

Feeding the Good Wolf

*Twenty-one Days of Developing the Practice of Faith, Hope and Love
in the Catholic Tradition*

Dedicated to my Mother and Father, who showed by example the joy of faithful love

Introduction

You are free. Before you begin this book I want to make clear that you are free to believe and to practice your faith in whatever way you choose. It's up to you. Faith can never be forced.

To be free is to be responsible for yourself. You are responsible not only for what you do, but you are also responsible for who you become. Allow me to illustrate with a story:

An old Cherokee was teaching his grandson about life:

"A fight is going on inside me," he said to the boy. "It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil - he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego." He continued, "The other is good - he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you - and inside every other person, too."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?"

The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."¹

Choosing to pray is choosing to feed the good wolf so you can grow in faith, hope and love. These three virtues are known as the three theological virtues, that is, virtues that come from God. Saint Paul writes of them in 1 Corinthians 13: *"In short, there are three things that last: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love."*

¹ <http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-HTML-Legends/TwoWolves-Cherokee.html>, August 28, 2009.

God is love², and when we pray we come to know love. I like to observe people. When I see miserable people, I often say to myself, “There is a person who doesn’t know love.” You either know love or you don’t. Prayer is about coming to know who you really are: God’s beloved.

Why Twenty-one?

This book teaches twenty one ways of prayer. Why twenty-one? I recently heard the Franciscan priest and writer Richard Rohr say that it takes twenty-one days to form a new habit.

I looked it up and found that it is actually based on the bestseller *Psycho-Cybernetics*, by Dr. Maxwell Maltz. “Originally a Plastic Surgeon, Maltz noticed that it took 21 days for amputees to cease feeling phantom sensations in the amputated limb. From further observations he found it took 21 days to create a new habit. Brain circuits take engrams (memory traces), and produce neuroconnections and neuropathways only if they are bombarded for 21 days in a row. This means that our brain does not accept ‘new’ data for a change of habit unless it is repeated each day for 21 days (without missing a day).”³

This book has twenty-one chapters and I suggest you make time for a chapter a day. Each chapter will teach a different way of prayer, which you are invited to try. If you spend some time each day in prayer for twenty-one days in a row, it will become a habit. Perhaps you already have a habit of stopping for prayer each day. If you don’t have this habit, then beginning to do so could be life changing. It would be a significant change because you would become more conscious of yourself as a spiritual person, and more conscious of God’s loving presence and action in your life. It is up to you: “*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.*” (2 Corinthians 3:17)

A long time ago Aristotle wrote that we learn justice by practicing justice and we learn goodness by doing good. We learn to play the violin by practicing the violin. In the same way we learn to pray by praying.

In Robert Wick’s book, *Touching the Holy*, he writes, “Although taking fifteen or twenty minutes to be with God each day in silence and solitude sounds good (and easy in

² 1 John 4:8

³ <http://answers.google.com/answers/threadview?id=786165> , April 26, 2008.

theory), the reality is obviously very different.”⁴ He discusses some reasons why we tend to resist spending time in prayer and reflection and suggests we don’t want to face our real selves. We don’t trust enough in the goodness of God. Such honesty with a God who sees all is unnerving, and so “unconsciously knowing this leads many of us to develop a schedule in which we become too active to slow down and too full to make room for God.”⁵

Do you feel that the topic of God and your Spiritual life is worth pursuing? Most in our society really don’t believe developing faith is very important. For many, money is considered more important. It is valued far more than wisdom or faith. If we spent as much time developing our Spiritual selves as we do pursuing money, there would be a lot more people knowing true love, peace and joy. It is important that you feel that prayer is necessary, because “Until you are convinced that prayer is the best use of your time, you will not find time for prayer.”⁶

Self Evaluation

Once you have decided prayer is something worth your time, you first need to assess the effort you are giving it now before you decide where to go from here. Do you feel you are spending enough time in prayer? Do you stop everything else on a regular basis so you can give all your attention to God, just as you would for someone you are truly in love with?

If there is need for improvement, can you name specifically what needs to be improved? Deciding on a time? Preparing a place?

