

Prayer Works  
for Teens  
Book 3

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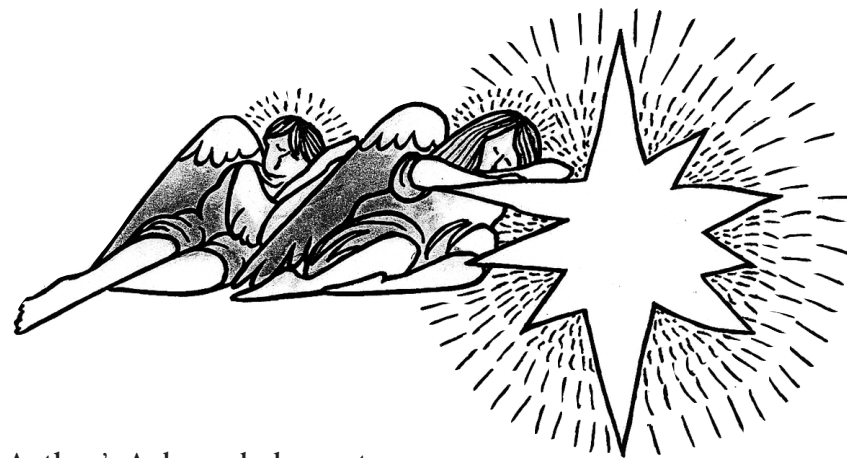
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This book is dedicated to  
David L. Chang  
1958–1994

David, you gifted me with imagination and spirit.  
You stretched my religious boundaries  
to help me form new images for faith and worship.  
You taught me to see all of life as art and service,  
and to see all of prayer as exploration and discovery.



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## Introduction to *Prayer Works*

Prayer works. It really does. Or does it?

Does it work for you? When you try to put together a meeting or an event, what's the hardest part to plan? the icebreakers and games? the theme presentations? the small-group discussions? the large-group activities? or the prayer time?

If you're like many youth ministers, the prayer time is the most difficult to plan. Why? Is it because prayer really *doesn't* work, or because it's really challenging to find ways to pray that are suitable and meaningful for teenagers?

You probably wouldn't be involved in ministry if you truly thought that prayer doesn't work. So, more than likely you just need some help finding ways to pray with young people that connect with who they are and what's important in their lives.

Perhaps you also need a renewed sense of what to expect from teenagers. For instance, if you use the same worship experience with a peer ministry team of high school seniors at a leadership training retreat, and then with a group of seventh graders at an all-night movie lock-in, can you expect the same degree of involvement and prayerfulness? Probably not.

### Sets of Prayer Experiences

Here's what *Prayer Works* offers. Each of the four books includes three sets of prayer experiences. Each set consists of four prayer formats: a short prayer, a medium-length reflection prayer, a long ritual prayer, and a family prayer. Every prayer set focuses on a different image or object. The three focus objects in this book are water, the four seasons, and an *ojo de dios* (eye of God).

To find out what the focus objects are for the other books of *Prayer Works*, check the back cover of this book. And while you're checking, note what comes at the end of this book. You'll find that the prayers for all four books are indexed by Scripture citations and themes.

The prayer experiences in each book are easy to lead, but you will need adult volunteers to help you with many of them.

### Short Prayer

The short prayer can stand by itself, or it can be the introductory prayer at an event that will include an additional prayer or two with the same focus. The short prayer is perfect for that situation

when you want to start off with some sort of prayer, *but* . . . —“*but* everyone doesn’t know one another yet,” “*but* teenagers will be feeling awkward and it probably won’t be too prayerful,” “*but* it can kill your event to get too involved too soon with anything deep or complex.” You probably know what I mean.

So this first prayer is short and sweet. It reminds us of our connection to God, quiets down the participants, focuses them, and gets them ready to begin. *But* it isn’t so long or cumbersome that the young people start getting restless.

### Medium Prayer

The medium-length prayer can stand by itself, or it can be the second prayer in a series of two or three prayers that you lead at an event or class. It is a faith-sharing prayer that involves self-reflection using Scripture passages or comments, reflection questions, and a conversation with a partner or small group. This prayer has an accompanying handout that contains the Scripture passage(s) or comments and the reflection questions. Directions for using the reflection part of the medium prayer follow. The directions are customized to apply to three different types of groups.

