



Introduction: When Prayer Stops Being Just Repeating Words

We live in an age of constant noise. Screens, rush, worries... and in the middle of all that, prayer is often reduced to quick formulas or improvised moments. But a decisive question arises: **does a truly perfect way of praying exist?**

The answer is yes. And it is not a modern invention, nor a psychological technique: it is a profound teaching of Saint Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest minds in Catholic theology.

For him, prayer is not simply “saying things to God.” It is a deeply rational, spiritual, and transformative act that involves the whole human person and directs him toward his ultimate end: **God Himself.**

This article will not only explain his theory. It will help you **pray better, with more meaning, and with greater spiritual fruit.**

1. What Is Prayer According to Saint Thomas?

To understand perfect prayer, we must first understand what prayer is.

Saint Thomas defines it as:

“Prayer is the raising of the mind to God.”

He does not begin with words. He begins with the **mind and heart lifted up**. In other words, prayer does not start on the lips, but in the soul.

This connects directly with Sacred Scripture:

“This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me” (cf. Gospel of Matthew 15:8)



Therefore, **the perfect prayer is not the longest one, but the truest one.**

2. The Structure of Perfect Prayer: What Saint Thomas Discovers

Saint Thomas does not improvise. He analyzes the most perfect prayer ever given: the **Our Father**, taught by Jesus Christ.

For him, this prayer contains **everything man must ask for and how he must ask for it.**

Keys to Perfect Prayer According to Saint Thomas:

- It is **ordered toward God** (not centered on the ego)
- It seeks **spiritual goods before material ones**
- It expresses **filial trust**
- It follows an order: first God, then man

In other words:

□ **Perfect prayer is the one that transforms you, not the one that merely lets you vent.**

3. The Three Types of Prayer According to Saint Thomas

Saint Thomas, following Tradition, distinguishes three fundamental forms of prayer. They are not isolated compartments, but complementary paths.

1. Vocal Prayer: The Necessary Beginning

This is prayer expressed with words: the Our Father, Hail Mary, Psalms...



It may seem the simplest, but Saint Thomas warns of something crucial:

□ **It is not inferior if it is done well.**

Vocal prayer is good when:

- The words express what the heart feels
- It helps maintain attention
- It educates the soul in the faith

But beware: if it becomes mechanical, it loses its essence.

“When you pray, do not heap up empty phrases...” (cf. Gospel of
Matthew 6:7)

Practical application:

Do not pray more... pray better. Even if it is just one prayer, but with attention.

2. Mental Prayer: The Interior Leap

Here we speak less with the lips and more with the mind and heart.

It is the prayer of:

- Meditation
- Reflection
- Initial contemplation

It consists of **thinking about God, His mysteries, and His will.**

Saint Thomas considers it superior to vocal prayer because it more directly involves the soul.

Practical example:

- Meditating on the Passion of Christ
- Reflecting on a parable



- Speaking to God from within

□ Here prayer ceases to be repetition and becomes a **real dialogue**.

3. Contemplative Prayer: Union with God

This is the highest level.

It is no longer so much about thinking... but about **loving and contemplating**.

It is a prayer that is:

- Silent
- Deep
- Transformative

Here the Scripture is fulfilled:

▮ *“Be still, and know that I am God” (cf. Psalms 46:10)*

Saint Thomas teaches that this form of prayer is a foretaste of heaven. It is when the soul rests in God.

□ It is not something to be “forced.” It is a gift... but one must be disposed to receive it.

4. The Theology of Prayer: Why Pray If God Already Knows Everything?

Here Saint Thomas answers one of the great objections:

“If God knows everything, why pray?”

The Thomistic answer:



□ We do not pray to inform God, but to **transform ourselves**.

Prayer:

- Orders our desires
- Makes us receptive to grace
- Unites us to the divine will

God wants to give us things...
but He wants us to ask, because that makes us grow.

5. The Conditions for Effective Prayer

Saint Thomas teaches that prayer is effective when it fulfills certain conditions:

✓ Humility

Recognizing that we depend on God

✓ Faith

Believing that God can and wants to act

✓ Perseverance

Not giving up if there is no immediate response

✓ Right intention

Asking for what is beneficial for salvation

This connects with a key teaching:

┆ *“Ask, and it will be given to you” (cf. Gospel of Matthew 7:7)*



But Saint Thomas adds a nuance:

□ God always responds... though not always as we expect.

6. Practical Applications: How to Pray Today According to Saint Thomas

In today's context, this teaching is more necessary than ever.

Concrete Guide for Your Daily Life:

1. Begin with conscious vocal prayer

One well-prayed Our Father is worth more than a thousand distracted ones.

2. Dedicate 5-10 minutes to mental prayer

Meditate on the Gospel of the day.

3. Seek moments of silence

Without words. Just being in God's presence.

4. Order your petitions

First spiritual matters, then material ones.

5. Persevere

Prayer is not always "felt"... but it always works.

7. The Great Lesson of Saint Thomas

Saint Thomas does not give us a technique... he gives us a vision:

□ **Perfect prayer is not the one that changes God... it is the one that changes you.**

And the more perfect it is, the closer it brings you to your ultimate end:

union with God.



Conclusion: Pray Like the Wise, Live Like the Saints

Today many seek methods, emotions, or quick experiences. But Saint Thomas reminds us of something eternal:

- To pray is to lift the soul
- To pray is to order life
- To pray is to love God

And above all:

□ **To pray well is to begin living heaven on earth.**

Because perfect prayer is not an impossible ideal...
it is a concrete path that begins today.