Where should you start? Well, there is only one place to start, and that is right where you are. Begin before you are ready. God comes and meets us right where we are. Never doubt that. And never say “I am not good enough to come into God’s presence.” Of course you’re not. None of us are. But that’s the good news: God loves us just as we are. Again and again the self righteous religious leaders of Jesus’ time simply could not comprehend such a concept. Today this belief that God loves us as we are is known as the gospel truth, the good news.

⁴ Robert J. Wicks, *Touching the Holy*, Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1992, p. 40.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁶ Fr. Hilary Ottensmeyer O.S.B.

Can prayer be taught?

“Now once he was in a certain place praying, and when he had finished one of his disciples said, ‘Lord, teach us to pray.’” (Luke 11:1)

Richard Rohr had the following to say about the Church’s call to teach prayer: “When the Church is no longer teaching the people how to pray, we could almost say it will have lost its reason for existence. Prayer is the ultimate empowerment of the people of God. Overemphasis on social prayer has left many of our people passive, without a personal prayer life and comfortable with ‘handed-down religion’ instead of first-hand experience.”⁷ That is what we are longing for: first-hand experience of God. There is a saying, “Jesus loves me, this I know, because the bible tells me so.” It is good to trust the word of the bible, but it would be even better if we knew God’s love from *experience*, an experience of God that happens in prayer.

Recently I came out of a bakery with a few samples of cake in my hand. My wife saw me eating it and asked what it tasted like. I could have started to describe it: “It has a hint of cinnamon with some nutmeg...” I did not even try. I simply gave her a piece to try. Try it and see how it tastes. We could say the same of God: *“Taste and see, the goodness of the Lord.”* (Psalm 34:8) That is why I encourage you to learn ways of prayer – so you can taste and see the goodness of God.

That is what I hope for more than anything else for my children and for the students I serve: that they come to know first-hand the goodness of God. I came to experience God because of the Grace of God and the witness and words of genuine ministers of the Gospel. This experience of a God who is unconditional love changed everything. It is what gave my life meaning and purpose. So from that time I began to commit myself to prayer, to learning about God and sharing what I learn. But God cannot be explained or taught. God has to be experienced. Prayer can be taught, and it is by the practice of prayer that we can come to experience God.

In the following twenty-one chapters I will introduce twenty-one ways of prayer. Some of these I am sure you do already. Some may be new to you and you may want to consider trying, so that you can taste for yourself, and see the goodness of God.

⁷ Rohr, Richard, *Everything Belongs*, Crossroad Publishing, New York, 2003, p. 147.

Part A - Four Approaches to Prayer

I. Mental Prayer

Many people lie in bed at night and just think about life, which often leads to thoughts of God. This often leads to talking to God about whatever is on the person's mind, or perhaps even wondering without words. This in itself is prayer.

St. Theresa of Lisieux writes in her autobiography of her experience of mental prayer as a child: "One day, one of the mistresses at the Abbey asked what I did with myself on holidays, when I was left to my own devices. I told her that I got behind my bed, where there was an empty space in which you could shut yourself away with the curtains, and there... well, I used to think. 'Think about what?' she asked. 'Oh.' I said, 'about God, and about life, and eternity; you know, I just think.' The dear nun made a great joke of this, and later on she used to remind me of my thinking days, and ask me whether I still thought. I can now see that I was practicing mental prayer without realizing what I was doing; God was teaching me the art in some secret way of his own."⁸

Chapter two of Luke's gospel is about the birth of Jesus, his presentation in the Temple, and then an event when Jesus was twelve and went missing from his parents. I love the line at the end of the chapter where it says that "*His mother pondered all these things in her heart.*" (Luke 2:51) What a wonderful word: she *pondered* these events in her heart. That is mental prayer, a simple pondering or thinking with the heart.

I invite you now to take some time to simply freestyle. Close your eyes and think about life and think about God. When you are ready, talk to God in whatever way feels natural to you.

2. Prayer of Petition

I was once teaching a class of adults and I asked if they spend time in prayer. One person from Ethiopia shared that he used to pray every day for his brother to return safely from war. When his brother never returned, he said he stopped praying and hasn't prayed since.