#### Self-Reflection and Sharing with a Small Group

If you have a group of fewer than fifteen teenagers who know one another well, give everyone a copy of the reflection handout, found at the end of the prayer set. Direct them to listen while the Scriptures and comments are being read, and then to jot down some thoughts or feelings that are triggered by the reflection questions. Naturally, you will always have some folks who aren’t “jotters” or journalers, and there is no need to pressure them to write if they don’t want to. But giving the participants time to reflect quietly, whether it is in their head or on paper, is very helpful if faith sharing is expected in the group.

One effective way to use this reflection method is to have volunteers read the different sections of the handout. For example, if the handout is arranged in this order—Scripture passage, comments, and questions—then one person reads the Scripture passage, a second person reads the comments, and a third person reads the questions, pausing after each question so that everyone (including the readers) can reflect and jot down their thoughts. That pattern would be repeated for the next set(s) of Scripture passage(s), comments, and questions.

Using different voices for different sections of the handout will help everyone listen more carefully. It’s easier to listen when different people alternate reading, as long as every reader speaks with a clear, confident voice that can be heard and understood.

Allow everyone to share verbally with the group. This can be done in a random, spontaneous, whoever-is-ready-to-share-can-share method. Or it can be done with an ordered, go-around-in-a-circle-and-share method.

Often the focusing object (for example, an *ojo de Dios*) can be used as a turn designator for this type of prayer. When it’s time for sharing, you, as the prayer leader, pick up the object first, offer your reflections, and then pass the object to the next person to do the same. Or, after you pick up the object and offer a reflection, you place it back in the center of the group and whoever else is ready to share can pick up the object and start sharing.

By the way, not only does the focusing object make an excellent turn designator, it also does a fine job of helping people forget that everyone is watching them. It can be awkward for some people—especially teenagers, but adults as well—to talk to a group when everyone is looking at them. Having an object to fiddle with can distract them from that awkward feeling and help them feel more comfortable.

The prayer experience can be ended with the closing reflection included in the prayer set or with any spontaneous words you think are appropriate.

#### Self-Reflection and Sharing with a Large Group

If you have a group larger than fifteen and don’t want to separate the young people into smaller groups for the process just described, you can change the dynamics of this experience by not distributing the reflection handout to everyone. Instead, tell everyone to find a partner to share with. Call on designated readers to read the Scripture passage(s), comments, and questions from the handout. As each question is read, the partners can share with each other. You might direct the young people to switch partners periodically if you are trying to build community in your group. Or you might direct them to keep the same partner if you are more concerned with developing fewer but deeper relationships. End the prayer experience with the closing reflection or words of your own choosing.

#### Self-Reflection and Sharing with a Journaling Group

If you intend to have the group write in a journal, have the Scripture passage(s), comments, and questions from the handout already written on a chalkboard, piece of poster board, or overhead projector. Everyone can then write the questions in their journal, respond to one or more of them, and then join a journaling partner for a faith-sharing walk. Because this type of sharing disperses the group, it doesn’t always work well to end the activity with a closing reflection, but that’s up to you as you plan your event and assess your group’s needs. Sometimes you might want to regather and close as a unified group; other times you might want to let the partners’ sharing flow into a break or meal and have no official closing.

### Long Prayer

The long prayer can stand by itself or serve as one in a series of two or three prayers at an event or class. This prayer involves more creativity and ritual than the short and medium ones. It is difficult

to describe or summarize because it varies so much from prayer set to prayer set. The long prayer, as its name suggests, usually takes the most time, but it depends on your group and the situation.

Here are examples of the processes in some of the long prayers in the four books of *Prayer Works*:

- ♦ In book 1, the long prayer with the rock image focuses on the strength and permanence of virtues and principles. It involves painting words on actual rocks.
- ♦ In book 2, the long prayer with the nuts image focuses on the importance of God in a life of many choices. It involves creating a faith carrier out of a jar of rice and walnuts.
- ♦ In book 3, the long prayer with the four seasons image focuses on the seasons and repeating patterns in our life. It involves a prayer journey to four different environments.
- ♦ In book 4, the long prayer with the puzzle image focuses on the puzzle of sin and on finding our peace (as well as our piece) in a reconciliation service. It involves working with puzzle pieces.

