

## WAYS OF PRAYING 1 SCRIPTURE

**Solomon's Prayer for Wisdom (1 Kings 3:7-9)** "Now, Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

**Jonah's Prayer (Jonah 2:1-9):**

**Jonah 2:3-5,8**

*You lifted my life from the pit, O Lord.*

Out of my distress I cried to the Lord  
and he answered me;

from the belly of Sheol I cried,  
and you have heard my voice.

You cast me into the abyss, into the heart of the sea,  
and the flood surrounded me.

All your waves, your billows,  
washed over me.

And I said: I am cast out  
from your sight.

How shall I ever look again  
on your holy Temple?

While my soul was fainting within me,

I remembered the Lord,  
and my prayer came before you  
into your holy Temple.

*You lifted my life from the pit, O Lord.*

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**David** said this prayer asking for repentance after his shameful treatment of Uriah and Bathsheba. This is a helpful prayer of confession and forgiveness for when you feel you have sinned and roamed from the Lord. It is powerful in that you are asking God for Him to help you obey Him. It takes a humble person to ask the Lord for help and forgiveness. We all make mistakes and fall under the spell of evil, so use this prayer when you are ready to apologize for your wrongdoings

Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness.

In your compassion blot out my offence.

O wash me more and more from my guilt  
and cleanse me from my sin.

My offences truly I know them;  
my sin is always before me.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned;  
what is evil in your sight I have done.

That you may be justified when you give sentence  
and be without reproach when you judge,

O see, in guilt I was born,  
a sinner was I conceived.

Indeed you love truth in the heart;  
then in the secret of my heart teach me wisdom.

O purify me, then I shall be clean;  
O wash me, I shall be whiter than snow.

Make me hear rejoicing and gladness,  
that the bones you have crushed may revive.

From my sins turn away your face  
and blot out all my guilt.

A pure heart create for me, O God,  
put a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence,  
nor deprive me of your holy spirit.

Give me again the joy of your help;  
with a spirit of fervour sustain me,  
that I may teach transgressors your ways  
and sinners may return to you.

O rescue me, God, my helper,  
and my tongue shall ring out your goodness.

O Lord, open my lips  
and my mouth shall declare your praise.

For in sacrifice you take no delight,  
burnt offering from me you would refuse,  
my sacrifice, a contrite spirit.  
A humbled, contrite heart you will not spurn.

In your goodness, show favour to Sion:  
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

Then you will be pleased with lawful sacrifice,  
holocausts offered on your altar.

**A prayer that faithful may know the love of Christ**

This is what I pray, kneeling before the Father, from whom every family, whether spiritual or natural, takes its name:

Out of his infinite glory, may he give you the power through his Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, you will with all the saints have strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; until, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God.

Glory be to him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; glory be to him from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen.

*Paul said this prayer about the Ephesians when he was trying to show them the power and strength of God's love. We can pray that others find hope in God, too. One way we can help others around us is by praying for them, and this is a great prayer for when we are unsure of the situation that someone is in. While we don't always know details, we can pray for them by asking God to wrap His arms around them and show them grace.*

At last, all-powerful Master, you give leave to your servant  
to go in peace, according to your promise.

For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared for all nations,  
the light to enlighten the Gentiles and give glory to Israel, your people.

The **tax collector's** prayer is one of the most striking prayers in the Bible. During biblical times, tax collectors were recognized as sinners. When Rome occupied Israel, the taxes collected went to Rome. Tax collectors were encouraged to charge compensatory taxes. So, they often overcharged the taxes and created false charges of smuggling to extort more money. The people considered tax collectors as traitors and thieves. However, instead of persecuting them, Jesus treated tax collectors with grace and mercy. His prayer is his humble acceptance of the sin he made against God that made this prayer powerful.

Luke 18:13

"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

### **The Pharisee's and tax collector's prayers—Luke 18:9-14**

The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' (Luke 18:11-13)

In Luke 23:32-43, two other criminals were also hanged along with Jesus Christ when he was crucified. One of two criminals mocked and teased Jesus for his inability to save himself, despite being called the Messiah. Jesus was sinless, but to fulfill the word, he was crucified to save us. On the other hand, the other criminal rebuked and asked the latter if he doesn't fear God. He knew that in contrary to them, Jesus did nothing wrong. This criminal uttered a prayer that marked how strong his faith was to God.

