

saint mary's press

The
Catholic
Youth Prayer
Book

Second Edition



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Introduction

Why We Pray

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve;
I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey.
I asked for health, that I might do great things;
I was given sickness, that I might do better things.
I asked for riches, that I might be happy;
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.
I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men;
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need for God.
I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life;
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.
I received nothing I asked for—but everything I hoped for.
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayer was answered;
I am, among all men, most richly blessed.

—UNKNOWN CONFEDERATE SOLDIER

When we talk with God and ask for help, we are in conversation with the one being who has the power to do or change anything. God even has the power to change us.

Sometimes, we ask for God's guidance in a certain way and then find out we have grown differently. Placing our needs and concerns before God allows us to share the struggle with someone loving and accepting—and powerful.

In the process, not only do we find that a situation or problem is better than we thought, but also we are able to see the situation from a new perspective. This is the power and grace of God at work.

When we are able to focus ourselves in prayer, we gain new insights and new perspective and are humbled to embrace God's will in our lives.

Sometimes, in the thick of struggling times, we might feel sorry for ourselves. We might ask God for things that may not really be good for us. For example, "God, please make _____ love me" might be the prayer of a heartbroken person.

Psalms 139:13 tells us that God knew us before we were born. God knows everything about us. Because we do not know all that God knows, it is possible that we don't always ask for what is best—especially if we ask out of pity or selfishness.

Even though our plans might not turn out as we prayed, God surprises us with a wonderful alternative. For example, many young people have prayed to get into a college they had their hearts set on. When they received their rejection letters, they might have thought there was no hope for a good college experience. However, God may have opened a door for them to get into a different school, one that was perfect for them. Their years there were great, and they discovered a major that suited them perfectly.

All of this is part of the wonder of prayer. The most important part of prayer, the goal of prayer, is for us to be shaped in the image of Jesus. Through prayer we can be changed into the image of Jesus to love what he loved as deeply as he loved.

As the Son of God, Jesus knew and experienced the Father intimately. The experience of God as Father is offered to us in prayer. Jesus was love and gave everything he had for others. The process of being changed into love is ours in prayer. God loves us profoundly and wants to give us things. God wants us to ask. God also offers something more for us in prayer. God offers a relationship that fulfills the deepest longing of the human heart.

Imagine it, believe it, and then—*pray!* Pray when you are

- reflecting
- contemplating

- asking or petitioning
- sorrowing
- thankful or grateful
- joyful and praising
- searching or seeking

How to Use This Book

Although prayer is personal in many ways, it is also a community experience. When you pray, God hears you. In addition, all the angels and saints are praying for you and your prayer. Family, friends, and other people you know are united with you in prayer too. Therefore, prayer is ever changing, ever growing, ever evolving.

Because of the community aspect of prayer, some prayers have been handed down for many generations. These traditional prayers may have their origins in Scripture, the life of a saint, or a Catholic teaching or other specific person or event.

This book contains a collection of prayers. It includes some traditional prayers for you to pray. It also includes some contemporary and traditional ways to pray, such as an adaptation of the form of prayer known as the Liturgy of the Hours, and journal writing. These options offer you variety in the way you choose to pray. The way you choose to pray might depend on your mood, needs, and energy level.

This book's table of contents gives an overview of the prayers and prayer forms in this book. In addition to the prayers in each chapter, you will also find sidebar notes called Study It!, Pray It!, and Live It!

Study It!

Prayer has a deep history in our Catholic faith and is a rich part of our Tradition. The Study It! sidebar notes help you learn about prayer in general or describe the origins of certain prayers.

Pray It!

Look for ways to be inspired in your own prayer life. Maybe you will discover new ways to pray either individually or with your family, friends, and community.

Live It!

Read about the prayer lives of the saints. People's stories can help us learn more about the value of prayer and can inspire us to live a prayerful life focused on God's will for us. Listen to the lives of others. Think about how you incorporate prayer into your own life. If you have so much as uttered the words "But I don't know how to pray," then you are already on the way to learning how to pray. At the very least, prayer is talking to God, and there is no right or wrong way to do that. This book will introduce you to many great ways to pray. Just ask God to guide you, and God will plant the seeds of deeper prayer in your heart.

Tips

Think about how you like to pray. Is there someplace or something that inspires you to live a prayerful life? Create a prayer space, a prayer box, or a prayer journal that contains the information and tools you need to allow yourself the opportunity to pray often.

Consider having more than one of some of these items so you can easily invite a friend, parent, or sibling to pray with you.

- *The Catholic Youth Bible*[®] or another edition of the Bible
- a pen and paper for writing prayers and thoughts
- a cross or crucifix
- a rosary
- a candle
- matches or a lighter (Remember to practice fire safety!)
- prayer cards

- pictures of saints or family members who inspire you
- a prayer shawl or blanket
- a rug or mat
- a small table with a tablecloth
- holy water
- statues or icons of saints
- a small fountain (for the sound of water)
- a chair or other special place to sit or kneel
- flowers or other items from nature
- this book, other books, and resources that include prayers and writings that inspire you personally
- music (a CD and a CD player or musical instrument)
- art supplies, such as markers, paints, clay, chalk, and paper
- a special item, such as your own baptismal candle or a grandparent's rosary
- a missalette or other publication that lists the weekly readings

Your Comments or Suggestions

Saint Mary's Press wants to know your reactions to the materials in this book. We are open to all kinds of suggestions from young people and want to continue to provide resources that enliven your hearts and minds with the Good News of Jesus Christ. Please let us know how we can help you pray all ways.

If you have a comment or suggestion, please write to us at 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1320, or send an e-mail to smpress@smp.org.