## Family Component

The most unique aspect of *Prayer Works* is the family component. So often families have no idea what their teenage members do at parish events and retreats. But *Prayer Works* gives you an easy way to involve parents and siblings in the prayer experienced by the teen. Two items make up the family component: a family handout and a sample letter for families.

### Family Handout

Each set of prayers includes a handout containing a family faith-sharing prayer. The family handout is modeled after the medium prayer handout, but the teenager does *not* need to have experienced that prayer for the family handout to be effective. The family handout includes directions and questions designed for use in family settings. You can photocopy the handout and use it in one of the following settings:

**A gathering of families after a retreat or long event.** End a youth retreat or other event with a family meal. Invite all the parents, brothers, sisters, and whoever else may share your young people's homes with them. After the meal, invite several young people to get up and share about parts of their prayer experience by telling stories, doing skits, or showing examples of what happened.

The families can then share their answers to the questions on the handout. Even young children can participate in answering most of the questions. In this way, the families not only have some idea of the kind of experience their teenagers had but also share in the experience itself.

**A separate gathering of youth and families.** Hold a reunion for the teens who participated in an event or retreat, and invite all their family members to attend. Or just have a gathering for the young people you work with and their families. In either case, after a

meal, do an activity that involves storytelling or skits related to the event in which the prayer was used, or just distribute the family handout and move the family groups into conversation using the faith questions.

**A bulletin or parish newsletter insert.** Use the family handout as a bulletin or parish newsletter insert. This is a wonderful way to spread the good news about what young people in your faith community are doing. Write a brief article about the event in which you used the related prayer forms with the young people. Include other folksy details about where you were, the history of the event, or some of the related activities. Explain that you are providing this family prayer handout as a service to *all* families, whether or not they had a teenager who attended the event, and that you hope it helps spread the kind of spirit the parish's young people experienced at the event.

**A personal letter and take-home handout.** Send a personal letter home to the parents of the participants, highlighting parts of your group's event or retreat, and thanking them for making the family arrangements that were necessary for their teenager to attend the event. A sample letter for families (described below) is included at the end of each set of prayers for you to use as a guide in composing your own letter.

**A follow-up mailing.** A few days after the meeting or event, mail the family handout to the parents of the young people who attended, along with a letter of explanation.

### Sample Letter for Families

At the end of each set of prayers, a sample letter for families is offered for possible use with the family prayer handout. Be sure to customize the letter to match the prayer and the setting in which it was used. And be sure to personalize the letter by using the names of the young people and parents. If you do not have access to a computer to make this feasible, then you could ask a few volunteers to type up the letters for you. Simply supply the basic text, with a list of the names and addresses of the young people and their parents. You'll find this extra effort goes a long way.

## Benefits of the Family Component

If you are hesitant about including a family component in your plans, please consider the benefits. If you get to know your young people's families, the young people will be more apt to come to future events because their parents will feel a greater attachment to you and your parish. The parents will be more likely to call on you in an emergency because they have developed trust in you, and they will also be more likely to say yes when you need volunteers. Besides, taking care of family needs and helping families develop their faith is a wonderful way to improve the lives of your young people. So how can you go wrong? That's a winning combination!

