



WE DARE TO SAY

A resource for faith-sharing groups
on The Lord's Prayer

WE DARE TO SAY

Birmingham Edition

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Cover image: The Sermon on the Mount (c.1860) by Henrik Olrik

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Why Share Your Faith in Small Groups?

In St Luke's account of the Early Church we hear that three thousand were baptised following Pentecost (Acts 2:41). Guided by the Holy Spirit, the newly baptised 'devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers' (Acts 2:42). In a similar fashion thousands of people have found spiritual nourishment in faith-sharing, in reflecting on Scripture and prayer as part of a small group.

This resource feeds such small groups drawing on the Scriptures with each session clearly rooted in a passage from the Bible. As the Second Vatican Council Fathers emphasised 'in the sacred books the Father comes lovingly to meet his children and talks with them' (Dei Verbum, 21).

Fellowship is a vital part of small group participation. In these small groups you are able to get to know your fellow Christians better and to form strong, mutually supportive bonds. We are a living community: 'God does not make men holy and save them merely as individuals, without bond or link ...' (Lumen Gentium, 9).

Members of small groups are encouraged to share and gain confidence in talking about their faith. It is this confidence building in a trusting environment that helps participants to 'love in all the circumstances of ordinary life' (Gaudium et Spes, 38). Our prayers together help us to become the dwelling places of the Holy Spirit that we are called to be (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 2).

Foreword to **WE DARE TO SAY**

In anticipation of the Jubilee Year 2025, *Pilgrims of Hope*, Pope Francis has asked us to keep a special year of prayerful preparation, so that we will be open to receive the graces that God wants to pour out upon His Church at this special time.

The Year of Prayer is an encouragement to us, right across the Church, and especially in the family of our own Archdiocese, to focus again on what lies at the heart of our faith in Jesus Christ. Prayer brings us into the presence of God at the beginning of each day, it lifts our hearts and minds towards that same presence throughout the day, and it empowers us to serve others as witnesses to God's love, at all times!

During this Year we are focussing on the Our Father, within which we can find all the intentions of our hearts. As we pray for the Church and the world, we ask for a deepening of our own faith on our journey towards the Jubilee Year. To help us, I am pleased to commend to you *We Dare To Say*, a five-week faith-sharing resource on the familiar and powerful words of the Our Father.

Remember that as you pray the Lord's Prayer in Mass, in your own private prayer, or on other occasions, you are praying the words of Jesus Christ to the Father, in the power of the Holy Spirit, united with Christians all over the world.

Let's pray together as a family of faith throughout this special year.

With my prayers for all of you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Bernard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Archbishop Bernard Longley
Archbishop of Birmingham

About this Resource

Artwork

A choice of art intended to illustrate the theme for meditation and contemplation

WE DARE TO SAY



The Madonna Picture (1481) by Giovanni Veronesi / Veronese English College, Rome

Theme Box

A short paragraph outlining the broad theme of each session, useful for preparation

Opening Prayer

The same prayer is used in all five sessions and participants are invited to pray for one another and for the needs of the world

Read the Word

The Scripture passage around which the session is built. Here you will also find a brief introduction. A selection of prayers before reading the passage is on p.46

WE DARE TO SAY

Read the Word 1 John 3:1-6, 11, 16-24 (15 mins)
Note John's first letter advises readers on how to discern true teachers - by their model of life, by their love and by their proclamation of Jesus. This passage
A variety of short prayers before the reading of Scripture can be found on page 46.

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God, and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared to take away sin, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has ever seen him or known him.

For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. As this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Let us love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God, and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

Meditate on the Word

A series of questions to encourage prolonged meditation on the Word of God in the pages of the Bible

Explore and Reflect on the Theme

A reflection, containing references to the Church's teaching and to Scripture, designed to unfold the theme

Additional Material for reflection, from the Saints and Catechism, are signposted throughout in gold/purple text boxes

SESSION 1 / OUR FATHER 7

SESSION 1 / OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE THY NAME

To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12)

Theme: The Lord's Prayer, found in Matthew's Gospel at the heart of the Sermon on the Mount, shows us our new inheritance in Baptism.

Welcome to Pray and to Share (15 mins)

O God,

send forth your Holy Spirit into our hearts that we might perceive, into our minds that we might remember, into our souls that we might meditate. Inspire us to speak with love, holiness, tenderness and mercy.

Teach, guide and direct our thoughts and senses from beginning to end.

May your grace help us to see with your eyes and to act with your love and light in our hearts.

May we be strengthened with wisdom from of high for the sake and glory of your kingdom.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

In a period of calm and a space of trust, each one of us is invited to share one thing that has happened in the past week. It could be one thing that has given you cause for concern, something shared during the last time you met as a group or something that has given you cause to celebrate.

In this moment of peace and fellowship, we pray for the good of the group. Each member is invited to offer up any personal intentions. We also pray for the good of the Church, for wisdom in our country and for the common good. Let us also bring to mind the poor, the sick and those who have died.

We join together in praying Our Father.

SESSION 1 / OUR FATHER 9

Meditate on the Word 1 John 3:1-6, 11, 16-24 (20 mins)

Once the Scripture passage has been read you are asked to choose a word or phrase that has struck you. Underline it with a pen or you might wish to simply hold it in mind. You will be invited to share the word or phrase with the group.

Another person will then read the passage. While you listen attentively repeat the process of holding onto a word or phrase, making a note and sharing it. In doing this, you are invited to consider the following questions:

How have these words or phrases resonated in my heart and in my mind?

What is the Lord saying to me at this very moment in my life?

In what way might my reading of this passage of Holy Scripture change me?

How might it help me to resolve to be more Christ-like in the coming days?

You are encouraged to re-read the Holy Scripture during the coming week, revisiting these questions.

Explore and Reflect on the Theme (25 mins)

When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we are addressing the all-powerful, transcendent God of the universe creator of all that is and ever has been. When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we call God, 'Father'. The enormity of this is so rarely lost on us.

In contemporary society, there is often a sense that fatherhood is repressive and problematic – see for example, the derogatory use of the term 'patriarchy'. So many fathers are no more than 'togethers', having little to do with the children they help to bring into the world. It is this difficulty with fatherhood that has led to the soft cry for changes to this most familiar of prayers.

God the Father, as Olivier Clément, the French theologian reminds us, transcends sexual duality (see the Catechism (CCC 239). The 'series Bible' he writes, evokes the 'bosom of mercy', 'ruminates in the sense of the word: this Father is motherly. He 'suckles' his children as a mother 'senses' her own, with her whole being, with all her flesh and within her bosom' (c. John 1:18). God's love for us is total, motherly, paternal, unequalled, unconditional. The

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relationships that we have with our own family, with our friends, are but shadows of this. Indeed, even when our own relationships with family, our own families, are weak or damaged, acknowledging God as Father often healing and sanctifies.

