

# PRAYER

## THE HEART OF THE MATTER

BY STEVEN ELLAIR

**W**hen I first began teaching, I would invite the class to take several minutes for silent prayer before we began. Shortly after I started this, individual students would approach me privately and ask, **“But what am I supposed to do during this time? I mean, I’m not sure I know how to pray.”**

Most students revealed that they had little or no experience of prayer outside of the traditional prayers they were taught to memorize or prayers that were written down in a book or liturgy guide. Then I discovered that most teachers weren’t very comfortable with prayer either, and that teaching prayer as an essential part of any curriculum was extremely rare.

**We have an incredibly rich opportunity before us as religious educators.** We’ve become experts in teaching the intellectual or “head” dimensions of faith—and this is

great—but we’re also called to become experts at addressing the “heart” dimensions of faith. One way we can do this is by leading students to experience the many rich forms and expressions of prayer. As students gain confidence with different types of prayer, they’re more likely to incorporate some of these into their own prayer life.

**When we make prayer and spirituality a priority, we’ll discover a better balance between the head and the heart and see our students become enriched in new ways.** Theological concepts will become connected to personal experience, and faith will come alive in a deeper way. This may require some intentional work on our part, but the rewards will be plentiful. And so...

*Let us pray.*