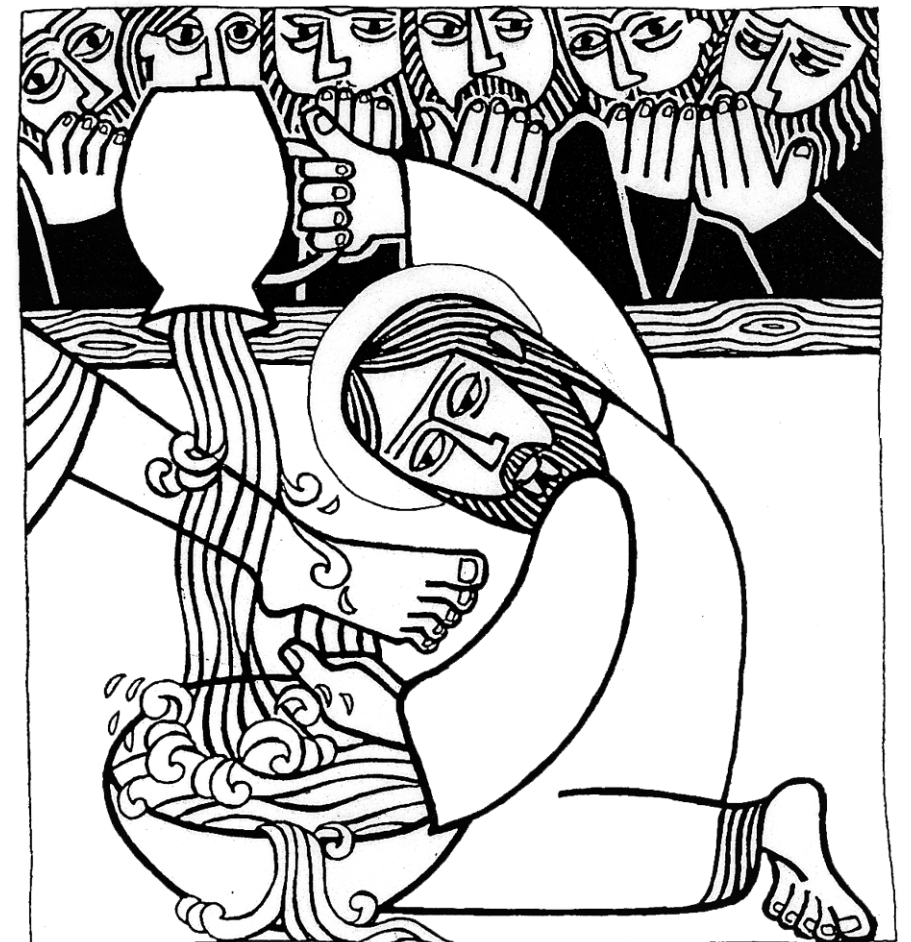
**Prayer Works for  
Youth Leaders,  
Parents, and  
Peer Ministers**

Don't worry about how to pull off these prayers—each one is simple to do and has already proven successful with teenagers. And the instructions are very specific and easy to follow, which makes it possible for peer ministers, parents, and youth leaders to run the experiences. For instance, material that is to be presented aloud to the group is highlighted with a black rule at the left margin. Teen leaders who are looking for prayers to facilitate will like these because they get the participants involved. Moreover, the prayers in each set have the same format, and that makes it easy to add icebreakers or related activities with a similar focus.

If the teens can do it, so can you. All you need is a little faith. So relax. Remember, prayer works. It really does.

## Prayer Set 1

### Water



# Short Prayer

- Themes**
- ♦ baptism
  - ♦ healing
  - ♦ community

## Background Information

This prayer is best used at a retreat or other event that consists of several activities. Participating in all three of the prayers in this set will enhance one's experience of the individual prayers.

Used together, these three prayers work especially well for catechumenate groups or families gathered for baptismal preparation.

The short prayer uses the sprinkling rite.

The opening of the prayer is from the Chinese masterpiece *Tao Te Ching* (pronounced *Dow Deb Jing*), by Lao-tzu. It means the "Book of the Way." This book is full of wisdom and is appropriate spiritual reading even today.

## Preparation

- Supplies**
- a clear glass bowl of water
  - an evergreen branch for the sprinkling rite
  - optional* (if your group is musically inclined): song sheets and musical accompaniment to "Wade in the Water" (new arrangement, Sweet Honey in the Rock, 1987), or "O Healing River" (Chicago: GIA Publications, 1983), or some other song focused on water

- Setting** This prayer can take place almost anywhere, with the participants arranged in almost any position. They can sit around a meeting table, on the floor, or on couches and chairs spread out around the room. They can even stand. Because the prayer is so brief, it doesn't require a distraction-free environment. As long as the participants can hear the words and see the speaker, the prayer can be effective.

