold hands if you like. Set a timer for 5 minutes and look into each other's eyes, silently holding your gaze until the timer stops (it's ok to blink!).



1 Item



2-3 Items



4+ Items



Contemplative

Day 6: Prayers

The challenge for today is spending time in silent contemplation with God. The goal is to simply listen and be present, like an interior gaze exercise with him. Check however many boxes you like below to determine the total duration of this time in prayer (1 box would be 10 minutes, 2 boxes would be 20 minutes, and so on):

- + 10 minutes



1 Item



2-3 Items



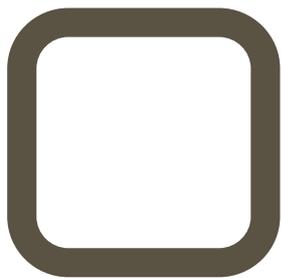
4+ Items



Final Tally

Add Up Your Stars

To calculate your total, add the number of stars circled at the bottom of each day. You may also record the date you completed the challenge below for your own records.



Total Stars

Week completed: _____



Reflection

Day 7:

How Did It Go?

Now that you've completed the journey, use this final day of the challenge to rest and reflect on your experience together. You may use the following questions as prompts for discussion.

1. What did you enjoy most about this past week? What part was the most challenging for you?
2. Was there anything new you discovered about yourself? Anything new about your spouse?
3. Do you feel your relationship with God has changed in any way? Why or why not?
4. Are there any types of prayer that I would like to commit to doing with my spouse going forward?



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