Part I

PRAYERS FOR DAILY LIFE

1

Prayers through the Day

Morning Prayers

Hymn for Sunday Morning: "Te Deum" ("You Are God")

You are God: we praise you;

You are the Lord: we acclaim you;

You are the eternal Father:

All creation worships you.

To you all angels, all the powers
of heaven,

Cherubim and Seraphim, sing
in endless praise:

Holy, holy, holy, Lord, God of
power and might, heaven and
earth are full of your glory.

The glorious company of apostles
praise you.

The noble fellowship of prophets
praise you.

The white-robed army of martyrs
praise you.

Throughout the world the holy
Church acclaim you:

Father, of majesty unbounded,
your true and only Son,

worthy of all worship,
and the Holy Spirit, advocate
and guide.

You, Christ, are the king of glory,
the eternal Son of the Father.

When you became man to set
us free
you did not spurn the Virgin's
womb.

You overcame the sting of death,
and opened the kingdom of
heaven to all believers.

You are seated at God's right
hand in glory.

We believe that you will come,
and be our judge.

Come then, Lord, and help
your people,
bought with the price of your
own blood,
and bring us with your saints
to glory everlasting.

Ignatian Examination of Conscience

Saint Ignatius of Loyola wanted to be fully present to God throughout his day. To prepare for the next day, he reviewed the day he had just lived. This review, or examination, brought to mind ways he was present to God and ways he needed to be more present to God.

Before you go to bed at night, take a little time to end your day with God. This will help you let go of the day and start tomorrow fresh—a clean slate, a new beginning. Following are several ways to do so:

- Begin by thanking God for the day.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see the day through his eyes.
- Think through your day, hour by hour. Getting out of bed and ready for school . . . arriving at school and seeing your friends . . . going through your morning classes . . . lunch . . . afternoon classes . . . after-school activities . . . coming home . . .
- What are you grateful for? When did you see God working? For those moments, pray, “Thank you, God, for . . .”
- What are you sorry for? Everyone sins. The greatest damage, however, isn’t in the moment of the act itself but is in the effects the act has on others, ourselves, and our relationship with God. We can feel shameful, or we may think we are bad people. It is much better simply to acknowledge our sins and shortcomings and to ask God and others to forgive us.
- After you have contemplated your day, ask God to help you grow closer to him.
- Last, ask God to guard you while you sleep, to keep your heart and mind fixed on him, and to help you wake up ready to serve throughout another day.

Psalm 33:20–22

Our soul waits for the Lord;
he is our help and shield.
For in him our hearts rejoice;
in his holy name we trust.
May your mercy, LORD, be
upon us;
as we put our hope in you.

Take This Day

To Jesus, who changed the water
into wine:
Take this day
and make it into something
beautiful.
Amen.

A True Friend to Jesus

To Jesus, who called us friends:
Let me be a true friend to
you today.
Let my words and my actions
tell the world how much
I love you.
Amen.

The Morning Offering

O Jesus,
through the Immaculate Heart
of Mary,
I offer You my prayers, works,
joys, and sufferings
of this day for all the intentions
of Your Sacred Heart,
in union with the Holy Sacrifice
of the Mass
throughout the world,
in reparation for my sins,
for the intentions of all my
relatives and friends,
and in particular for the
intentions of the Holy Father.
Amen.

Sanctifying the Day

To *sanctify* means to set something aside for holiness. Just how do you sanctify your day, or make it holy?

God makes things holy!

To set your day aside for God, simply recognize that you are in God's presence constantly. God is already there and is already aware of what is happening with you. Remember this. Turn to God and say yes.

The film *The Prince of Egypt* (1998, 90 minutes, rated PG) is the animated story of God's calling Moses to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt. At the burning bush, Moses draws near and hears God calling his name: "Moses! Moses!" Moses cannot see the person calling, but the voice becomes like a wind whirling around him. Moses finds himself lifted off his feet by the power of this call.

Think of God's presence in your life as being like that wind. It is constantly around us. God's presence and call to us are as real as the air we breathe. We cannot see air. Yet, though it is invisible, though it is most often forgotten, air is still real. It still gives us life.

In the middle of a busy day, remembering God can be hard. But God doesn't go away when we don't think about God. God is all around us, like the air we breathe.

Use a reminder that will help you remember to turn to God, perhaps every time the bell rings if you are at school. Pray: "Thank you, God, for being with me. Help me stay near you as I continue my day."

Connect your day with God. Make it, and yourself, holy.

Prayers at School

Prayer before a Test

Lord:

I have studied, but there is so
much to remember.

Please give me a clear mind.

Please keep distractions away
from me.

Do not allow the pressure of the
moment to frustrate me.

Help me instead to calmly take
this test with the confidence
that you will help me remember
everything I have studied.

Amen.

Prayer after a Test

Lord:

I worry about my grades.

It is very easy for me to obsess
over a test

I am going to take and tests
I have taken.

I give you my concerns about
the test I have just taken.

I ask that the teacher grade it fairly,
and I ask that I go about the
rest of the day with confidence
that I did my best.

Amen.

Prayer for Holy Words

Merciful Jesus:

It is very easy for me to join
my friends

when someone is being talked
about,

when the conversation is
about something inappropriate,
or when the language becomes
coarse.

Give me the right words when
the wrong words are being used.

May my words be only those that
will bless others,
not hurt or offend them.

Amen.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola

Saint Ignatius of Loyola is an inspiration to all who have been confused about what they should do with their life or what God calls them to, or perhaps to those who think they are following God but then get turned around.

Ignatius began life as, well, a partier. He was rich and popular and hung out at the royal court with all the other rich and popular people. But he was also a soldier. After being hit by a cannonball in battle, Ignatius was laid up for quite a while. The only books around were those about Christ and the lives of the saints. With nothing else to do, Ignatius began reading. These stories stirred his soul to the point that he committed himself to a life of faith and virtue.