**Expectations** This prayer works equally well with junior high youth, senior high youth, and adults. However, some junior high youth, and immature senior high youth, will probably get the giggles when the water is sprinkled on them. Feeling uncomfortable with a new experience is natural, and giggling is a typical youth response. Mature senior high students and most adults will likely feel more comfortable with the experience.

## Procedure

Either direct one person with an excellent reading voice to proclaim the following prayer to the group, or have three separate readers do it together, with the first person reading the quote from *Tao Te Ching*, the second person reading the passage from Mark's Gospel, and the third person reading the rest of the prayer. A fourth person can perform the sprinkling rite, ensuring that the water touches each person present.

- Prayer** 1. Begin by reading the following quotation:

Nothing in the world  
is as soft and yielding as water.  
Yet for dissolving the hard and inflexible,  
nothing can surpass it.  
The soft overcomes the hard;  
the gentle overcomes the rigid.  
Everyone knows this is true,  
but few can put it into practice.

(Lao-tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, p. 78)

2. Explain the reading this way:

The words from *Tao Te Ching* were written more than four hundred years before the birth of Christ. Jesus probably never heard them. His cousin John probably never heard them either. Yet both Jesus the Christ and John the Baptizer embraced their wisdom.

John wore clothes made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. He announced to the people, "The man who will come after me is much greater than I am. I am not good enough even to bend down and untie his sandals. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Not long afterward Jesus came from Nazareth in the province of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As soon as Jesus came up out of the water, he saw heaven opening and the Spirit coming down on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my own dear Son. I am pleased with you."  
(Mark 1:6–11, TEV)



Tiny water droplets can come together to make a river, and they can separate to make a splash. Our group wishes to develop both the united purpose of a river and the playfulness of a splash.

As the soft, gentle waters of baptism wash away our hard, inflexible sinfulness, may they also wash away any rigidity or divisions that might harm us. And may our individual energies flow together as a dynamic and moving force of God.

3. Read the following prayer while sprinkling the group:

May this gentle sprinkle of water remind us of the power of baptism, the power of water, and the power of God, all present here today in our gathered faith community. Amen.

If the group is musically inclined, you might wish to close by singing or listening to a song such as “Wade in the Water” or “O Healing River.”

## Medium Prayer

### Themes

- ♦ asking God
- ♦ thanking God
- ♦ listening to God

### Background Information

This prayer can stand by itself, but like the short prayer, it is more effective when used with the other two prayers in this set.

Again, the three prayers used together work especially well for catechumenate groups or families gathered for baptismal preparation.

This prayer equates the ritual of “pouring out our prayers” with pouring water from a pitcher to a basin. Each person takes a turn silently touching the water in the pitcher and then “pouring” his or her prayer intention into a common basin.

The sharing can be combined with the pouring of prayers in a variety of ways. Please do not be overwhelmed by all the options presented. Simply think about your group, picture them praying with you, and choose the option you think would be most appropriate for your setting and your group.

This prayer has a lot of built-in flexibility because it isn’t a difficult ritual and can be done in many ways.

## Preparation

### Supplies

- a pen or pencil and a sheet of paper for each participant
- one or more pitchers of water (one for groups of ten or fewer, one per small group if you have a large group divided into small groups)
- a basin or bowl, large enough to hold all the water in the pitcher(s)

### Setting

How you arrange the prayer participants depends on the size of your group. Very small groups can sit around a table or on the floor, with the pitcher and basin in the center.

For larger groups, chairs can be arranged in several circles, each with its own pitcher. The prayer participants can pass the pitcher around and silently pray their prayer while touching the water in the pitcher. The pouring ritual can then be performed as a representative from each small group comes forward to pour that group’s prayers into a common basin that all can see in the middle of the room.

### Expectations

This prayer works equally well with junior high youth, senior high youth, and adults. Naturally, however, the depth and intimacy of the conversation will vary according to the ages and maturity levels of the participants.