The heretics had a sense that God was Father of his People (e.g. Eusebius 422) but rarely would an individual address God as Father. Yet, remarkably, Jesus invites us to do just that. In the Aramaic – it is likely that Jesus would have taught this prayer in his native tongue – the word is Abba, more plain to 'Dad'. The relationship is familiar, that is of the family, and intimate.



By virtue of Baptism we are united to the Father, as his children, and to each other as brothers and sisters. This reality is often obscured by our sin. We see fierce competition and experience jealousy; we see conflict and act with pride. The reality that all we have is a gift, provided by God, is often invisible to our hearts that only see our own effort; that frequently see growth as possible only when others are diminished. We need to recover our sense of divine sonship – when this happens other relationships, with each other and the created order will start to be restored.

We are presented with two truths in this part of the prayer. One, the loving fatherhood of God for each one of us, inviting intimacy and communion. Two, the hallowing of the name of God, the need to respect and worship his greatness and majesty (cf. Psalm 104, 97-102; 103-111; Exodus 36:22-27; Isaiah 52:6; Genesis 32:26-29). Jesus taught us this prayer to draw us closer to God the Father, to recognise our precious 'spirit of sonship' and dignity. And because we are sons and daughters, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba! Father!' (Galatians 4:6; Romans 8:15).

Explore and Reflect on the Theme

Our reflection, continued with references to Church teaching and Scripture, unfolding the theme

Responding to what has been heard

A short paragraph with an encouragement to make the explicit connection between what has been heard in the Scripture, reflection and in daily living

Go in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord

To conclude the session we invite you to slowly pray the session's psalm together and end with the blessing

Text Box

Quotes from Saints and Catechism references are included for group or personal meditation with each session

Visio Divina

An optional opportunity to reflect on the pictures used to illustrate each section of *We Dare To Say*, with questions to support your reflection. This mode of prayer is becoming increasingly popular

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By his design and grace we are Children of God

Our awareness of our status as slaves would make us sink into the ground and our earthly condition would dissolve into dust. The authority of our Father himself and the Spirit of his Son had not impeded us to this cry – 'Abba, Father' –. When would a mortal dare call God 'Father' if man's inmost being were not overcome by power from on high?

St Peter Chrysologus

The expression God the Father had never been revealed to anyone. When Moses himself asked God with his face, he heard another name. The Father's name has been revealed to us in the Son, for the name 'Son' implies the new name 'Father'.

Irénéeus

[The prayer is accomplished] by the contemplation of God alone, and by the warmth of love, through which the soul, melted and directed to love him, speaks very familiarly to God as to its own Father with special devotion.

Our Father, at this name love is aroused in us – and the confidence of obtaining what we are about to ask –. What would he not give to his children who ask, since he has already granted them the gift of being his children?

St John Cassian

[See Catechism 2777-2815]

SESSION 1 / OUR FATHER 11

Responding to what has been heard

By committing ourselves to action we are saying that we want to make a difference to our lives and in the lives of others. We are committing to make the words of the Lord's Prayer resonate in our lives. What have you heard today that you find challenging? What do you find affirming? What is your response to God's offer of eternal life? Please share if you feel comfortable. What are you going to do about what you have heard today?

Go in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord (10:10-11)

You are invited to close with a time of meditation on Psalm 139 (13). Read it slowly, pause between verses, reflect on its meaning for your life and your journey in faith, hope and love. You may also wish to conclude with the Lord's Prayer, silent or another prayer of your own choosing.

- A. O Lord, you search me and you know me, you know my resting and my rising, you discern my purpose from afar.
 - B. Before ever a word is on my tongue you know it, O Lord, through and through. Too wonderful for me this knowledge, too high, beyond my reach.
 - A. For it was you who created my being, knit me together in my mother's womb. I thank you for the wonders of my being, for the wonders of all your creation.
 - B. O search me, God, and know my heart. See that I follow not the wrong path, and lead me in the path of life eternal.
 - AB. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.
- A blessing taken from the Liturgy of the Hours is included here. May the Lord bless us and keep us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

SESSION 1 / OUR FATHER 13



Meditate on Sacred Art: Visio Divina

Describe what you can see, what is happening? What does this picture say about the relationship within the Trinity? In Baptism, we enter into this relationship of love. How do I respond? How might I deepen my knowledge and love of God in the coming days?



SESSION 1 / OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE THY NAME

To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12)

Theme The Lord's Prayer, found in Matthew's Gospel at the heart of the Sermon on the Mount, shows us our new inheritance in Baptism.

Welcome: We Pray and Share Together (15 mins)

O God,
 send forth your Holy Spirit
 into our hearts that we might perceive,
 into our minds that we might remember,
 into our souls that we might meditate.
 Inspire us to speak with love, holiness,
 tenderness and mercy.
 Teach, guide and direct our thoughts and senses
 from beginning to end.
 May your grace help us to see with your eyes
 and to act with your love and light in our hearts.
 May we be strengthened with wisdom from on high
 for the sake and glory of your kingdom.
 Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

In a period of calm and a space of trust, each one of us is invited to share briefly one thing that has happened in the past week. It could be one thing that has given you cause for concern, something shared during the last time you met as a group or something that has given you cause to celebrate.

In this moment of peace and fellowship, we pray for the good of the group. Each member is invited to offer up any personal intentions. We also pray for the good of the Church, for wisdom in our country and for the common good. Let us also bring to mind the poor, the sick and those who have died.

We join together in praying: Our Father...

Read the Word 1 John 3:1-6,11,16-24 (5 mins)

Note: John's first letter advises readers on how to discern true teachers - by their model of life, by their love and by their proclamation of Jesus.

A variety of short prayers before the reading of Scripture can be found on page 46.

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practises lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.

For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another... By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

Meditate on the Word 1 John 3:1-6,11,16-24 (20 mins)

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How have these words or phrases resonated in my heart and in my mind?

What is the Lord saying to me at this very moment in my life?

In what way might my reading of this passage of Holy Scripture change me?

How might it help me to resolve to be more Christ-like in the coming days?

You are encouraged to re-read the Holy Scripture during the coming week, revisiting these questions.

Explore and Reflect on the Theme (25 mins)

When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we are addressing the all-powerful, transcendent God of the universe; creator of all that is and ever has been. When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we call God, 'Father'. We are presented with two truths in this part of the prayer. One, the loving fatherhood of God for each one of us, inviting intimacy and communion. Two, the hallowing of the name of God, the need to respect and worship his greatness and majesty (cf. Psalm 30:4, 97:12; 103:1; 111:9; Ezekiel 36:22-27; Isaiah 52:6; Genesis 32:28-29). The enormity of this is so easily lost on us.