Exactly what that meant, however, wasn't clear. Ignatius decided to travel to the Holy Land, which is modern-day Israel and surrounding areas. After a long and difficult journey, he arrived, only to be told he had to leave. He often suffered from poverty and bad health and was the victim of rumor campaigns.

Years after his injury, Ignatius gradually began to understand God's way. Eventually, Ignatius founded a religious order called the Society of Jesus, also known as the Jesuits. Ignatius centered the life of his order on a love for Jesus that was lived every moment of the day. He challenged the other Jesuits to become aware of God's calling in the small things. He instructed his followers to stop at moments through the day and to be aware of how they were saying yes to God.

Prayers at Meals

Prayer before Meals

Bless us, O Lord, and these
your gifts, which we are about
to receive from your bounty,
through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

Prayer after Meals

We give you thanks for all your
benefits almighty God,
who lives and reigns forever
and ever.
Amen.

Prayers at Midday

Psalm 19:15

Let the words of my mouth
be acceptable,
the thoughts of my heart
before you,
LORD, my rock and
my redeemer.

Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd;
there is nothing I lack.
In green pastures he makes me
lie down;
to still waters he leads me;
he restores my soul.
He guides me along right paths
for the sake of his name.
Even though I walk through
the valley of the shadow
of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are
with me;

your rod and your staff
comfort me.
You set a table before me
in front of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Indeed, goodness and mercy will
pursue me
all the days of my life;
I will dwell in the house of
the LORD
for endless days.

You Are Near

Lord:
Keep me mindful of your love,
and help me remember that you
are near.
Amen.

Night Prayers

Night Prayer Antiphon

Protect us, Lord, as we stay
awake;
watch over us as we sleep,
that awake, we may keep watch
with Christ, and asleep,
rest in his peace.
Amen.

Psalm 141:1–4

LORD, I call to you; hasten to me;
listen to my plea when I call.
Let my prayer be incense
before you;
my uplifted hands an evening
offering.
Set a guard, LORD, before my
mouth,
keep watch over the door of
my lips.
Do not let my heart incline
to evil,
to perform deeds in
wickedness.
On the delicacies of evildoers
let me not feast.

Canticle of Simeon: Luke 2:29–32

Now, Master, you may let your
servant go
in peace, according to
your word,
for my eyes have seen your
salvation,
which you prepared in sight
of all the peoples,
a light for revelation to the
Gentiles,
and glory for your people
Israel.”

While I Sleep

Lord God:
I know that you can be at work,
even while I sleep.
Keep my heart and mind on you.
Heal me of injury,
make my heart strong,
make my soul pure,
and may I grow closer to you.
Amen.

2 Prayers for Life Events

A Simple Prayer

O God,
Open my ears to hear you
and my heart to receive you,
and strengthen my will
that I may follow you.
Amen.

God Is Light

Loving God:
Take away the darkness
and fill me with the radiant light
of your Son, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

I Have Faith

Jesus Christ, my Lord:
I can't explain it, Lord,
but today I know you are
with me.
I know you hold me
in the palm of your hand.
I know you love me
and will guide me.
I know there is nothing
you can't do.

I know there is nothing
you won't do
for me.
Amen.

It's a Great Day

God of glory:
Thank you, God,
for all you have given me,
for everything that makes today
great—
the tangible things
and this good feeling I have
but can't explain.
Amen.

It's a Jungle Out There, God

Lord, I hate to watch the news.
Sometimes I feel
as though the world is spinning
out of control.
I know that you haven't
abandoned us,
but sometimes
I wonder where you are.
Then I remember

Joyful Hearts, Give Praise!

What does praising God mean? We know how to thank God. We know how to ask God for things. We know how to ask God to forgive us. We know how to pray. But what does it mean to praise God?

Giving thanks is about acknowledging what God does; giving praise is about acknowledging who God is. The root of the word *praise* also gives us the word *prize*. What do you prize about God?

Who is God? How have you experienced God? Some like to think of God's loving nature. Others like to think of God as a friend who never leaves their side. You may prize God's constancy. No matter how many things change in your life, God remains the same. What do you love about God?

Make a list of things you prize about God. This list is your own litany of praise. Read your list and make it your prayer. Before each thing you prize, say, "I praise you, God, for . . ." This will become your praise, your gift to God.

that I am your hands, your feet.
 It is my voice
 through which you speak.
 Let me remember
 that I may not be able to change
 the whole world,
 but I may be able to
 make all the difference
 in the world of one person.
 Amen.

There Is So Much

Lord Jesus, who calmed the
 stormy sea:
 There is so much pressure,
 there is so much hurt,
 there is so much confusion,
 there is so much noise.
 Jesus, please calm this storm,
 so that I may
 sit peacefully in this boat
 with you.
 Amen.

I Can't Do Anything Right

God:
 It feels like I can't do anything
 right,
 like I woke up in a parallel
 universe or something.
 Help me to remember today that
 wherever I am,
 you are there,

and that your love for me doesn't
 depend on what I do.
 You love me just because I am.
 Amen.

Why Did You Let It Happen, God?

I don't get it,
 and I don't get you.
 Why did you let it happen?
 I don't understand.
 But even though I am mad at you,
 I still feel hope inside me.
 I trust you,
 even though I don't know why.
 I guess that deep down I know
 you will help me through.
 I choose to believe in you
 in the middle of it all.
 Amen.

Confused

Jesus, light of the world
 and light of my world too:
 No matter how dark the
 darkness is,
 your light is shining.
 Help me to keep my eyes on
 your light
 and not on the darkness that
 swarms around me.
 I don't know what your plan for
 me is, Lord,

but I know you have one.
Help me to hang on
until the time is right
for you to show it to me.
Amen.

