

# praying

written by Yvette Nelson

Nihil Obstat: Patrick J. Rugen, STL  
Censor Librorum  
2 January 1998

Imprimatur: Rev. Michael J. Hoeppner, JCL  
Administrator, Diocese of Winona  
2 January 1998

The nihil obstat and imprimatur are official declarations that a book or pamphlet is free of doctrinal or moral error. No implication is contained therein that those who have granted the nihil obstat or imprimatur agree with the contents, opinions, or statements expressed.

Design and composition by Proof Positive/Farrowlyne Associates, Inc.

*Photo credits:* Wayne Aldridge, International Stock, page 24 (middle); copyright © Eiichi Anzai, Photonica, pages 20–21 (top); Chris Arend, Tony Stone Images, page 16 (bottom); copyright © 1991 Burke Triolo Photographic Studio, page 8 (lower left); Charles Campbell, Westlight, page 23 (top); Bruce Coleman, D Madison, page 32; Comstock Klips, page 8 (bottom left); copyright © 1995 Comstock Photography, page 6; copyright © 1997 Comstock Photography, pages 13 (bottom) and 22 (top); Monica Dalmasso, Tony Stone Images, page 5 (middle); Ken Fisher, Tony Stone Images, page 7 (top); copyright © 1995 FoodPix, page 8 (middle left); Louis Grandadam, Tony Stone Images, page 26; H. Horri, Westlight, page 8 (middle right); R. Ian Lloyd, Westlight, page 8 (lower right); Tracy Marhula, page 25; J. McGrail, H. Armstrong Roberts, page 16 (top left); Nita Winter Photography, pages 18–19; copyright © Orion Press, International Stock, pages 8 (bottom right) and 24–25; copyright © Orion Press, Westlight, page 8 (top left); copyright © Padelsky, Stock Imagery, page 21 (bottom); copyright © R. Peabody, Washington Stock Photo, page 19 (middle); Phyllis Picardi, International Stock, page 18 (top, and bottom right); Bill Ross, Westlight, page 8 (top right); Ron Sanford, International Stock, page 5 (top); Vernon Sigl, pages 4 and 14, (middle); Skjold Photography, pages 13 (top), 14 (top), and 17 (top); Jill Sneesby and Barrie Wilkins, Tony Stone Images, page 7 (middle); Joel Snyder, Publishers' Graphics, page 10 (middle); copyright © 1997 Joseph Sohm, ChromoSohm Media, all rights reserved, page 17 (bottom); Chris Speedie, Tony Stone Images, page 8 (bottom middle); M. Stephenson, Westlight, page 3 (top); David Stewart, Tony Stone Images, page 22 (right); B. Strode, Woodfin Camp and Associates, page 15; Visuals Unlimited, page 20 (bottom); Doug Wilson, Westlight, page 23 (middle); copyright © Scott Witte, Picture Cube, pages 16–17.

The acknowledgments continue on the inside back cover.

Copyright © 1999 by Saint Mary's Press, Christian Brothers Publications, 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1318, [www.smp.org](http://www.smp.org). All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced by any means without the written permission of the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

2122

ISBN 978-0-88489-475-9

# Thoughts on Prayer

You probably already are a person who prays, right? You have prayed before taking a hard test. Maybe you prayed for plain old joy when school was out for the summer. Or maybe you prayed to make the basketball team or to find your lost hamster.

Other young people like you also pray, and have ideas about what prayer is. Here are a few of their ideas for you to think about:

"Prayer is being aware of God's presence."

"I think most kids in general do care about God and do care about praying. A lot of times they think it's uncool to pray, so they act like they don't pray and they say, 'Oh, yeah, I don't pray and don't go to church either.' But I think a lot of times they do, and they just don't want to show it."

"I often pray at night, after a tough day especially, but I try to pray every night after I get done with all my schoolwork and when I'm just trying to relax a little bit. I also pray sometimes at school when I'm feeling a little low or feeling lonely and I need to talk to somebody more than just a friend or a teacher or a brother or a sister or anyone like that. I need to just take time out and realize that God's there for me."







**“Most of the time I pray at night after I’ve had either a good or a bad day, but most of the time it comes as I’m getting ready to go to sleep. I look back on my day, and I thank God for all the good times or ask God to help me with the bad times that I’ve had during the day.”**

**“Being a teenager, I think it’s important to pray, and I think a lot of teenagers do pray because it’s a time in your life when you have a lot of things going on, and it’s kind of hard to sort things out and find out what is important to you. But also you have a lot of things that you need to thank God for, so I think a lot of teenagers especially, but other people as well, do pray quite a bit.”**

**“I pray at all different times—whenever I think of Jesus. Lots of times when I’m lonely or depressed, I ask him to help me, or sometimes I pray just when I have a good day and when I want to thank him. I also pray to him whenever I hear something bad happened to another person or a group of people. I thank God for it not having happened to me and ask God to please help those other people that it happened to.”**