In contemporary society, there is often a sense that fatherhood is repressive and problematic – for example, the derogatory use of the term patriarchy. Unfortunately, it is the case that some fathers are no more than 'begetters', having little to do with the children they help to bring into the world. We need to rediscover the true identity of what it means to be a loving father.

God the Father, as Olivier Clément, the French theologian reminds us, transcends sexual duality (note the Catechism CCC 239). The 'entire Bible,' he

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writes, 'evokes the "bosom of mercy," *rahamim*, in the sense of the womb: this Father is motherly. He "senses" his children as a mother "senses" her own, with her whole being, with all her flesh and within her bosom' (cf. John 1:18).

God's love for us is total: motherly, paternal, unequivocal, unconditional. The relationships that we have with our own family, with our friends, are but shadows of this. This is why, even where our own relationships with family, our own fathers, are weak or damaged, acknowledging God as Father offers healing and sanctuary.

The Israelites had a sense that God was Father of his People (e.g. Exodus 4:22) but rarely would an individual address God as Father. Yet, remarkably, Jesus invites us to do just that. In the Aramaic – it is likely that Jesus would have taught this prayer in his native tongue – the word is *Abba*, more akin to 'Dad'. The relationship is familiar, that is 'of the family', and intimate.

Baptism incorporates us into this intimate, familial relationship. By virtue of our Baptism we are united to the Father, as his adopted children, and to each other as brothers and sisters. This reality is often obscured by our sin which results in conflict, jealousy, fierce competition and acts of pride. We frequently act as if our own growth is when others are diminished. The reality is that true spiritual growth comes when we use the gifts that God has given us at our Baptism. For when we diminish so that Christ increases, we will begin to understand more fully what it means to be the Father's adopted sons and daughters. When this happens other relationships, with each other and the created order, start to be restored.

Jesus taught us this prayer to draw us closer to God the Father, to recognise our precious 'spirit of sonship' and dignity. And because we are adopted sons and daughters, 'God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba! Father!' (Galatians 4:6; Romans 8:15).



**By virtue of our
Baptism we are
united to the
Father, as his
adopted children,
and to each other
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Responding to what has been heard

By committing ourselves to action we are saying that we want to make a difference in our lives and in the lives of others. We are committing to make the words of the Lord's Prayer resonate in our lives. What have you heard today that you find challenging? What do you find affirming? What is your response to God's offer of eternal life? Please share if you feel comfortable. What are you going to do about what you have heard today?

Go in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord (10 mins)

You are invited to close with a time of meditation on Psalm 139 (138). Read it slowly, pause between verses, reflect on its meaning for your life and your journey in faith, hope and love. You may also wish to conclude with the Lord's Prayer, another prayer of your own choosing or a moment of silence.

- A: O Lord, you search me and you know me,
you know my resting and my rising,
you discern my purpose from afar.
- B: Before ever a word is on my tongue
you know it, O Lord, through and through.
Too wonderful for me this knowledge,
too high, beyond my reach.
- A: For it was you who created my being,
knit me together in my mother's womb.
I thank you for the wonder of my being,
for the wonders of all your creation.
- B: O search me, God, and know my heart.
See that I follow not the wrong path
and lead me in the path of life eternal.
- All: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was
in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

A blessing taken from the Liturgy of the Hours is included here.

May the Lord bless us and keep us from all evil
and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

By his design and grace we are Children of God

Our awareness of our status as slaves would make us sink into the ground and our earthly condition would dissolve into dust, if the authority of our Father himself and the Spirit of his Son had not impelled us to this cry . . . 'Abba, Father!' . . . When would a mortal dare call God 'Father,' if man's innermost being were not animated by power from on high?

St Peter Chrysologus

The expression God the Father had never been revealed to anyone. When Moses himself asked God who he was, he heard another name. The Father's name has been revealed to us in the Son, for the name 'Son' implies the new name 'Father.'

Tertullian

[The prayer is accomplished] by the contemplation of God alone, and by the warmth of love, through which the soul, moulded and directed to love him, speaks very familiarly to God as to its own Father with special devotion.

Our Father: at this name love is aroused in us . . . and the confidence of obtaining what we are about to ask. . . . What would he not give to his children who ask, since he has already granted them the gift of being his children?

St John Cassian

[See Catechism 2777-2815]



Meditate on Sacred Art: Visio Divina

Describe what you can see, what is happening?

What does this picture say about the relationship within the Trinity?

In Baptism, you enter into this relationship of love. How do you respond?

How might you deepen your knowledge and love of God in the coming days?



The Heavenly Jerusalem (1375-1397) by Jacobello Albregno / Hermitage, Saint Petersburg

SESSION 2 / THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE

God our Saviour, desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:3-4)

Theme As Jesus has loved us, so we are called to love one another. This, and love of God above all things, summarises the will of God (cf. CCC 2822).

Welcome: We Pray and Share Together (15 mins)

O God,
 send forth your Holy Spirit
 into our hearts that we might perceive,
 into our minds that we might remember,
 into our souls that we might meditate.
 Inspire us to speak with love, holiness,
 tenderness and mercy.
 Teach, guide and direct our thoughts and senses
 from beginning to end.
 May your grace help us to see with your eyes
 and to act with your love and light in our hearts.
 May we be strengthened with wisdom from on high
 for the sake and glory of your kingdom.
 Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
 Amen.

In a period of calm and a space of trust, each one of us is invited to share briefly one thing that has happened in the past week. It could be one thing that has given you cause for concern, something shared during the last time you met as a group or something that has given you cause to celebrate.

In this moment of peace and fellowship, we pray for the good of the group. Each member is invited to offer up any personal intentions. We also pray for the good of the Church, for wisdom in our country and for the common good. Let us also bring to mind the poor, the sick and those who have died.

We join together in praying: Our Father...

Read the Word Haggai 1:2-13 (5 mins)

Note: The Book of Haggai records events in 520 BC, some 18 years after Cyrus had conquered Babylon and issued a decree in 538 BC, allowing the captive Israelites to return to Judea. The restoration of the Temple was vital to the people, after the exile.

A variety of short prayers before the reading of Scripture can be found on page 46.

‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD.’ Then the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, ‘Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your panelled houses, while this house lies in ruins? Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.

‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the Lord. You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house. Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labours.’

Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD.

Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the Lord’s message, ‘I am with you, declares the LORD.