My Dream Is Shattered

Loving God,
who cares about my dreams:
Bless and restore me.
In my disappointment
and sadness,
help me to remember
that you have a future full of
hope for me.
Give me a new dream.
Amen.

I'm Sorry, God

Jesus, you forgave Peter
for denying you three times.
Please give me the guts
to be honest with myself.
Give me the humility
to admit my sins.
And give me wisdom
so I will know how to repair the
harm I have caused.
Forgive me, Lord,
for what I have done,
and give me the grace
not to do it again.
Amen.

Boyfriend or Girlfriend Trouble

Jesus, you promised to carry
my burdens:
I have a broken heart,
and I have to live with it
while I deal with homework,
friends,
and everything else.
Lord Jesus,
will you carry my heavy heart?
Will your love fill the empty
space
that was left when love was taken
from me?
Amen.

My Family

Jesus,
son of Mary and Joseph,
I love my family, Lord.
And I want what's best for them.
I wish I knew how to say that
to them.
Help me, Jesus, to find the
words.
But while I am looking,
will you hear my prayer for them,
and bless them,
and let them know that you
love them?
Amen.

Growing Closer to God

When we think of growing, we usually think of an upward movement. Plants become taller when they grow. A promotion at work means a step up on the ladder.

Growing closer to God is all about going deeper, not moving up.

“I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33). To grow closer to God, we must go to the depth of our hearts, where God’s Law is written, where God dwells. We don’t have to add something new to our hearts; rather, we must learn to listen to that place in our hearts where God’s Law is already written. The more we listen, the easier hearing God becomes.

“Baptism seals the Christian with the indelible spiritual mark (*character*) of his belonging to Christ”¹ (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1272).

You were forever changed when you were baptized. When the mark of Jesus Christ was engraved onto your soul, you received a homing device of sorts that leads you back to God—if you listen.

Think of sunflowers. They are unusual by almost any measure. They are taller, stronger, and bigger than most flowers. Of course, the most fascinating aspect of sunflowers is that they follow the sun as it makes its way across the sky. They do this even on cloudy days. Somehow, they just do it.

As sunflowers follow the sun, so does your heart follow God—unless we weaken ourselves through sin. Sin separates us from God and causes us to become weak and less than God intended. The key is to avoid sin and to listen to your heart—to go to the depths where God’s Word is written, where the mark of your Baptism is found. There you will learn to grow strong in virtue to be the beautiful person God created you to be!

Thank You for My Friend

Thank you, Jesus,
for sending my friend
to speak with me.
Thank you for reminding me
that you are thinking of me,
and thank you for my friend.
Amen.

My Friend Is Hurting

Jesus,
you cared about your friends:
My friend is hurting, Lord,
and I don't know how to help.
Bless [name], Lord,
and give comfort, healing,
and peace.
Amen.



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Mother Teresa

Saint Cecilia

Imagine walking through an underground tunnel, a seemingly endless maze of small rooms and nooks. It is damp and cold, and despite the lamps, you cannot help but feel the darkness of the place.

Your thoughts turn to the people who first dug these tunnels, called catacombs. The diggers were the Christians during the time that Christianity was illegal in Rome, a time when being a Christian could get a person killed. The Christians of those days hid in these tunnels for meetings, for celebrating the Eucharist, and for fellowship.

You come to a room a bit larger than the others. There you see a sculpture of Saint Cecilia that was created ages ago. The room is filled with vibrantly colored murals of her. Everything about this room says Cecilia was unique.

Cecilia was a noblewoman of her time who gave up everything for her faith. After the Roman authorities martyred her husband and his brother for their Christian faith, Cecilia brought their bodies to her estate and buried them there. For this the authorities sentenced Cecilia to die. She lived for three days after an executioner attempted to behead her. During that time, Cecilia used her worldly goods to take care of people who were poor, made provisions to leave her home to the Christian Church, and continued to sing praises to God. That is part of the reason she is the patron saint of singers. Even through the painful wounds of an executioner, Cecilia gave praise.

In the pains and sufferings of life, Cecilia can inspire us always to have a joyful heart that is focused on the Lord.

Left Out by Friends

Jesus, on the Cross:
You know what hurt is
and how it feels
to be left behind by your friends.
You know how I feel,
and I know how you felt.
I will stay with you today,
and I know that you will stay
with me.
Amen.

Living True

Jesus:
Sometimes I know exactly what
you want me to do,
but I don't have the courage to
do it.
I am tired of being this way.
Help me to stand up straight
and be who you made me
to be—
Strong, confident, and unafraid.
Amen.

I Want to Do Good Work in the World

Lord,
you call me to great things.
You have created me good.
In my Baptism, you placed
within me
the same Spirit

that raised Christ Jesus from
the dead.
Help me, Lord,
to open my heart
and let the good that you have
placed in me
flow out into the world.
Amen.

The Path I Want to Walk

Loving God,
the Bible says
that your Word is a lamp for
my feet
and a light for my path.
Light my way, God,
while I fill out college
applications
and choose my major
and interview for jobs.
Help me to find the path
that you have laid out for me.
Amen.

Waiting for "the One"

I am lonely, Lord,
waiting,
waiting for "the one"
to come into my life.
Be with me, Jesus,
and help me to have hope,
because right now
I feel sad and alone.

Help me to trust in your plan
and to have faith that you
 will provide
all that I need.
Amen.

Jesus, I Trust You

Jesus, you fed the multitudes:
Help me to have the courage
of the boy who brought you
the five loaves and two fish.
With your blessing,
his small gift
became enough to feed five
 thousand.
Let me never think of myself
as not quite enough.
You have blessed me,
and with you,
I have everything I need.
Amen.