Sometimes our prayers are not answered as we wish, and sometimes they are. My father tells a story of being very sick with stomach troubles when he was newly married. He was bedridden for days. A priest came to visit, and while he was there the priest offered to bless his

⁸ Thérèse of Lisieux, *op. cit.*, p. 101-102

stomach. My father says that with this offer from a priest the expectation in his mind was automatic that he would be healed. He was, and it was as simple as that.

Prayer does not have to be so complicated. We should put aside time for prayer and we would do well to develop a pattern or habit of how we pray. But there will be times of spontaneous prayer as well. Once I was on a retreat being led by Sister José Hobday, a wonderful Native American sister who traveled extensively leading retreats. She was quite elderly and couldn't see the clock, so she asked what time it was. In response she was given the time, "9:11". Some chuckled at the coincidence, but she very seriously mentioned that the Pope would be visiting ground zero tomorrow and stopped right there to voice a prayer for those who perished in the tragedy that was 9:11.

There will be times when we have an urgent need, and the scripture teaches us to pray for what we need, like a child asking his parents for something. Anthony De Mello writes that many times he has met priests and religious who prayed much better before they entered the novitiate or seminary, the places where they train to be a leader in the church. Why did they pray better before? Because it got too complicated. We used to pray for grace to pass our examinations, for health, for success in our work. "Then we grew up and learned a lot of clever arguments about God not being interested in these mundane trifles. God helps those who help themselves, we cannot change the will of God, etc. So we stopped expecting miracles; we stopped praying for miracles; and God's interventions in our lives became fewer and fewer."⁹

"St. John of the Cross says that people receive from God as much as they expect from God. If you expect little, you will generally receive little. If you expect much, you will receive much. Do you need a miracle of grace in your life? Then you must expect a miracle to happen."

¹⁰ "Karl Rahner was once asked whether he believed in miracles. 'I don't believe in them,' he replied. 'I rely on them to get me through daily life!'"

Of course we have all prayed for something and not received it. All prayers are answered, but sometimes the answer is no. St. Paul had a prayer request denied. He had something that was bothering him. We are not quite sure what it was. He referred to it as his "*thorn in the flesh*" and

⁹ De Mello, Anthony, *Contact With God*, Image/Doubleday, New York, 2003, p. 49.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

he wrote, *“About this thing I have pleaded with the Lord three times for it to leave me, but he has said, ‘My grace is enough for you; my power is at its best in weakness.’”* (2 Corinthians 12:8-9)

Even Jesus, before his death, prayed that he might not have to suffer: *“Abba (Father)! Everything is possible for you. Take this cup away from me. But let it be as you, not I, would have it.”* (Mark 14:36) That last line is essential. As disciples of Jesus, we can expect that we may have to accept suffering at times, just as Jesus did. We are children of God, but we can’t act like spoiled children who expect to get what we want when we want it.

When Jesus promised, *“If you ask for anything in my name, I will do it.”* (John 14:14) the *“in my name”* part is crucial. It’s not so much as if it is a magic formula, but a prayer in Jesus’ name is a prayer inspired by Jesus. It is a prayer Jesus would pray – in fact, He is praying in you. *“For when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit himself expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words... The pleas of the saints expressed by the Spirit are according to the mind of God.”* (Romans 8:26-27)

Here is a true story about Corrie ten Boom that illustrates well this principle of praying for something we know God would want: *“Corrie and her family were imprisoned by the Nazis during World War II for hiding Jews in Amsterdam. Only Corrie survived. When the war ended, Corrie traveled about Europe, lecturing on forgiveness and reconciliation. After a talk in Munich, Germany, a man came up to thank her for the talk. He was one of the hated prison guards. When the man reached out to shake her hand, Corrie froze. She couldn’t believe her response. She had just given a talk on forgiveness, and now she herself couldn’t forgive the man. Corrie began to pray, saying, ‘Jesus, I cannot forgive this man. Help me forgive him.’ At that moment some mysterious power helped her reach out and take the man’s hand in true forgiveness.”*¹¹

St. James says, *“Why you don’t have what you want is because you don’t pray for it; when you do pray and don’t get it, it is because you have not prayed properly; you have prayed for something to indulge your own desires.”* (James 4:2-3) We have to be careful what we pray for. Jesus taught us to pray for *“our daily bread”* and *“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.”* (Matthew 6:10-11) St. John puts it very nicely in his first letter: *“We are quite confident that if we ask him for anything, and it is in accordance with his will, he will hear us.”* (1 John 5:14)

¹¹ Mark Link, S.J., *Decision*, Tabor Publishing, Valencia, California, 1988, p. 106.