Meditate on the Word Haggai 1:2-13 (20 mins)

Once the Scripture passage has been read you are asked to choose a word or phrase that has struck you. Underline it with a pen or you might wish to simply hold it in mind. You will be invited to share the word or phrase with the group.

Another person will then read the passage. While you listen attentively, repeat the process of holding onto a word or phrase, making a note and sharing it. In doing this, you are invited to consider the following questions:

How have these words or phrases resonated in my heart and in my mind?

What is the Lord saying to me at this very moment in my life?

In what way has my reading of this passage of Holy Scripture changed me?

How has it helped me to resolve to be more Christ-like in the coming days?

You are encouraged to re-read the Holy Scripture during the coming week, revisiting these questions.

Explore and Reflect on the Theme (25 mins)

Quite often prayer is experienced as a simple, almost transactional, request for God to bless a decision we have already made. Lord, we ask, please allow my plans to come to fruition; please help me in my efforts; please support my strength and my resolutions. But what would our lives look like if we genuinely, in each and every decision, sought to follow God's plans for our lives?

The prophet Jeremiah, when writing from Jerusalem to those in exile, reminds us that God wants to be sought, wants to be found and wants us to flourish:

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord (Jeremiah 29:11-14).

In the scripture passage we read from the prophet Haggai, that the Israelites have returned from exile, with Jeremiah's words in their ears, yet they focus on the rebuilding of their own homes while the Temple still lies in ruins. Each new day is an opportunity to choose either our 'houses', our design or to affirm our desire to give glory to God, to rebuild his Temple.

It is this choice that shows that we are followers of Christ to those around us. It is the Holy Spirit that gives us the particular gifts to follow his path. Through Baptism and Confirmation, we are anointed with the Spirit and these gifts (Isaiah 11:1; CCC 1831). The gifts, permit us to live out a life of grace; that is to

share in the divine life (CCC 759 and 1997). These gifts help us to choose the Lord's will and to see signs of the Kingdom, glimpses of heaven, the Lord with us, in our daily lives. They enable us to live as the family of God.

Each and every day, the Lord's Prayer is recited in countless languages and diverse cultural settings. Its familiarity provides a sense of unity for Christians worldwide, fostering a shared spiritual language. In some simple way, it recalls the prophecies of God's reign over the nations (e.g. Zechariah 14:9 and Psalm 47). Is not life, for Christians from every nation, the struggle between doing God's will and doing our own?

When prompted by his disciples to eat, after his encounter with the woman at the well, Jesus gave a cryptic response. Jesus told his disciples that doing his Father's will is what truly sustains him (John 4:34). He shows us that this line of the Lord's Prayer is not a passive request but an active engagement with God's plan for salvation (cf. CCC 2822). The Father's will is done perfectly in heaven; Jesus teaches us to pray that everyone on earth – ourselves included – join the angels and the saints in serving the king, revering his holy name and doing his will perfectly, as it is in heaven.



The Father's will is done perfectly in heaven. Jesus teaches us to pray for the same to be true for everyone on earth.

Responding to what has been heard

By committing ourselves to action we are saying that we want to make a difference in our lives and in the lives of others. We are committing to make the words of the Lord's Prayer resonate in our lives. What have you heard today that you find challenging? What do you find affirming? What is your response to God's offer of eternal life? Please share if you feel comfortable. What are you going to do about what you have heard today?

Go in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord (10 mins)

You are invited to close with a time of meditation on Psalm 40 (39). Read it slowly, pause between verses, reflect on its meaning for your life and your journey in faith, hope and love. You may also wish to conclude with the Lord's Prayer, another prayer of your own choosing or a moment of silence.

A: I waited, I waited for the LORD,
and he stooped down to me;
he heard my cry.

B: He drew me from the deadly pit,
from the miry clay.
He set my feet upon a rock,
made my footsteps firm.

A: He put a new song into my mouth,
praise of our God.
Many shall see and fear
and shall trust in the LORD.

B: You delight not in sacrifice and offerings,
but in an open ear.
You do not ask for holocaust and victim.

A: Then I said, 'See, I have come.'
In the scroll of the book it stands written of me:
'I delight to do your will, O my God;
your instruction lies deep within me.'

All: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was
in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

A blessing taken from the Liturgy of the Hours is included here.

May the Lord bless us and keep us from all evil
and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Offering praise & seeking the LORD's will

The first series of petitions carries us toward him, for his own sake: *thy* name, *thy* kingdom, *thy* will! It is characteristic of love to think first of the one whom we love. In none of the three petitions do we mention ourselves; the burning desire, even anguish, of the beloved Son for his Father's glory seizes us: 'hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done...' These three supplications were already answered in the saving sacrifice of Christ, but they are henceforth directed in hope toward their final fulfilment, for God is not yet all in all.

(CCC 2804)

Asking the Father that his name be made holy draws us into his plan of loving kindness for the fullness of time, 'according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ,' that we might 'be holy and blameless before him in love.'

(CCC 2807)

By a discernment according to the Spirit, Christians have to distinguish between the growth of the Reign of God and the progress of the culture and society in which they are involved.

(CCC 2820)

By prayer we can discern 'what is the will of God' and obtain the endurance to do it.

(CCC 2826)

What would he not give to his children who ask, since he has already granted them the gift of being his children?

St Augustine

[Catechism 2816-2827]



Meditate on Sacred Art: Visio Divina

Describe what you can see, what is happening?

What does this picture say about the power of the Holy Spirit?

In Confirmation, you received the fire of the Spirit. How do you respond?

How might you live in this powerful reality in the coming days?



SESSION 3 / GIVE US OUR DAILY BREAD

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19)

Theme The old dictum, *Deus Providebit* (God will provide) is borne from experience, not always obvious but nevertheless real. We then, having received, are asked to provide for others in need.

Welcome: We Pray and Share Together (15 mins)

O God,
 send forth your Holy Spirit
 into our hearts that we might perceive,
 into our minds that we might remember,
 into our souls that we might meditate.
 Inspire us to speak with love, holiness,
 tenderness and mercy.
 Teach, guide and direct our thoughts and senses
 from beginning to end.
 May your grace help us to see with your eyes
 and to act with your love and light in our hearts.
 May we be strengthened with wisdom from on high
 for the sake and glory of your kingdom.
 Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
 Amen.

In a period of calm and a space of trust, each one of us is invited to share briefly one thing that has happened in the past week. It could be one thing that has given you cause for concern, something shared during the last time you met as a group or something that has given you cause to celebrate.

In this moment of peace and fellowship, we pray for the good of the group. Each member is invited to offer up any personal intentions. We also pray for the good of the Church, for wisdom in our country and for the common good. Let us also bring to mind the poor, the sick and those who have died.