You Are with Me

Jesus, you said, “I am with
 you always”:
Help me to keep my heart open
 today, Lord,
so I can feel your love at work
 in me.
You are always present to me,
 Lord.
Today let me be present to you.
Amen.

3

Opening and Closing Prayers

This chapter contains short prayer services for eight common group situations. There is a prayer to be used at the beginning and at the

end of each situation. Each prayer has parts for a leader and a reader. The readings are from Scripture and could be read from the Bible.

Prayers for Class

Prayer to Begin Class

All: +In the name of the Father . . .

Leader: Let us recall that we are in the holy presence of God.

(Pause for a moment of silence.)

Reader: After they had completed [the days of Passover], as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him.

After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers.

(LUKE 2:43-47)

Leader: Lord of all wisdom, open our minds and hearts to your truth. Help us learn what we need to learn. Give us the grace to do more than we think we can do today. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Prayer to End Class

Leader: Let us recall that the Lord our God is in our midst.

(Pause for a moment of silence.)

Reader: The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, / because the LORD has anointed me.

(ISAIAH 61:1)

Leader: Holy God, let us live more fully in your Spirit, that we might walk in confidence. Let us go forth from today certain that with your Spirit upon us, we are empowered to do more than we think we can do. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen. +In the name of the Father . . .

Prayers for Team Practice

Prayer before Practice

All: +In the name of the Father . . .

Leader: Let us recall that we are in the holy presence of God.

(Pause for a moment of silence.)

Reader: They that hope in the LORD will renew their strength, / they will soar on eagles' wings; / they will run and not grow weary, / walk and not grow faint.

(ISAIAH 40:31)

Leader: All-giving God, we thank you for the abilities you have given us and for bringing us together today. We ask you to bring this group of individuals together into a powerful team. Help us to do our best, and help

us to trust others to do their best. Keep us safe from injury, and help us stay focused on our goals. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Prayer after Practice

Leader: Let us recall that the Lord our God is in our midst.

(Pause for a moment of silence.)

Reader: I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me, which the Lord, the just judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but to all who have longed for his appearance.

(2 TIMOTHY 4:7–8)

Leader: Thank you, Lord, for helping us today, for keeping us safe, and for helping us stay focused. As we leave this practice, we ask that you keep building this team, so that we can be an example to our classmates of what

a group of people working toward a common goal can accomplish together. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen. +In the name of the Father . . .

Prayers for a Meeting

Prayer to Begin a Meeting

All: +In the name of the Father . . .

Leader: Let us recall that we are in the holy presence of God.

(Pause for a moment of silence.)

Reader: [And Jesus said,] “Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock.”

(MATTHEW 7:24-25)

Leader: Lord God, let our ears be attentive to your leading. Guide us with your holy wisdom. Let all that we do be built on you, our Rock. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Prayer to End a Meeting

Leader: Let us recall that the Lord our God is in our midst.

(Pause for a moment of silence.)

Reader: Let my prayer be incense before you, / my uplifted hands an evening offering.

(PSALM 141:2)

Leader: All-good God, we ask you to receive the work of our hands as a sign of our love for you. Bless what we have accomplished during this meeting. We all lead busy lives, Lord; help us to live out our best intentions. Give us the determination we need to complete the commitments that we have made here. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen. +In the name of the Father . . .

Leading Others in Prayer

As a young person, you have perhaps never been invited to lead people in prayer before. How does one lead others in prayer?

To answer that question, let's look at what the Catholic bishops of the United States say to church musicians:

The church musician is first a disciple and then a minister. . . . he or she is a worshiper above all. Like any member of the assembly, the pastoral musician needs to be a believer, needs to experience conversion, needs to hear the Gospel and so proclaim the praise of God. Thus, the pastoral musician is not merely an employee or volunteer. He or she is a minister, someone who shares faith, serves the community, and expresses the love of God and neighbor through music. (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Liturgical Music Today*, 23)

Reread this passage, and replace the word *musician* with *leader* as you read. What advice does it offer you as a leader of prayer?

When you are called on to lead prayer, you will find some practical steps helpful: review the prayer service, practice reading the prayers aloud, read slowly and confidently, and look at people as you read. But remember also to reflect on this beautiful excerpt from the U.S. bishops to prepare your heart as well.

Prayers for a Service Project

Prayer before a Service Project

All: +In the name of the Father . . .

Leader: Let us recall that we are in the holy presence of God.

(Pause for a moment of silence.)

Reader: Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be. The Father will honor whoever serves me.

(JOHN 12:26)

Leader: Good and gracious God, we thank you for gathering us here today and for giving us this opportunity to serve. May we be a witness to your love and your goodness to everyone we meet. Bless our work this day, and bless those we serve. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Prayer after a Service Project

Leader: Let us recall that the Lord our God is in our midst.

(Pause for a moment of silence.)

Reader: You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.

(JOHN 15:14-15)

Leader: Loving God, thank you for calling us your friends. Thank you for this chance to be together, to serve together, and to live the Gospel together. As we leave here today, may we be more grateful for our blessings and be ready to share those blessings with others. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen. +In the name of the Father . . .

What Is the Liturgy of the Hours?

Perhaps you have seen your priest carrying a small book with many ribbons. The book is used to pray the Liturgy of the Hours. The full Liturgy of the Hours is commonly a four-volume set, but some people pray with excerpts collected in a single volume.

Liturgy of the Hours (also called the Divine Office) is the official public, daily prayer of the Catholic Church. The Divine Office provides standard prayers, Scripture readings, and reflections at regular hours throughout the day, including Morning Prayer, Daytime Prayer (midmorning, midday, or midafternoon), Evening Prayer (late afternoon or early evening), and Night Prayer (right before bed).