Luke 23:42-43 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

### **Jesus' Prayer for His Disciples (John 17: 1-26)**

## Ways of Praying 2: Lectio

Tip: Teresa of Avila who was a consummate teacher and a mystic with her feet firmly on the ground. She wrote the following, which we can probably all identify with. *'Some alas have such butterfly minds that when they try to fix their thoughts on God they are assailed by a thousand foolish ideas; their thoughts run hither and thither...People can either be born this way or become so....Prayer for them is a continual struggle. If you are like this then the advice I give is on no account to give up. Every journey begins with a single step- take it. That one step will take you nearer to God and even if you do not progress any further....you cannot possibly come to harm.'* This compassionate understanding of difficulty in prayer is beautifully reflected in our first reading from Romans, where Paul says *'The Spirit too comes to help us in our weakness; for when we cannot find words to pray properly... the Spirit expresses our plea in a way we cannot put into words.'* God will always do the work in us and for us if we let him.

While Teresa wrote several books on prayer and has been given the title Doctor of the Church, her following advice sums up a good deal of her wisdom. *'Regular time set aside for God is of paramount importance. Better to spend twenty minutes regularly, come what may, than resolve on two hours a day, keep it up for a week or so when you are full of enthusiasm, then decide the whole procedure is too taxing and stop it completely, until another bout of piety takes hold of you. Time given to God is what matters. How you spend it depends on yourself. There are no set rules; **just do whatever helps you love best.**'*

That's it in a nutshell. Just do whatever helps us love best. The prayer itself may feel a mess, but if the fruit shows up in us being more loving, forgiving, then that's what's important.

Sr. Anne

Last weeks tip: 2 or 5 minutes a day

This weeks tip: distractions

How do I pray? – the daily scriptures

Lectio Divina (Chewing – swallowing)

**Matthew:11:28** `Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest.

Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.

## What is Lectio Divina?

Lectio Divina is a contemplative way of reading the Bible. It dates back to the early centuries of the Christian Church and was established as a monastic practice by Benedict in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. It is a way of praying the scriptures that leads us deeper into God's word. We slow down. We read a short passage more than once. We chew it over slowly and carefully. We savour it. Scripture begins to speak to us in a new way. It speaks to us personally and aids that union we have with God through Christ who is himself the Living Word.

Fr Christopher Jamison, former Abbot of Worth Abbey in Sussex, England in his book *Finding Sanctuary* writes of three key features of *lectio*;

- The first is that “the text is seen as a gift to be received, not a problem to be dissected..... let the text come to you.”
- The second is that the *lectio* tradition “teaches us that in order to receive what the text has to offer we must read slowly.”
- The third is that *lectio* is “a way of prayer. Before reading pray that God will speak to you through the text. During reading, allow the reading to evolve into meditation and then into prayer and finally contemplation. When the reading is concluded, keep some phrase in mind and repeat it throughout the day so that prayerful reading becomes prayerful living.”

So, *lectio* is not Bible study or even an alternative to Bible study but something radically different. The practice understands Scripture as a meeting place for a personal encounter with the Living God. It is a practice we come to with the desire to be changed at all sorts of levels. It operates very much on the emotional rather than the purely cerebral level. It is perhaps *heartly* rather than *heady*. Through it we allow ourselves to be formed in the likeness of Christ; it is about *formation* rather than *instruction*.

## How to enter into Lectio Divina?

Make sure you are sitting comfortably.

Breathe slowly and deeply.

Ask God to speak to you through the passage that you are about to read.

*This is a way of praying that starts with our silence. We often make the mistake of thinking prayer is about what we say to God. It is actually the other way round. God wants to speak to us. He will do this through the Scriptures. So don't worry about what to say. Don't worry if nothing jumps out at you at first. God is patient. He will wait for the opportunity to get in. He will give you a word and lead you to understand its meaning for you today.*

First reading of the passage: **Listen**

*As you read the passage listen for a word or phrase that attracts you. Allow it to arise from the passage as if it is God's word for you today. Sit in silence repeating the word or phrase in your head.*

*Then say the word or phrase aloud.*

Second reading of the passage: **Ponder**

*As you read the passage again ask how this word or phrase speaks to your life and why it has connected with you. Ponder it carefully. Don't worry if you get distracted – it may be part of your response to offer it to God. Sit in silence and then frame a single sentence that begins to say aloud what this word or phrase says to you.*

Third reading of the passage: **Pray**

*As you read the passage for the last time ask what Christ is calling from you. What is it that you need to do or consider or relinquish or take on as a result of what God is saying to you in this word or phrase? In the silence that follows the reading pray for the grace of the Spirit to plant this word in your heart.*

## WAYS OF PRAYING 3

## Praying the Scripture with imagination:

Tip of the week: (5 minutes / distractions) Posture

Jesuit retreat prayer

St Ignatius 16<sup>th</sup> C Spiritual Exercises – he called it composition of place.