## Procedure

### Opening

Welcome your group to prayer. Tell the participants that they will think together about ways of praying to God. Suggest that they may want to ask God for help with some situation, thank God for some particular blessing, pray on behalf of someone close to them who needs support and strength, or simply be with God in silence and listen.

Tell them that all of these are wonderful ways to pray, to communicate with our Creator, who already knows our thoughts and feelings before we can even fully articulate them.

**Psalm Reading** Invite an excellent reader to proclaim these words from Psalm 65:

O God, it is right for us to praise you in Zion  
 and keep our promises to you,  
 because you answer prayers.  
 . . . . .  
 You answer us by giving us victory,  
 and you do wonderful things to save us.  
 People all over the world  
 and across the distant seas trust in you.  
 . . . . .  
 You show your care for the land by sending rain;  
 you make it rich and fertile.  
 You fill the streams with water;  
 you provide the earth with crops.  
 This is how you do it:  
 you send abundant rain on the plowed fields  
 and soak them with water;  
 you soften the soil with showers  
 and cause the young plants to grow.  
 What a rich harvest your goodness provides!  
 Wherever you go there is plenty.  
 The pastures are filled with flocks;  
 the hillsides are full of joy.  
 The fields are covered with sheep;  
 the valleys are full of wheat.  
 Everything shouts and sings for joy.

(vv. 1–5,9–13, TEV)

**Self-Reflection and Sharing**

Use the following questions for self-reflection and sharing. Either ask the three questions verbally or post them for all to see. Either option can be effective.

- ♦ What blessings would you like to thank God for?
- ♦ What help would you like to request from God?
- ♦ Is there anyone for whom you would like to pray?

Depending on your preferences, setting, and group size, this sharing could be done in one of several ways:

**Small groups.** For this method, seat the participants around a table. Explain that you will read three questions. Assure them that there will be a chance for group sharing, but that no one will be asked to share anything that they feel is too personal.

After reading the questions, give the participants 2 to 3 minutes to write down their thoughts or insights. Allow more time if the participants seem engrossed, less if they are fidgety.

When the participants are done writing, begin the sharing. Have them take turns, possibly passing the pitcher of water as a turn designator, sharing whatever information or insights they are comfortable revealing. When each person is finished sharing, she

or he should touch the water in the pitcher and pass the pitcher to the next person.

**Large groups.** A large group can be divided into smaller groups in order to use the same sharing method described for small groups.

**Journaling groups.** You can use these reflection questions as journal-entry starters. After writing in their journal, the participants can share in small groups, go for a walk with a prayer partner, or follow up in whatever way you think is most comfortable for your group.

**Closing Pouring Ritual**

This ritual is an expression of communal prayer support. During the sharing session, each person touched the water and passed it on to the next person. Now it is time to “pour the prayers” into the basin as a sign of the whole group being united in its prayer support for one another. This ritual can also be performed in a variety of ways:

**Large group.** If the sharing has been done in small groups, the participants can come together in one large circle, with the basin in the middle. One representative from each small group comes forward and pours that group’s pitcher of water into the large basin. The water needs to be poured slowly, deliberately, and reverently so that everyone can witness the holiness of supporting one another in prayer.

If the large gathering consists of several small groups, you might want to consider having two or three pitchers poured at the same time so that the waters can be seen intermingling as they fall into the common basin.

**Small group.** After everyone has shared, the last person to speak or the leader of the group slowly and reverently pours the water of prayers from the pitcher into the basin.

Another option is to have each person take the pitcher and pour a bit of the water into the basin, so that the pitcher isn’t completely emptied until the last person pours.

Yet another option is to combine the sharing with the pouring. Have each person do his or her sharing and then immediately touch the water in the pitcher and pour some of it into the basin.

A final option, which combines the sharing with the pouring, is done in silence. After the questions have been read and the participants have responded in writing, there is no talking. Instead of sharing aloud, each person takes a turn sharing silently. This is done simply by touching or stirring the water in the pitcher for a moment while offering a prayer to God, and then standing and pouring a portion of the water into the basin. The group silently supports and respects whatever prayer intentions that person has in her or his heart.

The silent option works best with adults who might not know one another well but who can understand the symbolism without much of an explanation. It also takes less time and thus is a good option if you are in a time crunch.