Ordained clergy are required to pray the Divine Office every day, as are the members of many religious institutes. However, anyone can pray the Liturgy of the Hours, and the Church encourages laypeople to make it part of their own daily prayer life. In fact, many parishes are starting to include the Liturgy of the Hours as part of the parish prayer. You may see notices in your bulletin that say, “Morning and Evening Prayer will be held at . . .” Stop by and pray sometime. Don’t worry if you don’t know what to do—people will assist you. You will find that it feels very much like the Liturgy of the Word at Sunday’s Mass.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains: “This celebration, faithful to the apostolic exhortations to ‘pray constantly,’ is ‘so devised that the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praise of God’ ”² (1174). As you go about your day, take comfort and encouragement from knowing that so many people are praying and making the world holy.

Prayers for a Youth Group Meeting

Prayer to Begin a Youth Group Meeting

All: +In the name of the Father . . .

Leader: Let us recall that we are in the holy presence of God.

(Pause for a moment of silence.)

Reader: The community of believers was of one heart and mind. . . . With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all.

(ACTS 4:32-33)

Leader: Father of us all, thank you for bringing us here. Thank you for the faith that unites us. Let us give each other the gift of a clean slate, so that we can be free of labels. Help us to create a safe place where each person feels free to be himself or herself. Help us, Lord, to share with one another honestly. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Prayer to End a Youth Group Meeting

Leader: Let us recall that the Lord our God is in our midst.

(Pause for a moment of silence.)

Reader: How good and how pleasant it is, / when brothers [and sisters] dwell together as one!

(PSALM 133:1)

Leader: Good and loving God, thank you for being with us and among us. Thank you for the honesty here. We ask you for the grace to continue standing with one another when we return to our schools and our families. May this unity that we experience here give us the strength to cope with stresses we face in our lives. Bless us, Lord, and bless all those we love. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen. +In the name of the Father . . .

Prayers for a Retreat Team

Prayer before Leading a Retreat

All: +In the name of the Father . . .

Leader: Let us recall that we are in the holy presence of God.

(Pause for a moment of silence.)

Reader: But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach?

(ROMANS 10:14)

Leader: Give us the words, Lord, to share your Good News with the people who will be on retreat with us. Help us share your hope, your light, and your love. Bless the speakers as they share, the musicians as they sing and play, and all others who work on this retreat. Lead us, Lord, so that we can lead those who will attend this retreat. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Prayer after Leading a Retreat

Leader: Let us recall that the Lord our God is in our midst.

(Pause for a moment of silence.)

Reader: I give thanks to my God at every remembrance of you, praying always with joy in my every prayer for all of you, because of your partnership for the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.

(PHILIPPIANS 1:3–6)

Leader: God who keeps promises, we thank you for being with us for this retreat. We pray that as everyone returns home to their families, they will know of your love for them in a deeper way. We leave them in your hands, Lord, and we ask that you will complete the good work that you have begun. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen. +In the name of the Father . . .

The School Chapel

A simple sign at the door read “Chapel.” The interior was dusty and smelly, with old sheet music scattered on the chairs and floor, with dingy windows and dead plants. The chapel appeared abandoned. A small door off to the side opened into the sacristy, which was being used as a storeroom.

The chaplain rallied his friends, and the great cleanup began. The chapel and sacristy were clean and ready by the students’ arrival that fall.

The chaplain began celebrating morning Mass. Only one or two students came in those first weeks. But as the weeks rolled into months, students responded to the invitation to come to Mass, and they began to extend an invitation to their friends and classmates. At some point in the second year, Mass attendance flowed into the hall outside the chapel. The students developed a tradition of signing large cards to send to members of their community, saying, “We prayed for you at Mass today.” People who were homebound, struggling families, students going through a hard time, total strangers—the cards were treasured by those who received them.

Students graduated. New students came and entered the chapel and its tradition. As the years continued, the chaplain began receiving letters and e-mails from his former students. They had taken what they found in their school chapel to their universities, to their jobs, to their children, to the priesthood. Soldiers took it to the battlefields. The chaplain realized that the little chapel where his students had come to pray had expanded far beyond the walls of the school. It had become a chapel they carried in their hearts.

Prayers for a Dance

Prayer before a Dance

All: +In the name of the Father . . .

Leader: Let us recall that we are in the holy presence of God.

(Pause for a moment of silence.)

Reader: All you peoples, clap your hands; / shout to God with joyful cries.

(PSALM 47:2)

Leader: God of all goodness, thank you for gathering us here for this dance. Thank you for our friends, the music, and the chance to be together to have a good time. Let us welcome you among us tonight, and welcome your presence in one another. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Prayer after a Dance

Leader: Let us recall that the Lord our God is in our midst.

(Pause for a moment of silence.)

Reader: Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near.

(PHILIPPIANS 4:4–5)

Leader: God our joy, thank you for the good time we enjoyed here. Thank you for everyone who worked to make this dance possible. We ask your blessing on them. As we leave this place and drive home, we ask you to keep us safe. Give us the grace to be grateful always for the things we have, especially for the people in our lives who care about us. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen. +In the name of the Father . . .



The Shofar

Prayers for a Graduation Party

Prayer to Begin a Graduation Party

All: +In the name of the Father . . .

Leader: Let us recall that we are in the holy presence of God.

(Pause for a moment of silence.)

Reader: Go, eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry heart, because it is now that God favors your works.

(ECCLESIASTES 9:7)

Leader: Good and loving God, thank you for this gathering to celebrate the graduation of [name]. Thank you for his or her family, friends, teachers, coaches, and everyone who helped [name] get to this moment. Give [name] the grace to open up his or her heart to enjoy this celebration and to fully express gratitude to all who come to this party. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Prayer to End a Graduation Party

Leader: Let us recall that the Lord our God is in our midst.

(Pause for a moment of silence.)

Reader: For I know well the plans I have in mind for you . . . plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope. When you call me, and come and pray to me, I will listen to you.

