

"I pray for them."

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, there was a sick man, who had been confined to bed for years. The sick man found it hard to pray to God. One day a friend suggested that he try to use the **'Empty Chair'** method to pray. This is the system that St. Theresa of Avila used to pray.

A friend said to the sick man:

"Have an empty chair placed near your bed. Next, imagine Jesus sitting in that chair. Converse with Jesus, just as the two of us have been conversing."

When the friend had departed, the sick man tried it ...and had no more trouble praying after that.

*Of course, Jesus was not sitting in the chair, but Jesus was present in the room. The **'Empty Chair'** exercise simply helped the sick man to realize it.*

Now, if you decide to try this exercise, you might find it helpful to talk out loud to Jesus. (Just don't talk to him too loudly. Someone, within earshot, may think you've finally ...gone over the edge!) Many people find talking to Jesus out loud, in a quiet voice, helps them to pray better.

**So, at any rate, "What do you say to Jesus?" you ask.
Well, I am glad you asked that question!**

You say anything—whatever you feel like saying! Talk to him about your life.

Or for example: pick out a passage from the Gospel—like the one I just read to you from St. John. Discuss it with Jesus, step-by-step.

Whatever you **DO** talk to Jesus about, be sure to pause now/then to let him reply--if he so wishes.

Here's one, final, insight. **DON'T** try to imagine what Jesus looks like. St. Theresa of Avila, who used such a method of prayer, **NEVER** imagined the face of Jesus. She merely sensed his closeness, just as two people in a dark room can sense each other's presence.

During the week ahead, you might want to experiment with this method of praying to God in your own words.

*Now, in conclusion, I inform you that there are 3 general settings in which one can pray:
The personal, the small group, and, finally, in the larger community.*

*An excellent way to pray in the personal setting is in your own words, as Jesus did in today's Gospel. You may want to employ the **'empty chair'** method, as did St. Theresa.*

BUT...regardless of the method or the setting, the important thing in conversing with God is **not** the words that come from the lips, BUT...the honesty, integrity, & **love** that comes from the heart.

*May our ever-loving God, our Abba, bless you:
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*