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Visualizing God in Prayer and Guided Meditations

12/08/2009 by Jared Dees [Leave a Comment](#)

When you pray, how do you imagine God? Do you visualize something? Do you use images to help you pray?

Too often we tend to focus on what we are praying for rather than to whom we pray. If you ask your students what they imagine when they pray, you may be surprised by what you hear. More than likely, most of your students will describe a white-bearded man who resembles Zeus or Santa Claus.

How we pray: put yourself in the presence of God.

No matter how we pray, the purpose of prayer is to put ourselves in the presence of God. We experience this presence in a number of different ways: through words, readings, smells, places, and other people. As a teacher or catechist, you must help your students place themselves in the presence of God. The challenge, of course, is doing it well.

One way of doing this, is to use images. Images are excellent ways to help your students assimilate your lessons into their personal prayer lives. I am admittedly a visual person so pictures, icons, and art help put me in the presence of God. For visual learners (and visual pray-ers), you may use paintings and icons of Jesus to inspire prayer. I have heard of a number of teachers who use Rembrandt's image of the Prodigal Son to teach about Penance. There are many, many images of the Paschal Mystery that are excellent resources as well. There are a number of excellent paintings for you to use in class at the [Web Gallery of Art](#).

You may also consider crafting a meditation that asks students to close their eyes and visualize some image of God that you would like them to focus on. The key is to have the students relax and eliminate all distractions to focus on the meditation.

Connect images to liturgical seasons.

During Advent we are seeing nativity scene constructed at homes and churches everywhere in preparation for Christmas. During Lent we celebrate the Stations of the Cross visualizing ourselves with him along the via dolorosa. In Easter we shift into a Risen Christ who inspires hope and joy. There is a Christ for every liturgical season.

Challenge your students to see God in different ways.

"I like the Christmas Jesus best!" proclaimed Will Ferrell as Ricky Bobby in the movie Talladega Nights. Do your students picture Jesus in a tuxedo t-shirt? Or Jesus Ninja? Or a member of Lynard Skynard? Probably not. But you should challenge them to expand their images of Jesus and God the Father when they pray. Do not encourage them to imagine a "Jesus Ninja" just because it is cool. Make sure the images of God that they pray with are revealing of the Divine. Scriptures are loaded with images of God, but the most important one is the image Jesus gave us in prayer. He taught us to call God our Father. At the very least we should imagine a God to whom we can relate as family.

And for a little comic relief, here is a cleaned up version of the famous "sweet baby Jesus" prayer:



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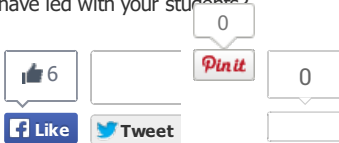
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I would love to read your comments. How have you used images and visualization in prayers that you have led with your students?



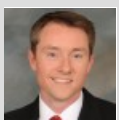
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About Jared Dees

[Jared Dees](#) is the creator of [The Religion Teacher](#) and has worked in catechetical ministry for over ten years. He is the Digital Publishing Specialist at [Ave Maria Press](#) and the author of [31 Days to Becoming a Better Religious Educator](#).

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