We join together in praying: Our Father...

Read and Reflect on the Scriptures Matthew 6:1,3-6,9-15 (5 mins)

Note: The Lord's Prayer comes in the middle of St Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount. Chapter 6 gives us the pattern of Christian life: prayer, fasting and the giving of alms. This prayer, structured according to seven petitions (the Scriptural number of perfection), is our model for prayer.

A variety of short prayers before the reading of Scripture can be found on page 46.

'Beware of practising your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven... when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

'And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you...

'Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

'For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.'

Meditate on the Word Matthew 6:1,3-6,9-15 (20 mins)

Once the Scripture passage has been read you are asked to choose a word or phrase that has struck you. Underline it with a pen or you might wish to simply hold it in mind. You will be invited to share the word or phrase with the group.

Another person will then read the passage. While you listen attentively, repeat the process of holding onto a word or phrase, making a note and sharing it. In doing this, you are invited to consider the following questions:

How have these words or phrases resonated in my heart and in my mind?

What is the Lord saying to me at this very moment in my life?

In what way has my reading of this passage of Holy Scripture changed me?

How has it helped me to resolve to be more Christ-like in the coming days?

You are encouraged to re-read the Holy Scripture during the coming week, revisiting these questions.

Explore and Reflect on the Theme (25 mins)

During lockdown many people tried their hand at making bread, creating a daily loaf which was the work of their hands. People suddenly found they had time on their hands, because a good loaf takes time to prove and rise, and enjoyed the simple 'magic' where something as simple as flour and water, and little else, becomes something tasty and satisfying. The good baker knows that it is not complicated, you just need a daily routine which allows time so that the bread will be ready when you want it - when your hunger needs satisfying.

Two thousand years after Jesus taught us this simple request - to have basic food each day - we know that for many it remains a real prayer. Many people in our country have to turn to food banks to have access to something to feed them and their families. Many parishes have supported schemes to help those in need in the community so that they can have something to eat. This 'daily bread' is both a symbol and reality of the challenges which face us both locally and globally in terms of food production, climate change and economic systems and which often hit the poor and disadvantaged both globally and locally. To highlight just one aspect Pope Francis writes in *Laudato Si* that 'we know that approximately a third of all food produced is discarded, and "whenever food is thrown out it is as if it were stolen from the table of the poor' (LS 50). The Lord's Prayer begins with 'our' Father and continues here with give 'us'. Jesus is not inviting us to make the personal prayer of an individual but to pray for 'all, in solidarity with their needs and sufferings' (CCC 2829).

Indeed, at this point in the Lord's Prayer it takes a turn. So far Jesus has taught us to offer praise to our Father, now we ask for something, we make petition,

which is the pattern for the rest of the prayer. This two-part structure of praise and petition is why the Lord's Prayer is called the model of prayer. It forms the pattern of many of the prayers in the liturgy, such as the Collects, where we offer praise to God for what he has done for us and then ask him to respond to our needs. This pattern can also form our own prayers.

At Mass we pray the Lord's Prayer shortly before the distribution of Holy Communion. As the prayer of the baptised it is one of the signs of our communion which prepares us to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord but we also pray this petition 'give us...' as sign of our desire to receive. In the Eucharist, we know that we do not live on bread alone but the word of God - the Bread of Life we seek is 'the Word of God accepted in faith, the Body of Christ received in the Eucharist' (CCC 2835).



This two-part structure of praise and petition is why the Lord's Prayer is called the model of prayer.

Responding to what has been heard

By committing ourselves to action we are saying that we want to make a difference in our lives and in the lives of others. We are committing to make the words of the Lord's Prayer resonate in our lives. What have you heard today that you find challenging? What do you find affirming? What is your response to God's offer of eternal life? Please share if you feel comfortable. What are you going to do about what you have heard today?

Go in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord (10 mins)

You are invited to close with a time of meditation on Psalm 107(106). Read it slowly, pause between verses, reflect on its meaning for your life and your journey in faith, hope and love. You may also wish to conclude with the Lord's Prayer, another prayer of your own choosing or a moment of silence.

- A: 'O give thanks to the LORD for he is good;
for his mercy endures forever.'
Let the redeemed of the LORD say this,
those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,
and gathered from far-off lands,
from east and west, north and south.
- B: They wandered in a barren desert,
finding no way to a city they could dwell in.
Hungry they were and thirsty;
their soul was fainting within them.
- A: Then they cried to the LORD in their need,
and he rescued them from their distress,
and he guided them along a straight path,
to reach a city they could dwell in.
- B: He stilled the storm to a whisper,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
They rejoiced because of the calm,
and he led them to the haven they desired.
- All: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was
in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

A blessing taken from the Liturgy of the Hours is included here.

May the Lord bless us and keep us from all evil
and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

What sustains us as Christians?

The Eucharist is our daily bread. The power belonging to this divine food makes it a bond of union. Its effect is then understood as unity, so that, gathered into his Body and made members of him, we may become what we receive.... This also is our daily bread: the readings you hear each day in church and the hymns you hear and sing. All these are necessities for our pilgrimage.

The Father in heaven urges us, as children of heaven, to ask for the bread of heaven. [Christ] himself is the bread who, sown in the Virgin, raised up in the flesh, kneaded in the Passion, baked in the oven of the tomb, reserved in churches, brought to altars, furnishes the faithful each day with food from heaven.

St Augustine (cf. CCC 2837)

I have never worried about our temporal affairs, and I have seen by experience that God has always provided for us. When our number increased the needs of all were supplied, thus verifying the divine promise: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.' (Matthew 6:33)

St Paul of the Cross

If it is 'daily bread,' why do you take it once a year? ... Take daily what is to profit you daily. Live in such a way that you may deserve to receive it daily. He who does not deserve to receive it daily, does not deserve to receive it once a year.

St Ambrose of Milan

[See Catechism 2828-2837]



Meditate on Sacred Art: Visio Divina

Describe what you can see, what is happening?

What does this picture say about the generosity of God?

In the Eucharist, Jesus himself, you receive the nourishment and grace to live out your vocation in the world. How might you live in this powerful reality?



The Return of the Prodigal Son (c.1667-1670) by Murillo / National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

SESSION 4 / FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES

I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me (John 5:30)

Theme God's mercy endures; with him all things are possible. In this prayer, we hear that the outpouring of God's mercy cannot penetrate our hearts as long as we have not forgiven others (cf. CCC 2840).