(JEREMIAH 29:11-12)

Leader: God of the journey, thank you for this party and its reminder of the people who are important to us. Thank you for the past years and for what [name] has accomplished. Thank you, too, for the hardships, because we know that hardships are part of what makes us into who we are. Help [name] to accept the blessings with gratitude, to reconcile where reconciliation is needed, and to move forward, confident in your plan for her or his life. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen. +In the name of the Father . . .

4 Blessing Prayers

Blessing for a New School Year

O Lord of wisdom,
You who know the innermost
secrets of the universe,
send us your Paraclete
and cause us to grow in wisdom,
knowledge, and understanding.
When it is time to work,
give us the grace to stay focused.
When we participate in a
competition,
give us the grace to show good
sportsmanship.
When it is time to enjoy,
give us the grace to help us set
concerns aside.
Above all, O Lord,
let us grow closer to you.
We ask these things
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Blessing before an Entrance Exam

All-powerful God,
you who created our inmost
being:
Send us your Holy Spirit.
In your kindness, help us to
stay focused
during this exam.
Help us call to mind those things
we know,
which may be hidden behind
clouds of anxiety.
Give us the grace
to put forth our best effort
and then leave the results in
your hands.
We make this prayer
through Christ our Lord,
who reigns with you
forever and ever.
Amen.

Intercessory Prayer

"I'll pray for you." How many times have you said that to someone? How many times did you actually pray for that person? Sometimes it seems as though "I'll pray for you" is what we say when we don't know what to say. Yet because we are a blessed and holy people, our prayers do much to move the heart of God.

Here's something to try. Keep a small journal by your bed. Each night, write down what you promised to pray for that day, and how you promised to pray for it. Then look through your journal, and let your list guide your prayer. If you find a prayer that has been answered, don't cross it off your list. Turn your "Please, God" into a "Thank you, God!"

How can we pray when we don't know what to say? Saint Paul tells us, "In the same way, the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings" (Romans 8:26). When you don't know what to pray, close your eyes and try to see the person in your mind. As you look at the person, say, "Be with [name], Lord; be with [name]." Keep looking at the person for a moment in your mind's eye, and then pray it again . . . and then again. Let the Spirit of God pray for you.

Blessing before an Awards Banquet

All-powerful God,
 you who separated the night and
 the day,
 the water and the dry land:
 We come to you this day
 grateful for all we have
 accomplished together.
 Grant that we who have enjoyed
 triumphs
 will be good stewards of the gifts
 you have given us.
 May our success give glory
 to God,
 the giver of all good things.
 We make this prayer
 in the all-powerful name
 of Jesus Christ our Lord.
 Amen.

Blessing for One Going on a Mission Trip

God our protector,
 you stand guard over our
 comings and goings:
 Watch over our [brother/sister], N.,
 as [he/she] goes forth from
 our midst
 to serve you.
 Keep [name] safe from all harm,
 and keep [his/her] heart open to
 receive your grace.

Comfort N. if [he/she] feels
 homesick,
 and bring [him/her] new friends
 to share this journey.
 We ask this through your Son,
 Jesus Christ,
 who reigns with you
 forever and ever.
 Amen.

Blessing for Those Going on a Pilgrimage

All-powerful God,
 you always show mercy toward
 those who love you
 and you are never far away for
 those who seek you.
 Remain with your servants on
 this holy pilgrimage
 and guide their way in accord
 with your will.
 Shelter them with your
 protection by day,
 give them the light of your grace
 by night,
 and, as their companion on
 the journey,
 bring them to their destination
 in safety.
 We ask this through Christ
 our Lord.
 Amen.

—FROM *BOOK OF BLESSINGS*, 603

Blessed and Holy

The first blessing appears in the very first chapter of the Bible—Genesis, chapter 1. Grab your Bible and take a look. You will find that first blessing on the fifth day of Creation, when God created and blessed the first living beings, all his creatures (v. 21). Then on the sixth day, after God created man and woman, God blessed them (v. 28).

To bless is to make holy. And what is holy? That which is joined to God. In other words—you.

At your Baptism the priest anointed you with the Chrism of salvation so that you would remain forever a member of Christ who is Priest, Prophet, and King. You are joined with God. Therefore you are holy.

Although we can be uncomfortable with the word *holy*, it is important to recognize that we are blessed and holy by virtue of our creation in God's image and of our Baptism. So when you pray that your loved one will be "blessed," he or she will be blessed, because of the prayers of a holy person. Pray with confidence, for God hears the prayers of those who are joined to him.

Blessing for One Leaving for the Military

Lord God,
 Father to all children,
 you have counted,
 each hair on our head:
 We ask you now to watch
 over N.,
 your [daughter/son].
 Give N. the grace
 to carry the knowledge of your
 love and care
 with [her/him]
 wherever military service takes
 [her/him].
 We pray that you keep all soldiers
 from harm.
 Keep special watch over those in
 hostile places,
 and return them safely to their
 families and friends.
 We make this prayer through
 Jesus Christ, our Lord,
 who reigns with you
 forever and ever.
 Amen.

Blessing for One Celebrating a Birthday

God of all creation,
 We offer you grateful praise for
 the gift of life.
 Hear the prayers of N.,
 your servant,

who recalls today the day of his/
 her birth and rejoices in your
 gifts of life and love,
 family and friends.
 Bless him/her with your presence
 and surround him/her with
 your love
 that he/she may enjoy many
 happy years,
 all of them pleasing to you.
 We ask this through Christ
 our Lord.
 Amen.