I asked God for strength that I might achieve. I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey.
I asked God for health that I might do greater things. I was given infirmity that I might do better things.

I asked for riches that I might be happy. I was given poverty that I might be wise.

I asked for power that I might have the praise of men. I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God.

I asked for all things that I might enjoy life. I was given life that I might enjoy all things.

I got nothing I asked for, but everything I had hoped for.

Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.

I am among all men most richly blessed. - Henri Viscardi

What grace or gift of God's Spirit do you need to ask of God at this time?

3. Our Father

"So you should pray like this:

Our Father in heaven,

Holy is 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 trespasses

As we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation

But deliver us from evil." (Matthew 6:7-13)

This is the prayer that Jesus taught and it is my favorite, along with the Magnificat. The prayer begins with praise to God the father, and we do well to spend some time with that, raising our hands and praising God with all our hearts. Then we pray for God's reign to come in our lives and for God's will to be done, which is really one and the same thing. Again, we do well to

pause with this thought and really pray it. God's will in our lives is of course that we love and live like Jesus, so extending our hands so that our body makes the sign of the cross is appropriate. We are saying with our body that we are willing to sacrifice ourselves as Jesus did on the cross. It is when we do this that God's kingdom will be within us as it is in heaven.

In the previous section we spoke of petitionary prayer. In the second half of this prayer we see the things that Jesus asks us to pray for: enough "bread" (our basic needs) for our day, forgiveness, the ability to forgive and the strength to do what is right.

St. Theresa of Lisieux says the following of the Our Father: "Sometimes, when I'm in such a state of spiritual dryness that I can't find a single thought in my mind which will bring me close to God, I say an Our Father and a Hail Mary very slowly indeed. How they take me out of myself then; what solid satisfaction they give me then."¹²

Take your time and pray the Our Father slowly and carefully. If you feel comfortable, stand and raise your arms, look up and begin the prayer. The prayer begins with praise of God (hollowed be thy name), so stay with it for a while and praise God for being so incredibly awesome!

You may incorporate other gestures as well, such as bowing low at "Thy will be done". Try it. It is a gesture of submission and praying with your body in this way can help you to be fully engaged in your prayer. Cupping your hands in front of you as you say "give us this day our daily bread" is another gesture that can help. I like to bless myself with the sign of the cross with each of the last three petitions, since it is by the cross that we are forgiven and delivered from evil.

4. Examine awareness

"Unawareness is the root of all evil." - Anonymous Egyptian Monk

In this way of prayer you need to put aside five to ten minutes at the end of the day. Close your eyes (Sometimes you need to close your eyes to see) and pray the prayer of the blind man in the Gospel: "*Lord, that I might see.*" (Luke 18:41) We pray here that the Holy Spirit will enlighten us to see his presence and action this day. Then you close your eyes and look over your

¹² Thérèse of Lisieux, *op. cit.*, p. 290. The Hail Mary, mentioned here, is discussed in the next chapter.

day. For some people nothing will come to mind at first. The key is to relax and *wait* to see what comes to mind.

When I close my eyes and look over my day, all kinds of incidents will begin to come to mind. Just pay attention and listen to what God is saying to you in the events of your day. You may feel inspired to pray thank you, or sorry, or please... The important thing is that you look at the events of the day with God, and then pray as appropriate.

The Our Father prayed slowly and attentively is a good way to close the prayer time.

This is a great way to pray with others as well. Take time to reflect; then share what stood out for you from your day, and close with an Our Father. What a great way for couples to pray, or a family.

