



with James & John

How Can We Deepen Our Love For God?

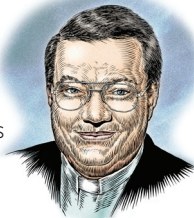
Know This...

God created us to know, love, and serve Him. We can deepen our love for God through prayer, fasting, and abstinence. Prayer is conversation with God. It helps us focus our hearts, minds, and souls on doing His will. Fasting and abstinence are exterior signs of interior penance. Fasting helps us recognize our dependence on God. Abstinence helps us unite our discipline and sacrifice with our Lord's. Through prayer, fasting, and abstinence we open ourselves to God's grace and its power to enlighten our lives.



John: We must imitate Jesus. He obeyed the Ten Commandments, perfectly. He lived the beatitudes, perfectly. He prayed to His Father, constantly.

James: Prayer begins as a response to God's grace. If we surrender our will to His, prayer moves us to an interior encounter with Jesus.



John: Praying is hard work; but it's necessary. No one has ever developed a deep and lasting relationship with God without prayer.

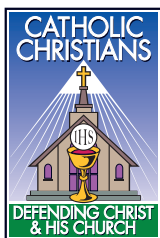
James: Fasting is a discipline that Jesus used to turn away from His bodily needs and to deepen His need for the Father. When we fast, we acknowledge our dependence on God.

John: Abstinence from meat or other foods is penitential. It can free us from self-centeredness, facilitate charity, and unite us to Christ and His Church.

James: When we begin to know God intimately, we begin to lean on Him and trust Him. This intimacy deepens through prayer, fasting, and abstinence.

Deacon John Beckmann and Deacon James Russell are permanent deacons in the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

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"In the morning, He rose and went out to a lonely place, and there He prayed." *Mk 1:35* "He withdrew to the wilderness and prayed." *Lk 5:16* "He departed to the mountain to pray, and He spent the night in prayer to God." *Lk 6:12* "In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think they will be heard because of their many words." *Mt 6:7* "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." *Lk 11:9* "Whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith." *Mt 21:22* "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done." *Lk 22:41-42* "When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you." *Mt 6:16-18*

"Prayer is the elevation of the mind and heart to God in praise of His glory; a petition made to God for some desired good, or in thanksgiving for a good received, or in intercession for others before God. Through prayer the Christian experiences a communion with God through Christ in the Church." (*CCC glossary*) We cannot imagine "the depths of God's desire for us. Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him." *CCC 2560; cf. St. Augustine*



BE ATTITUDES



"God will not hear our prayers unless we acknowledge ourselves to be sinners. We do this when we ponder on our own sins alone, and not on those of our neighbor." *St. Moses the Ethiopian* "When we pray, the voice of the heart must be heard more than the proceedings from the mouth." *St. Bonaventure* "For me, prayer means launching out of the heart toward God; a cry of grateful love from the crest of joy or the trough of despair: it is a vast, supernatural force that opens out my heart, and binds me close to Jesus." *St. Thérèse of Lisieux* "Prayer reveals to souls the vanity of earthly goods and pleasures. It fills them with light, strength and consolation, and gives them a foretaste of the calm bliss of our heavenly home." *St. Rose of Viterbo*

Eternal Father, You are worthy of all praise. By example, Your Son revealed that prayer is not a burdensome obligation, but a holy privilege; that fasting is not a difficult challenge, but a rewarding discipline; and that abstinence is not a useless hardship, but a fruitful sacrifice. I ask that You send forth Your Spirit to strengthen my life of prayer, fasting, and abstinence as I seek to deepen my love for You. I ask this through Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