(But not only St Ignatius – e.g. St Francis – Crib of Greccio)

Ignatius popularised imaginative prayer.

Use all 5 senses

Sight: - we are going to use the nativity story as our teaching aid

- you know the story:

*Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken. This census – the first – took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and everyone went to his own town to be registered. So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee and travelled up to Judaea, to the town of David called Bethlehem, since he was of David's House and line, in order to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to a son, her first born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn.*

As you start St Ignatius always says: ask God to be with you and to help you and ask for what you want.

What do I see? (This is not a biblical archaeology test!)

What do the surroundings look like?

What do the people look like?

What are they wearing?

What is the expression on their faces?

You might see Mary and Joseph as your parents

Where am I in the scene? (don't be far away looking in!)

Who am I?

What do I hear? (sound of the sea of Galilee from Tabgha)

Smell?

Touch?

Taste?

Enter the scene –

Hold the infant baby Jesus

What if I can't do this way of praying – fine – no problem –

End by asking what has God said/shown me?



## Prayer exercise:

Gospel

Matthew 14:22-36

Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he would send the crowds away. After sending the crowds away he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, while the boat, by now far out on the lake, was battling with a heavy sea, for there was a head-wind. In the fourth watch of the night he went towards them, walking on the lake, and when the disciples saw him walking on the lake they were terrified. 'It is a ghost' they said, and cried out in fear. But at once Jesus called out to them, saying, 'Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid.' It was Peter who answered. 'Lord,' he said 'if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water.' 'Come' said Jesus. Then Peter got out of the boat and started walking towards Jesus across the water, but as soon as he felt the force of the wind, he took fright and began to sink. 'Lord! Save me!' he cried. Jesus put out his hand at once and held him. 'Man of little faith,' he said 'why did you doubt?' And as they got into the boat the wind dropped. The men in the boat bowed down before him and said, 'Truly, you are the Son of God.'

### Passages that might help:

Mark 10: 46-52

The cure of Bartimaeus

Luke 5: 1-11

Call of 4 disciples

John 13: 1-17

Jesus washes the feet of his disciples

Exodus 3: 1-6

Moses and the burning bush

1 Samuel 3:1-10

The call of Samuel.

## Ways of Praying 4:

Tip of the week: 5 minutes / distractions / Posture / Don't give up!

The Breviary

Having said this, however, the Church emphasises

that all the baptised should pray the Divine Office,

The Council urges us to pray at least morning and evening prayer

and in article 100 of the *Constitution*, says this:

“Lay people, too, are encouraged to pray the divine office

with local priests, among themselves,

or even individually.”

*The Liturgy of the Hours* is an excellent way to gather for prayer

outside of Sunday Mass.

### **A homily of Pseudo-Chrysostom**

I warn you, though: do not imagine that prayer is simply words. Prayer is the desire for God, an indescribable devotion, not given by man but brought about by God's grace. As St Paul says: *For when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit himself intercedes on our behalf in a way that could never be put into words.*

If God gives to someone the gift of such prayer, it is a gift of imperishable riches, a heavenly food that satisfies the spirit. Whoever tastes that food catches fire and his soul burns for ever with desire for the Lord.

## Prayer and images of God

### Good old uncle George (**God of Surprises** pg 34)

God was a family relative, much admired by Mum and Dad, who described him as very loving, a great friend of the family, very powerful and interested in all of us. Eventually we are taken to visit 'Good Old Uncle George'. He lives in a formidable mansion, is bearded, gruff and threatening. We cannot share our parents' professed admiration for this jewel in the family. At the end of the visit, Uncle George turns to address us. 'Now listen, dear,' he begins, looking very severe, 'I want to see you here once a week, and if you fail to come, let me just show you what will happen to you.' He then leads us down to the mansion's basement. It is dark, becomes hotter and hotter as we descend, and we begin to hear unearthly screams. In the basement there are steel doors. Uncle George opens one. 'Now look in there, dear,' he says. We see a nightmare vision, an array of burning furnaces with little demons in attendance, who hurl into the blaze those men, women and children who failed to visit Uncle George or to act in a way he approved. 'And if you don't visit me, dear, that is where you will most certainly go,' says Uncle George. He then takes us upstairs again to meet Mum and Dad. As we go home, tightly clutching Dad with one hand and Mum with the other, Mum leans over us and says, 'And now don't you love Uncle George with all your heart and soul, mind and strength?' And we, loathing the monster, say, 'Yes I do,' because to say anything else would be to join the queue at the furnace.