Self knowledge and awareness of what is going on within our hearts and minds is so important that it is worth the deliberate and sustained effort of the examine awareness. So many people are quite unaware of their true motivations for their actions. A favorite writer of mine named John Powell says that “We are so easily deluded by our own ego defense mechanisms. Each of us has to contend with the deceits of an illusory self. The person we would like others to see and accept. It is hard for most of us to distinguish this illusory self from a real but repressed self.”¹³

Eckhart Tolle wrote an amazing book called *A New Earth*¹⁴ in which he talks about the ego as the unobserved mind. The ego is the thoughts and feelings going on inside of us, and it is only ego when we mistakenly believe those thoughts and feelings are who we are. If we make a habit of taking an objective look at our thoughts and feelings, then we will not be controlled by our ego. The practice of the examine awareness helps us to examine our thoughts and feelings so we are not controlled by them. As Richard Rohr wrote, “The ego self is the unobserved self. If you do not find an objective standing point from which to look back at yourself, you will almost always be egocentric – identified with yourself instead of in relationship to yourself.”¹⁵ To practice the examine awareness is to “find an objective standing point from which to look back at yourself.”

Albert Einstein claimed, “Small is the number of them that see with their own eyes and feel with their own hearts.” That is a very challenging point. Most of us are influenced in ways

¹³ John Powell, *Fully Human, Fully Alive*, Tabor Publishing, Allen, Texas, 1976, p. 58.

¹⁴ Plume Publications, New York, 2005.

¹⁵ Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now, Learning to See as the Mystics See*, Crossroad Publishing Co, New York, 2009, p. 166.

we do not even know. Advertisers, for instance, spend billions on advertising because their studies tell them that it works. And how often do we just go along with someone else just to fit in? This is not a new phenomenon. In John's gospel, Jesus admonishes his listeners for worrying too much about what others think: *"How can you believe, since you look to one another for approval and are not concerned with the approval that comes from the one God?"* (John 5:44)

To have this examination at the day with God will keep us very honest. There is no hiding when you come before God. *"Before God no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account."* (Hebrews 4:13)

Many in today's Western society live a shallow life, but it is probably even more dangerous to live in delusion. If you are motivated by repressed energies and motives which you are not even aware of, you are not free. It is important to be aware of why we do the things we do. We may end up hurting the innocent because of our jealousy or our repressed and displaced anger. Jesus prayed for self deluded people, which is all of us to some extent, when he prayed, *"Forgive them, Father, they do not know what they are doing."* (Luke 23:34)

When I talk to students I like to ask them to give me a number between one and ten to rate how close they are to God. (Go ahead; give yourself a number before you read on.) People often give low numbers, and then I remind them that they are all tens! God is closer to you than you are to yourself. If I asked about your awareness of God's presence, that is a different story. The regular disciplined exercise of the examine awareness is a great way to become more aware of God who is always present and to discern where God is leading us in our lives. God is always with us. The Spiritual life is all about a serious effort to pay attention to this mysterious God who moves within and among us.

Take a few moments now to reflect about your day, or perhaps more generally about your life at this time. What arises for you to pray about? You may want to end with the Our Father.

Part B - Praying With Saints and Symbols

Mary said ... "From this day forward all generations will call me blessed." (Luke 1:48)

5. The Rosary

I remember when I first came to believe that there really is a God. I said to myself, "I guess I should pray." I was not in the habit and didn't have a clue where to begin. Then I came

across a pamphlet about the rosary at church. I took it home, found rosary beads, knelt by my bed and proceeded to pray the rosary. It was a long haul as I prayed one hundred and fifty Hail Marias, along with all the other prayers outlined on the pamphlet. Only later did I learn that people usually pray five mysteries of the rosary a day rather than all fifteen.

In praying the rosary, you hold the rosary beads in your hand and there is a set prayer to say for each bead. As you hold the crucifix you make the sign of the cross and pray the Apostles Creed. The Creed is a summary of the faith from the time of the Apostles:

I believe in God, the father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

The first bead is an Our Father, then we pray three Hail Marias for an increase in faith, hope and love. The words of the Hail Mary are very scriptural:

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. (from Luke 1:28)

Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. (from Luke 1:42)

Holy Mary, Mother of God,

Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

On the next bead you pray, “Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.”