—FROM *BOOK OF BLESSINGS*, 343

Blessing for One Celebrating an Engagement

We praise you, Lord,
 for your gentle plan draws
 together your children,
 N. and N.,
 in love for one another.
 Strengthen their hearts,
 so that they will keep faith with
 each other,
 please you in all things,
 and so come to the happiness of
 celebrating the sacrament
 of their marriage.
 We ask this through Christ
 our Lord.
 Amen.

—FROM *BOOK OF BLESSINGS*, 211



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Commissioning of Leaders in the Early Church

Blessing at a Gravesite

Almighty God and Father,
by the mystery of the cross, you
have made us strong;
by the sacrament of the
resurrection you have sealed us
as your own.

Look kindly upon your servants,
now freed from the bonds of
mortality,
and count them among your
saints in heaven.

We ask this through Christ
our Lord.
Amen.

—FROM *BOOK OF BLESSINGS*, 1749

Blessing of a Pet

O God,
the author and giver of every gift,
animals also are part of the way
you provide help
for our needs and labors.

We pray (through the
intercession of Saint N.)
that you will make available for
our use
the things we need to maintain a
decent human life.

We ask this through Christ
our Lord.
Amen.

—FROM *BOOK OF BLESSINGS*, 957

The Radical Example of Saint Clare

You have probably heard of Saint Clare. At seventeen years old, Clare heard Saint Francis of Assisi preach, and she decided that she wanted to live as Francis did.

Beautiful and rich, Clare could have lived any life she wanted. What did she want? To give her wealth to the poor, leave her beautiful home, and live a cloistered life of poverty and prayer with other women.

Just another teenager? No, she was much more than that. Today young women still follow Clare's example. They have radically given up their possessions and their connections with family and friends to join the Poor Clares, a cloistered community of women who pray for the world.

In a letter to Pope John Paul II, Mother Mary Francis—an abbess of the Poor Clare Monastery of Our Lady of Guadalupe in New Mexico—explained that her community steps away from the world, but not apart from the world. It is in following this radical call that a Poor Clare can give herself completely to God and to prayer for the world.

The prayers of these holy women bless the world. But you don't need to join the Poor Clares to pray for the world. Look at your schedule. Can you find five minutes a day to step away from the world so you can pray *for* the world?

Blessing of a Planting

Lord of the harvest,
you placed the gifts of creation in
our hands
and called us to till the earth and
make it fruitful.

We ask your blessing
as we prepare to place these seeds
(seedlings) in the earth.

May the care we show these seeds
(seedlings)
remind us of your tender love for
your people.

We ask this through Christ
our Lord.

Amen.

—FROM *BOOK OF BLESSINGS*, 1021

Blessing of a Harvest

All-powerful God,
we appeal to your tender care
that even as you temper the
winds and rains
to nurture the fruits of the earth
you will also send upon them
the gentle shower of your
blessing.

Fill the hearts of your people
with gratitude,
that from the earth's fertility
the hungry may be filled with
good things
and the poor and needy proclaim

the glory of your name.
We ask this through Christ
our Lord.

Amen.

—FROM *BOOK OF BLESSINGS*, 1021

Blessing of an Advent Wreath

Lord God,
let your blessing come upon us
as we light the candles of this
wreath.

May the wreath and its light
be a sign of Christ's promise to
bring us salvation.

May he come quickly and not
delay.

We ask this through Christ
our Lord.

Amen.

—FROM *BOOK OF BLESSINGS*, 1540

Part II

**PRAYERS FROM
THE CATHOLIC TRADITION**

5

Prayers and Devotions to Mary

Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with you!
Blessed you are among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your
womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners
now and at the hour of
our death.

The Oldest Marian Prayer: "Sub Tuum Praesidium" ("Under Your Protection")

We fly to your patronage,
O Holy Mother of God.
Despise not our petitions
in our necessities but deliver
us always from all dangers,
O glorious and blessed Virgin.

The Angelus

The Angelus is traditionally recited morning (6:00 a.m.), noon, and evening (6:00 p.m.). Monks pray Morning Prayer, Midday Prayer,

and Evening Prayer. By praying at set times of the day, the entire day is made holy. In the Middle Ages, the local churches' bells rang at these set times, and the laypeople stopped their work, gathered in small groups of two or more, and prayed the Angelus as a way to make their day holy. The Angelus can be said either in a group or alone.

Leader: The Angel of the Lord
declared unto Mary,

Response: And she conceived of
the Holy Spirit.

All: Hail Mary . . .

Leader: Behold the handmaid of
the Lord,

Response: Be it done unto me
according to your word.

All: Hail Mary . . .

Leader: And the Word was made
flesh,

Response: And dwelt among us.

All: Hail Mary . . .

Leader: Pray for us, O holy
Mother of God,

Response: That we may be
made worthy of the promises
of Christ.

Leader: Let us pray: Pour forth,
we beseech you, O Lord, your
grace into our hearts that we
to whom the incarnation of
Christ, your Son, was made
known by the message of an
angel may, by his passion and
Cross, be brought to the glory
of his resurrection, through
Christ our Lord.

Hail, Holy Queen

Hail, holy Queen, mother of
mercy, our life, our sweetness,
and our hope.

To you do we cry, poor banished
children of Eve.

To you do we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this
vale of tears.

Turn then, most gracious
advocate,
your eyes of mercy toward us,
and after this our exile show
to us the blessed fruit of your
womb, Jesus.

O clement, O loving,
O sweet Virgin Mary.

“Memorare” (“Remember, O Most Gracious Virgin Mary”)

Remember, O most gracious
Virgin Mary, that never was it
known that anyone who fled
to your protection, implored
your help or sought your
intercession was left unaided.
Inspired with confidence, I
fly to you, O virgin of virgins,
my Mother. To you I come,
before you I stand, sinful and
sorrowful. O Mother of the
Word Incarnate, despise not
my petitions, but in your
mercy, hear and answer me.
Amen.