## Long Prayer

**Themes** ♦ service  
♦ humility  
♦ discipleship

**Background Information** This prayer can stand by itself, but it is most effective when used as the last of the three prayers in this set.  
Again, used together these three prayers work especially well for catechumenate groups or families gathered for baptismal preparation.

**Preparation** This prayer involves the washing of feet. The participants should know this before coming to the prayer.

**Supplies** You will need the following for each foot-washing circle:

- a large pitcher of warm water—enough to pour over every person's feet (If you have a large circle of twenty or more people, you will need several pitchers of warm water.)
- a basin or bowl large enough to collect all the water from the pitcher(s) (If you have a large circle of twenty or more people, you will need several basins.)
- one large white towel for every six participants

**Setting** This prayer requires enough space for everyone to sit in a circle facing inward. If your group has more than twenty participants, the foot washing is best accomplished in smaller groups, each having its own circle of foot washing. How you arrange the groups depends on your time schedule and the attention span of the prayer participants.

In each foot-washing circle, set up a small table in the center, with a pitcher of warm water on top of it. Set an empty basin on the floor, beside the table. Lay a towel on the table, if the table is big enough. If the table is too small, lay the towel on the basin. Place an empty chair beside the table.

Have extra pitchers of warm water, basins, and towels nearby so that they can be fetched quickly when needed.

**Expectations** This prayer works equally well with junior high youth, senior high youth, and adults. Having one's feet washed is a bit awkward for anyone, regardless of their age or maturity level. Remember, Peter didn't want Jesus to do it to him! Expect a bit of resistance at first. But if the group has been together for a while and has built up a level of trust, objections will be short lived.

### Procedure

**Greeting** Greet the prayer participants with words similar to these:

I welcome you to our prayer time. We gather in the name of Jesus, who taught us to serve one another in humility and love.

**Gospel Reading** Call for an excellent reader to proclaim these words from John's Gospel:

Jesus—knowing that God had put all things into his own hands, and that he had come from God and was returning to God—rose from the table, took off his clothes and wrapped a towel around his waist. He then poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and dry them with the towel that was around his waist.

When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said, "Rabbi, you're not going to wash my feet, are you?"

Jesus answered, "You don't realize what I am doing right now, but later you'll understand."

Peter replied, "You'll never wash my feet!"

Jesus answered, "If I don't wash you, you have no part with me."

Simon Peter said to Jesus, "Then, Rabbi, not only my feet, but my hands and my head as well!"

Jesus said, "Any who have taken a bath are clean all over and only need to wash their feet—and you're clean, though not every one of you." For Jesus knew who was to betray him. That is why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

After washing their feet, Jesus put his clothes back on and returned to the table. He said to them, "Do you understand what I have done for you? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Sovereign'—and rightly, for so I am. If I, then—your Teacher and Sovereign—have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

"The truth of the matter is, no subordinate is greater than the superior; no messenger outranks the sender.

"Once you know all these things, you'll be blessed if you put them into practice." (John 13:3–17, INT)

**Foot Washing** To put people at ease about taking off their shoes and socks, remove your own before giving any directions.

Go to the middle of the circle, pick up the towel, drape it over your shoulder, and face the prayer participants. Introduce the foot-washing service using words similar to these:

I invite all of you to remove your socks and shoes. Jesus calls us all to be foot washers, to be servants to one another. That will be the essence of our prayer together. I will begin, and I ask everyone to simply follow my example when it is your turn.

This ritual is performed in complete silence, and with great reverence and prayerfulness.

Go to the first person seated nearby, lead her or him by the hand to the empty chair near the table with the pitcher of water, and motion for her or him to sit down. Pick up the basin, kneel at the person's feet, and place her or his feet inside the basin. Pick up the pitcher of water and pour some of the water over the person's feet. Put the pitcher back on the table. Dry the person's feet carefully and respectfully with the towel.

Move the basin to the side and then stand up, still facing the person. Take the person by the hand and help him or her up out of the chair. Drape the towel over the person's shoulder and lead him or her to the next person seated in the circle. Take the seated person's hands and place them in the hands of the person whose feet you just washed. Gesture toward the chair by the water pitcher, indicating that they are to go there and perform the same ritual. Then sit down.