Then you pray five decades of the rosary. For each decade you pray an Our Father, ten Hail Marias, and then a Glory Be. As you pray the ten Hail Marias, you count them on the ten beads. Fingering the beads and the repetition helps you to focus your mind. As you repeat the ten Hail Marias you think about the particular mystery from the life of Christ that you are meditating on. You might start with a small scripture reading about the event from the life of Christ, or you

might use a pamphlet that has a scripture verse and a picture to help you see the scene in your mind. We usually pray them in this order:

Monday – the Joyful Mysteries: The Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38), The Visitation (Luke 1:39-45), The Birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1-20) The Presentation of Jesus (Luke 2:22-32), The Finding of Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:41-50)

Tuesday – the Sorrowful Mysteries: The Agony in the Garden (Luke 22:39-46) The Scourging (John 19:1) Jesus is Crowned with Thorns (Mark 15:17) Jesus Carries his Cross (John 19:17) Jesus Dies on the Cross (John 19:26-27)

Wednesday – the Glorious Mysteries: Jesus Rises from the Dead (John 20:19), Jesus Ascends into Heaven (Mark 16:19), The Holy Spirit Comes on the Apostles (Acts 2:1-13), Mary is Assumed into Heaven and crowned Queen of Heaven (see 2 timothy 2:12, Revelation 13;5-6), The Second Coming of Christ (Matthew 25:31-46)

Thursday – the Mysteries of Light (added by John Paul II in 2002): Jesus' Baptism (Matthew 3:13-17), The Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-12), The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15), The Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36), The Institution of the Eucharist (Luke 22:19-20)

Friday – the Sorrowful Mysteries (Friday is the day of the crucifixion)

Saturday – the Joyful Mysteries (Saturday is a day often devoted to Mary)

Sunday – the Glorious Mysteries (Sunday is the day of the resurrection)

The rosary is not for everybody. St. Theresa of Lisieux struggled with it herself: “It’s a terrible thing to admit, but saying the rosary takes it out of me more than any hair-shirt would; I do it so badly! Try as I will to put force on myself, I can’t meditate on the mysteries of the rosary; I just can’t fix my mind on them. For a long time I was in despair about it, this want of devotion. I couldn’t understand it, because I have such a love for the Blessed Virgin that there ought to be no difficulty about saying prayers in her honor; her own favorite prayers too! Now I don’t distress myself so much; it seems to me that the queen of heaven, being my Mother, must be aware of my good intentions, and that’s enough for her.”¹⁶ This is a perfect example of the rule, “Pray as you can; don’t pray as you can’t.”

¹⁶ Thérèse of Lisieux, *op. cit.*, p. 289-290

To pray five decades of the rosary takes about fifteen to twenty minutes. If you don't have time for that, I recommend praying two decades that get to the heart of our faith: the death and resurrection of Jesus. If you don't have rosary beads, you can count the ten Hail Mary's on your fingers.

6. The Chaplet of Divine Mercy

This is another prayer that can be said on the rosary beads. It comes to the Church from Sister Faustina, a Polish mystic who lived in the early 1900's and was canonized by Pope John Paul II in the year 2000. Here is the method of praying the chaplet of divine mercy:

1. Begin with the Sign of the Cross, One Our Father, One Hail Mary and The Apostles Creed.

2. Then on the Our Father Beads say the following:

Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.

3. On the 10 Hail Mary Beads say the following each time as you hold each of the ten beads in turn: For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the sins of the whole world.

(Repeat step 2 and 3 for all five decades).

4. Conclude with *(three times)*:

Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

I have only recently discovered this prayer. I find that repeating these words of mercy has the effect of filling the mind and heart with thoughts of mercy and the spirit of mercy. A person who prays this is sure to become a more compassionate person.

Grab those rosary beads (or fingers) and give it a try. You will find this takes a fraction of the time that the rosary takes.

If you are without these words and want to pray it, don't worry about memorizing everything exactly. Just make it your own. The main part is the repetition of the words, "For the sake of

His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the sins of the whole world” fifty times on your rosary beads.