Welcome: We Pray and Share Together (15 mins)

O God,
 send forth your Holy Spirit
 into our hearts that we might perceive,
 into our minds that we might remember,
 into our souls that we might meditate.
 Inspire us to speak with love, holiness,
 tenderness and mercy.
 Teach, guide and direct our thoughts and senses
 from beginning to end.
 May your grace help us to see with your eyes
 and to act with your love and light in our hearts.
 May we be strengthened with wisdom from on high
 for the sake and glory of your kingdom.
 Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
 Amen.

In a period of calm and a space of trust, each one of us is invited to share briefly one thing that has happened in the past week. It could be one thing that has given you cause for concern, something shared during the last time you met as a group or something that has given you cause to celebrate.

In this moment of peace and fellowship, we pray for the good of the group. Each member is invited to offer up any personal intentions. We also pray for the good of the Church, for wisdom in our country and for the common good. Let us also bring to mind the poor, the sick and those who have died.

We join together in praying: Our Father...

Read and Reflect on the Scriptures Luke 15:11-24 (5 mins)

Note: The story of the Prodigal Son is occasionally referred to as the story of the Forgiving Father. Here we have a vivid image, frequently chosen by artists, which paints a picture of God the Father as patient, generous and ever-ready to embrace his wayward children.

A variety of short prayers before the reading of Scripture can be found on page 46.

[Jesus] said, 'There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them.

Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

'But when he came to himself, he said, "How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.'" And he arose and came to his father.

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son."

But the father said to his servants, "Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." And they began to celebrate.'

Meditate on the Word Luke 15:11-24 (20 mins)

Once the Scripture passage has been read you are asked to choose a word or phrase that has struck you. Underline it with a pen or you might wish to simply hold it in mind. You will be invited to share the word or phrase with the group.

Another person will then read the passage. While you listen attentively, repeat the process of holding onto a word or phrase, making a note and sharing it. In doing this, you are invited to consider the following questions:

How have these words or phrases resonated in my heart and in my mind?

What is the Lord saying to me at this very moment in my life?

In what way has my reading of this passage of Holy Scripture changed me?

How has it helped me to resolve to be more Christ-like in the coming days?

You are encouraged to re-read the Holy Scripture during the coming week, revisiting these questions.

Explore and Reflect on the Theme (25 mins)

All across the London Underground are small, ceramic finger labyrinths for commuters to trace (though few do). Created by the artist Mark Wallinger, each station features a panel, each in a public space – when new stations were added to the system, so new labyrinths are installed.

These ceramics are a nod to a venerable spiritual practice. You may be familiar with one of the most famous labyrinths on the floor of Chartres Cathedral, which invites pilgrims to reflect on their life as a series of steps both away from and towards the LORD.

Hundreds of thousands of people walk past the Wallinger ceramics without so much of a glance, all the while their own lives tracing familiar patterns, sometimes progressing, sometimes regressing in love, in faith, in life. Each one of these labyrinths is unique, in design and in the path one traces; just as each life that passes them by is unique.

Similarly, when growing up, you may have had the joy of playing Snakes and Ladders. Again, here, you trace your way *up* the board, towards your goal. Sometimes you gain a remarkable advance (perhaps akin to a spiritual insight or a singularly graced moment), sometimes you get thrown back (as one is when succumbing to temptation and sin). The Scriptural images here - Jacob's Ladder (cf. Genesis 28:12) and the Snake in Eden (cf. Genesis 3:15) - are perhaps unintentional but worthy of note and reflection.

Conversion, both initial conversion to Jesus Christ and ongoing conversion of heart, intellect and will, are recurring invitations in the Bible and the Liturgy.

The beginning of Mark's Gospel offers us a perspective on preparing the way of the Lord. Mark tells us that John the Baptist proclaimed a 'baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin.' Believe it or not, John and his message of conversion were immensely popular! Great joy doesn't sound exactly like the emotion brought forth by a call to 'repentance' and acknowledgement of sin. So, what is happening here?

John's call to 'repentance' wasn't an invitation to penance. He was inviting people to see everything in life from a new perspective. The change in perspective is required for our participation in the great mission of Christ's Church – the building of the kingdom and the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Our Baptism opens the door to this new perspective, it opens the door to sacramental graces in the other sacraments and permits us to see God as a loving Father and Jesus as brother and Lord.



Reflecting on the sweeping story of love in Scripture we are helped to see beauty in others and to love as Christ loved.

Responding to what has been heard

By committing ourselves to action we are saying that we want to make a difference in our lives and in the lives of others. We are committing to make the words of the Lord's Prayer resonate in our lives. What have you heard today that you find challenging? What do you find affirming? What is your response to God's offer of eternal life? Please share if you feel comfortable. What are you going to do about what you have heard today?

Where we go awry, sliding down one of life's 'snakes' or tracing a path away from the centre of the labyrinth – the Sacrament of Reconciliation awaits. The Father's arms are open; let us climb the ladders of grace.

Go in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord (10 mins)

You are invited to close with a time of meditation on Proverbs 3:5-12. Read it slowly, pause between verses, reflect on its meaning for your life and your journey in faith, hope and love. You may also wish to conclude with the Lord's Prayer, another prayer of your own choosing or a moment of silence.

- A: Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.
- B: Be not wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.
It will be healing to your flesh
and refreshment to your bones.
- A: Honour the LORD with your wealth
and with the first fruits of all your produce;
then your barns will be filled with plenty,
and your vats will be bursting with wine.
- B: My child, do not despise the LORD's discipline
or be weary of his reproof,
for the LORD reproves him whom he loves,
as a father the child in whom he delights.
- All: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was
in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

A blessing taken from the Liturgy of the Hours is included here.

May the Lord bless us and keep us from all evil
and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Pardon and Peace

God does not want to impose the good, but wants free beings... There is a certain usefulness to temptation. No one but God knows what our soul has received from him, not even we ourselves. But temptation reveals it in order to teach us to know ourselves, and in this way we discover our evil inclinations and are obliged to give thanks for the goods that temptation has revealed to us.

Origen

The Lord who has taken away your sin and pardoned your faults also protects you and keeps you from the wiles of your adversary the devil, so that the enemy, who is accustomed to leading into sin, may not surprise you. One who entrusts himself to God does not dread the devil. 'If God is for us, who is against us?'

St Ambrose

I cannot believe that a soul which has approached so nearly to Mercy Itself, and has learned to know itself and the greatness of God's pardon, will not immediately and readily forgive, and be mollified and remain on good terms with a person who has done it wrong. For such a soul remembers the consolation and grace which he has shown it, in which it has recognised the signs of great love, and it is glad that the occasion presents itself for showing him some love in return.

St Teresa of Ávila

[See Catechism 2838-2854]



Meditate on Sacred Art: Visio Divina

Describe what you can see, what is happening?