The person with the towel then takes the second person by the hand, leading her or him to the chair for the foot washing, following your example. This process continues until everyone has had their feet washed.

Be ready with new towels, fresh warm water, and new basins as needed.

**Blessing** As the leader who began this ritual, you should be the last to have your feet washed. After your feet have been washed, stand and thank the group for their cooperation and their prayerfulness. Ask them all to stand. Then offer this blessing, extending your hand over them:

May Jesus, our teacher and sovereign, bless us with the *humility* to wash the feet of others.

May Jesus, our teacher and sovereign, bless us with the *grace* to accept having our feet washed by others.

May Jesus, our teacher and sovereign, bless us with the *courage* to put into practice all we have learned about foot washing and service.

## Family Component

Details for using the family component are included on pages 11–12 of the introduction to this book. Here are a list of the supplies you will need and a reminder of the settings in which the family component can be used.

**Supplies**  handout 1–A, “Pouring Our Family’s Prayers into God’s Waters”  
 sample 1–A, “Sample Letter for Families”

**Settings** ♦ a gathering of families after a retreat or long event  
 ♦ a separate gathering of youth and families  
 ♦ a bulletin or parish newsletter insert  
 ♦ a personal letter and take-home handout  
 ♦ a follow-up mailing

# Pouring Our Family's Prayers into God's Waters



As a family, you might sit down together and participate in this reflection. One family member could read the psalm, or members could take turns reading each line.

Three simple sharing questions follow the psalm. All the questions focus on our prayers to God. You might have one family member read all three of the questions, and then invite everyone in your family to say as much as they want in response to one or all of the questions.

During the sharing, have each member of the family touch some water in a pitcher. After the sharing, pour some of the water into a basin or bowl. This ritual symbolizes all your family's prayers being mixed together in God's uniting waters.

## Psalm

O God, it is right for us to praise you in Zion  
and keep our promises to you,  
because you answer prayers.

You answer us by giving us victory,  
and you do wonderful things to save us.

People all over the world  
and across the distant seas trust in you.

You show your care for the land by  
sending rain;  
you make it rich and fertile.

You fill the streams with water;  
you provide the earth with crops.

This is how you do it:  
you send abundant rain on the  
plowed fields  
and soak them with water;  
you soften the soil with showers  
and cause the young plants to grow.

What a rich harvest your goodness  
provides!

Wherever you go there is plenty.

The pastures are filled with flocks;  
the hillsides are full of joy.

The fields are covered with sheep;  
the valleys are full of wheat.

Everything shouts and sings for joy.

(Ps. 65:1-5,9-13, TEV)

## Reflection Questions for Sharing

- ◆ What family blessings would you like to thank God for?
- ◆ What help for your family would you like to request from God?
- ◆ Is there anyone else for whom you would like to pray?

Sample 1-A

# Sample Letter for Families

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

It has been a pleasure having \_\_\_\_\_ with us. Thank you for making all the necessary family arrangements so that she/he could be with us. It was truly a gift from your family to our parish community.

During our time together, we focused on the symbol of water. We prayed using a sprinkling rite; we "poured" our prayers into a basin to symbolize all our individual intentions united in God's healing waters; and we prayed with a community foot washing. You might ask \_\_\_\_\_ to share what he/she thought of the experience.

Enclosed is a family-based version of the prayer incorporating the pouring ritual. I encourage you to take some time during or after a family meal to go through the questions and discuss them as a family. If you have a pitcher of water on the table, your family members could each put their fingers in the water as they reflect on the questions. Each member could respond by sharing, pouring her or his prayer into the bowl, and then passing the pitcher to the next person. After everyone has finished sharing, you might leave the pitcher and bowl on your kitchen table or counter as a reminder of your family's individual prayers united together. These are just a few ideas to help you get in touch with \_\_\_\_\_'s experience with this prayer.

If you have any questions about our programs, or if any of your family members would like to get more involved with our parish in any way, please don't hesitate to call me. I wish your family great peace and joy.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_