### Prayer Exercise:

*Music / Hymns*

Sacred Dance: Spirit Divine

Psalms: 46

The Lord's my shepherd: John Rutter

## Way of Praying 5: (Music: O Lord hear my prayer)

Tip of the week: 5 minutes / distractions / Posture / Don't give up! / Silence

Prayers of intercession:

Does prayer change God?

If lots of people prayed for one thing – would God grant it? How many does it take?

What about a person who has died and has no one to pray for them?

The OT is full of people asking Gods help:

Great story of Abraham – bargaining with God for Sodom – will you save it if there are 50 good people, what about 40..... down to 10!

the psalms: have mercy on me – God for you I long – Ps 13 How long O Lord? –

NT: prayer is often petitionary = Our Father – give us.....forgive us ....

The widow who wants the judge to hear her – ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you.

We can pray for ourselves – you can pray for anything –that is good – not praying for an enemy to drop dead....

Fr James Martin – in a book on prayer suggests 10 things we could pray for:

- Wisdom
- Humility
- Freedom – you have set us free
- Perspective
- Courage
- Patience
- Hope
- Inspiration
- Success
- Safety

This is all about a relationship – child to parent. When you ask the relationship deepens. You wouldn't ask if you didn't expect to receive.

✠ We pray for others – friends etc – but also people we don't know.

Prayer changes me not God

I might be the answer to someone's prayer

What about unanswered prayer? We think no is not an answer!

We are not God so we don't know how prayer works.

✠ God answers our prayer but sometimes the answer is no

✠ God answers our prayer but we cannot see how

✠ Our prayers are not answered in the way we want –

**Formal Prayers:** Prayers we have learnt.

Hail Mary:

**We know them:**

This can be really helpful if and when we are struggling – tired, or just empty, sick.

**They have a distinguished history:**

Jesus taught the Our Father – but great saints have given us prayers.

**We are united in prayer with everyone else praying them:**

Throughout the world and throughout time.

Praying to Saints

Patron Saints:

**ST. ISIDORE – THE INTERNET** St. John Paul II appointed him to that.

**ST. DROGO – UNATTRACTIVE PEOPLE** Looks aren't all that matters. Plus, he could bilocate!

**ST. POLYCARP OF SMYRNA – DYSENTERY** Polycarp is so unique (both his name and patronage) that we still have a letter from him from the year 140 A.D.

**ST. CLOTILDE – DISAPPOINTING CHILDREN** As royalty, Clotilde's children fought endlessly and divided the kingdom.

**ST. FRIARD – AGAINST FEAR OF WASPS** A swarm of wasps went after his tormenters. Don't mess.

**ST. BARBARA – ANYTHING THAT GOES BOOM** Fireworks, artillery, lightning, etc. Her father forced her to marry, but she refused; so, he beheaded her. Soon after, he was struck by lightning and killed.

**ST. PATRICK – AGAINST ABNORMAL FEAR OF SNAKES** A fear of snakes is pretty normal, though.

**ST. BIBIANA – HANGOVERS** Her name comes from the Latin word that means "to drink." Moderation, folks.

**ST. VITUS – OVERSLEEPING** Every college kid should pray to this saint.

**ST. ARNOLD – BEER** In tradition, some thirsty people prayed to him to give them what they lacked — and a pot of beer appeared.

**ST. FIACRE – TAXI DRIVERS AND GARDENERS** Interesting combo.

**ST. CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA – UNMARRIED GIRLS, APOLOGISTS, POTTERS, SPINNERS, ARCHIVISTS, DYING PEOPLE, EDUCATORS, GIRLS, JURISTS, KNIFE SHARPENERS, LAWYERS, LIBRARIANS, LIBRARIES, MAIDENS, MECHANICS, MILLERS, HAT-MAKERS, NURSES, PHILOSOPHERS, PREACHERS, SCHOLARS, SCHOOLCHILDREN, SCRIBES, SECRETARIES, SPINSTERS, STENOGRAPHERS, STUDENTS, TANNERS, THEOLOGIANS, UNIVERSITY OF PARIS, HABERDASHERS, WHEELWRIGHTS, PHILIPPINES AND GREECE**

Will you be quiet I'm talking to your mother

The Rosary: The Annunciation

Next week – final talk – novena after that.