What does this picture say about forgiveness?

In Reconciliation, you are reconciled with God and with others. How have you experience the mercy of the Lord in the past or even today?



SESSION 5 / FOR THE GLORY IS YOURS

All that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord (1 Chronicles 29:11)

Theme The doxology, used in our liturgy but not often in personal prayer, is a song of praise to, and a powerful recognition of, Almighty God.

Welcome: We Pray and Share Together (15 mins)

O God,
 send forth your Holy Spirit
 into our hearts that we might perceive,
 into our minds that we might remember,
 into our souls that we might meditate.
 Inspire us to speak with love, holiness,
 tenderness and mercy.
 Teach, guide and direct our thoughts and senses
 from beginning to end.
 May your grace help us to see with your eyes
 and to act with your love and light in our hearts.
 May we be strengthened with wisdom from on high
 for the sake and glory of your kingdom.
 Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
 Amen.

In a period of calm and a space of trust, each one of us is invited to share briefly one thing that has happened in the past week. It could be one thing that has given you cause for concern, something shared during the last time you met as a group or something that has given you cause to celebrate.

In this moment of peace and fellowship, we pray for the good of the group. Each member is invited to offer up any personal intentions. We also pray for the good of the Church, for wisdom in our country and for the common good. Let us also bring to mind the poor, the sick and those who have died.

We join together in praying: Our Father...

Read and Reflect on the Scriptures Hebrews 12:1-3,7,10-17,28-29 (5 mins)

Note: The author of the Letter to the Hebrews describes the perfect priesthood of Jesus. In the face of pressures on belief, the author seeks to strengthen the community to which he writes; encouragements that can help us today.

A variety of short prayers before the reading of Scripture can be found on page 46.

Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted...

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons... he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Therefore, lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears...

Let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

Meditate on the Word Hebrews 12:1-3,7,10-17,28-29 (20 mins)

Once the Scripture passage has been read you are asked to choose a word or phrase that has struck you. Underline it with a pen or you might wish to simply hold it in mind. You will be invited to share the word or phrase with the group.

Another person will then read the passage. While you listen attentively, repeat the process of holding onto a word or phrase, making a note and sharing it. In doing this, you are invited to consider the following questions:

How have these words or phrases resonated in my heart and in my mind?

What is the Lord saying to me at this very moment in my life?

In what way has my reading of this passage of Holy Scripture changed me?

How has it helped me to resolve to be more Christ-like in the coming days?

You are encouraged to re-read the Holy Scripture during the coming week, revisiting these questions.

Explore and Reflect on the Theme (25 mins)

How do you end a prayer? In the liturgy we have a number of set phrases, such as ‘Through Christ our Lord’, which not only round off the text and signify to the listener that it is concluding but also remind us that the prayer we offer is done so through Jesus who unites us with him in his prayer to his Father.

How would Jesus have ended a prayer? What we know from scripture is that he would probably said some words of praise of God, a ‘doxology’, such as these words of King David ‘Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all’ (1 Chronicles 29:11), and still found in the New Testament letters, for example, ‘To him belong glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.’ (1 Peter 4:11).

One of the tasks of those who prepare biblical translations is to decide from various manuscripts what the original text was – or at least that for which we have the earliest evidence. The doxology text ‘For the kingdom...’ had always been included in the Orthodox liturgy. In the 16th century there was a new interest in looking at the sources and the Catholic scholar Erasmus who compiled a Greek text of the New Testament included the doxology and this became the basis of translations such as the King James Bible of 1611. Subsequent scholarship has agreed that it is not found in the earliest extant manuscripts and so in modern translations it is given in a footnote

with a phrase like ‘some manuscripts add ‘For yours...’ but also recognise it probably represents an ancient liturgical tradition of praying the text. Following the Second Vatican Council, the doxology is added to the Order of Mass as an ecumenical gesture reflecting the use in both the Orthodox and Protestant liturgies.

It is appropriate we pray these words in every celebration of Mass as they express in words of adoration and thanksgiving a truly Eucharistic attitude; to recognise the gift what we are about to receive and to give thanks to God.

There is an interesting echo of the Gospel we hear on the First Sunday of Lent when Jesus is tempted by the devil to worship him so that he will be given authority over the kingdoms of the world (Luke 4:1-13). In the doxology we acknowledge that the kingdom, the power and the glory truly belong to God. Further, it is worth reflecting on how, in the Gospels, Jesus presents the kingdom which is present now. We reflect on a kingdom characterised by small acts of love and justice, where power is turned upside-down in Jesus’ association with the weak and the powerless, and his glory, which culminates in his being lifted up on the Cross.



**Prayer is the soul’s
attention on Jesus.
The more you love
Jesus, the better
you pray.**

Responding to what has been heard

By committing ourselves to action we are saying that we want to make a difference in our lives and in the lives of others. We are committing to make the words of the Lord’s Prayer resonate in our lives. What have you heard today that you find challenging? What do you find affirming? What is your response to God’s offer of eternal life? Please share if you feel comfortable. What are you going to do about what you have heard today?

The Orthodox theologian, Alexander Schmemmann, ends his reflections on the Lord's Prayer:

'While we remember this prayer, while we keep repeating it, our life is opened towards the kingdom, is filled with power, shines with glory, in the face of which darkness, hatred, and evil lie powerless.'

Go in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord (10 mins)

You are invited to close with a time of meditation on Psalm 145 (144). Read it slowly, pause between verses, reflect on its meaning for your life and your journey in faith, hope and love. You may also wish to conclude with the Lord's Prayer, another prayer of your own choosing or a moment of silence.

A: I will extol you, my God and king,
and bless your name forever and ever.

B: I will bless you day after day,
and praise your name forever and ever.

A: Age to age shall proclaim your works,
shall declare your mighty deeds.
They will tell of your great glory and splendour,
and recount your wonderful works.

B: They will speak of your awesome deeds,
recount your greatness and might.

A: The LORD is kind and full of compassion,
slow to anger, abounding in mercy.

B: Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom;
your rule endures for all generations.

All: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was
in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

A blessing taken from the Liturgy of the Hours is included here.

May the Lord bless us and keep us from all evil
and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Only the Lord can give us what we need

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, graciously grant peace in our days, that, by the help of your mercy, we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Roman Missal, Embolism after the Lord's Prayer

He who trusts himself is lost. He who trusts in God can do all things.