## **“Prayer is doing God’s work.”**

***“I think high school brings a lot of different circumstances to you. When we review our years of high school (we’re seniors now), we look back on a lot of things: we’ve come across a lot of roads; we’ve had a lot of rough times. And many times we couldn’t just look to our friends or parents for advice—we had to ask Jesus about it. That’s how prayer becomes more important, because you know that nobody else could answer your questions. God has a way of helping you through.”***

### **Saints on Prayer**

**You have made us for yourself, O Lord,  
And our hearts are restless until they rest in you.  
(Saint Augustine of Hippo)**

**The person who sings, prays twice!  
(Based on words of Saint Augustine of Hippo)**

**Prayer is loving attention to God.  
(Saint John of the Cross)**

# What If God . . . ?

Think about God's point of view and then write your answers to the following questions in the spaces provided:

1. If God were going to call you, what time would the phone ring?

---

2. If God were playing hide-and-seek with you, where would you find God?  
(Hint: It has to be somewhere possible for *you* to get to.)

---

3. If God were listening to your music, what kind of songs would God like? Why?

---

---

4. If God were a salesperson, what would God be able to sell to you? (Hints: Think about the price. Can you wheel and deal with God? Why would you or would you not buy what God had to sell?)

---

5. If you told God about a hard problem you were struggling with, what kind of advice would God give you?

---

6. If God were making baseball caps, what message would God print on your cap?

---

## You Have Got to Want To

Once a boy came to a holy man who knew much about prayer. The boy asked the holy man to teach him how to pray. So it was agreed. The boy came late the first day. The second day he skipped. The third day he came late again.

The holy man led the boy to the edge of a creek and told him to put his face underwater and leave it there as long as he could. After a short while, the boy pulled his face out of the water, gasping for air.

The master said: "When you want to pray as much as you want to breathe the fresh air, then you will be ready. But first you've got to want to pray."



# Images I Can Hold On To



Each of us can think of an image of a parent or a police officer or a teacher or a movie star. Such images influence how we act toward parents or police officers or teachers or movie stars.

We also have certain images of what God is like. Our prayer will in large part depend on how we view God. Many Christian people view God as a *father*. Christians tend to favor this image because Jesus spoke of God this way.

But some people have other images of God. Some people see God as a *protector* who will shield and support them when life is difficult or scary. Other people think of God as a *police officer* who watches everything they do and writes up tickets to heaven or hell. Some people think of God as a *friend* to whom they can talk about anything and everything. For other people nature is the source of images: God is like a *cloud* hovering over us; God is like the *sun* bringing warmth to our life; God is like a *fire* that is beautiful and mysterious.

As a Catholic Christian, you have inherited the learning and wisdom of the people of God who have prayed and thought about God for thousands of years. The Bible contains many of these ideas and images. Read the following passages, and pick from them the images of God you think can deepen your prayer life.

Like an eagle watching her nest,  
hovering over her young,  
God protects us with outspread wings.

(Adapted from Deuteronomy 32:11)



The Lord is  
my shepherd,  
I lack nothing.

(Adapted from  
Psalm 23:1)



**T**he Lord is my rock and my fortress,  
my deliverer is my God.

(Adapted from Psalm 18:2)

For the Lord, the most high, is glorious,  
the great ruler over all the earth.

(Adapted from Psalm 47:2)



God will judge between the nations  
and arbitrate between many peoples.

(Adapted from Isaiah 2:4)



Can a woman forget her baby  
at the breast,  
feel no pity for the child she  
has borne?  
Even if these were to forget,  
I shall not forget you.

(Isaiah 49:15, NJB)

**A**fter all, you, O God,  
are our mother and father.

(Adapted from Isaiah 63:16)

This is how some young people think of God:

God is like . . .

- . . . a protector. I made a house to symbolize this because houses protect us from the storm.
- . . . a peacemaker. I made a rainbow to symbolize this because a rainbow shows God's love and peace for the world.
- . . . a grandpa. I made a cane to symbolize this because grandpas are happy and caring and so is God. They keep you safe and sometimes need canes to help them walk.
- . . . a feeling and presence. I made a leaf to symbolize this because nature is a feeling and presence to me. Nature gives me a sense of peace and love and so does God.
- . . . a cellular phone, because God is always there for you. I think God is always around no matter what happens.

**T**hey will follow  
the Lord,  
who will roar like  
a lion.

(Adapted from Hosea 11:10)



God created the most  
remote parts of the earth.

(Adapted from Isaiah 40:28)

Respond to these questions as instructed by  
your teacher:

1. If you were frightened or worried, which image of God would be helpful to you? Why?
2. Which images would help your prayer if you were feeling down? Why?
3. If you were all mixed up about something, which image of God might help you as you pray?
4. If you wanted to praise God, which image would help you?
5. These two images of God are most helpful for me right now:

---

---