St Alphonsus Liguori

Such is our Christian life. By desiring heaven we exercise the powers of our soul. Now this exercise will be effective only to the extent that we free ourselves from desires leading to infatuation with this world. Let me return to the example I have already used, of filling an empty container. God means to fill each of you with what is good; so cast out what is bad! If he wishes to fill you with honey and you are full of sour wine, where is the honey to go? The vessel must be emptied of its contents and then be cleansed. Yes, it must be cleansed even if you have to work hard and scour it. It must be made fit for the new thing, whatever it may be.

St Augustine

Blessed the one who observes with spiritual understanding the choirs of stars shining with glory and the beauty of the heavens and longs to contemplate the Maker of all things.

St Ephrem of Syria

[See Catechism 2855-2856, section 'in brief': 2857-2865]



Meditate on Sacred Art: Visio Divina

Describe what you can see, what is happening?

What does this picture say about the glory of God?

What is the impact on those who witness God's power in their lives?

How might I live in this powerful reality in the coming days?

Introductory phrases before reading Scripture

Let us listen carefully to the Word of the Lord, and attend to it with the ear of our hearts. Let us welcome it, and faithfully put it into practice. *St Benedict of Nursia (c.480-c.547) adapted*

Merciful God, anoint me with your Holy Spirit. As I read your Word, let me hear your voice speaking to me from within. Give me the wisdom to understand your message to me. Give me strength to build my life on your Word. May I rejoice in hearing your Word and keeping it. *Fr Augustine Vallooran V.C.*

Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort me and restore me. *att. St Patrick (c.387-c.460)*

Let us pray with great confidence, with confidence based upon the goodness and infinite generosity of God and upon the promises of Jesus Christ. God is a spring of living water which flows unceasingly into the hearts of those who pray. *St Louis de Montfort (1673-1716)*

Lord, inspire me to read your Scriptures and to meditate upon them day and night. I beg you to give me real understanding of what I need, that I in turn may put its precepts into practice. Yet, I know that understanding and good intentions are worthless, unless rooted in your graceful love. So I ask that the words of Scripture may also be not just signs on a page, but channels of grace into my heart. *Origen (184-253)*

O Lord Jesus Christ, open the eyes of my heart, that I may hear Thy word and understand and do Thy will. On Thee do I set my hope, that Thou shalt enlighten my mind and understanding with the light of Thy knowledge, not only to cherish those things which are written, but to do them; that in reading the lives and sayings of the saints I may not sin, but that such may serve for my restoration, enlightenment and sanctification, for the salvation of my soul, and the inheritance of life everlasting. *St John Chrysostom (347-407)*

Let us speak of the God whom we love, listen to the God who wishes to speak to us. 'Speak, Lord, for your servants are listening'. *EG, 146 and 1 Samuel 3:9*

Let us go forward in peace, our eyes upon heaven, the only one goal of our labours. *St Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897)*

Some Suggested Further Reading

Books

Curtis Mitch & Edward Sri, **The Gospel of Matthew**, (2010), Baker Academic

Olivier Clément, **Three Prayers**, (2000) SVS Press

Tertullian, Cyprian & Origen, **On the Lord's Prayer**, (2004) SVS Press

Alexander Schmemmann, **Our Father**, (2000) SVS Press

St Teresa of Ávila, **The Pater Noster of St Teresa** (1949) Grail

Church Teaching

Pope Francis, **Catecheses on the Lord's Prayer** (5 Dec 2018 to 22 May 2019)

Pope Benedict XVI, **General Audiences** (23 May 2012 & 30 Jan 2013)

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

Article 1: *The Summary of the Whole Gospel* - CCC 2759-2776

Article 2: *Our Father Who Art In Heaven* - CCC 2777-2802

Article 3: *The Seven Petitions* - CCC 2803-2854

Article 4: *The Final Doxology* - CCC 2855-2865

The Lord's Prayer and Lent

At the heart of the Lenten Journey is the preparation of those seeking to be baptised at the Easter Vigil. In every diocese at the beginning of Lent, at the Rite of the Election, the bishop affirms the readiness of the catechumens (those preparing for Baptism) to be welcomed into the Church. In the weeks following there are a number of liturgies which help them prepare. One of these is the **Presentation of the Lord's Prayer**.

From the early Church, the Lord's Prayer is seen as the prayer of baptised because in Baptism we receive the spirit of adoption. A better translation of 'presentation' would be 'handing on' as the original Latin word is 'traditio' - from which we get tradition. The church, the local community, hands on the Our Father to those who are to be baptised so that they, in turn, will hand on their faith to others.

Where there are people to be baptised at Easter it would be appropriate in the Year of Prayer, to celebrate the Presentation of the Lord's Prayer in the Fifth week of Lent bringing together any small groups who have engaged with WE DARE TO SAY. The small groups will be a sign of the witness of the local community entrusting the prayer to those who will be baptised.

Where it is not possible to celebrate the Presentation, a time of prayer to reflect on the gift of the Lord's Prayer is offered. This can be celebrated either within the small group or with the wider parish community.

The other important focus of Lent is reconciliation, so that we are ready to celebrate the Easter Triduum worthily. A Reconciliation liturgy has been prepared which uses the Lord's Prayer as a central theme. It can be found on the Bishops' Conference website:

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/jubilee-the-year-of-prayer/>

The Song of Zechariah (Benedictus)

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel!
He has visited his people and redeemed
them.

He has raised up for us a mighty saviour
in the house of David his servant,
as he promised by the lips of holy men,
those who were his prophets from of old.

A saviour who would free us from our foes,
from the hands of all who hate us.
So his love for our fathers is fulfilled
and his holy covenant remembered.

He swore to Abraham our father to grant us,
that free from fear, and saved from the
hands of our foes,
we might serve him in holiness and justice
all the days of our life in his presence.

As for you, little child,
you shall be called a prophet of God,
the Most High.

You shall go ahead of the Lord
to prepare his ways before him.

To make known to his people their salvation
through forgiveness of all their sins,
the loving-kindness of the heart of our God
who visits us like the dawn from on high.

He will give light to those in darkness,
those who dwell in the shadow of death,
and guide us into the way of peace.

The Song of Mary (Magnificat)

My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.
He looks on his servant in her lowliness;
henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy his name!
His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear him.

He puts forth his arm in strength
and scatters the proud hearted.
He casts the mighty from their thrones
and raises the lowly.

He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.

He protects Israel, his servant,
remembering his mercy,
the mercy promised to our fathers,
to Abraham and his sons for ever.

The Benedictus can be found in the first chapter of Luke's gospel (Luke 1:68-79). It is sung daily at Morning Prayer. You can also find the Magnificat in Luke's account, earlier in chapter one (Luke 1:46-55). It is sung daily at Evening Prayer.



**WE DARE
TO SAY**



THE ARCHDIOCESE
of BIRMINGHAM