7. The Angelus

The Angelus is another traditional Catholic Marian prayer. The prayer at the end is essentially a prayer for the Holy Spirit (grace) to come into our hearts and it is a favourite prayer of mine.

The Angel of the Lord declared to Mary: And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord: Be it done unto me according to Thy word.

Hail Mary . . .

And the Word was made Flesh: And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary . . .

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray:

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts; that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection, through the same Christ Our Lord.

Amen.

8. The Magnificat

Another favourite Marian prayer of mine is the Magnificat. This is the prayer Mary prayed in her joy soon after being told that she was to be the Mother of God. Jean Vanier refers to this as Mary’s little gospel, because it sums up the good news of the Gospel message. It is found in the Gospel of Luke 1: 46-55, and it goes like this:

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
My Spirit rejoices in God my Saviour
For He has looked with favour on His lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:
The Almighty has done great things for me,
And holy is His Name.

He has mercy on those who fear Him
In every generation.

He has shown the strength of His arm,
He has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
And has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,
And the rich He has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of His servant Israel
For He has remembered His promise of mercy,
The promise He made to our fathers,
To Abraham and his children for ever.

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever .

I know this prayer off by heart since I have prayed it every day for many years. I love to lock my door for privacy, lift my eyes to God and raise my arms, as this is a prayer of praise and thanks for God's amazing grace. I often pray this and then the Our Father, which also begins with praise to God. Go ahead, give it a try.

9. Novena

A novena is when you say a prayer for nine days in a row, often a prayer to a saint. The name comes from the Latin *novem*, which means nine. The practice comes from the belief that the disciples prayed for nine days after Jesus' resurrection as they waited for the promised Holy Spirit. The first chapter of the book of Acts tells the story. It picks up where the Gospel of Luke

leaves off, with the event of the Ascension. In the last resurrection appearance, Jesus says: *“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and then you will be my witnesses... As Jesus said this he was lifted up while they looked on, and a cloud took him from their sight... They joined in continuous prayer, together with several women, including Mary the mother of Jesus.”* (Acts 1: 8-14) Nine days later was the birth of the church with the event of Pentecost. Many times people will pray a novena to a certain saint, and there are prayer cards that give you the words to say. There are many types of novenas. One example is Sister Faustina’s novena to Divine Mercy. She asked that a novena would be prayed for nine days before the feast of Divine Mercy, the second Sunday of Easter.

My daughter was being confirmed recently and we made up our own novena. Each day at supper for the nine days before her confirmation we said a prayer for one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (since there happens to be nine: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control*, from Galatians 5:22). Each day we wrote the word of the day on a wooden cross, which she kept as a remembrance of her special day.

St. Theresa of Lisieux is the 19th century Carmelite nun from Lisieux, France who said shortly before her death: “I will spend my heaven doing good on earth. I will let fall a shower of roses.”¹⁷ I never would have thought we would actually receive such a sign.

I will never forget the time I was in church with my fiancée at the time, now my wife, Dorothy. We were standing in Mass in St. Thomas and a rose petal came floating down right to us. We saw it coming from six or seven yards away, gently floating towards us. It didn’t come straight down from above, but it was out in front and angled toward us. I caught it without having to move. Incredible! Where did that come from?

Well, it turns out that Dorothy had been praying a novena to St. Theresa of Lisieux. When I think of it now I can hardly believe it happened; yet as it is happening you can do nothing other than accept it. It really is very humbling.

“If a man could pass through Paradise in a dream,
and have a flower presented to him as a pledge
that his soul had really been there,

¹⁷ <http://www.littleflower.org/learn/littleflower.asp>, accessed March 11, 2010.

and if he found
that flower in his hand when he awoke –
Ay! And what then?

- Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Here is the prayer Dorothy was praying. Give it a try.

“O Little Thérèse of the Child Jesus, please pick for me a rose from the heavenly gardens and send it to me as a message of love. O Little Flower of Jesus, ask God today to grant the favours I now place with confidence in your hands... (mention specific requests) “St. Thérèse, help me to always believe as you did, in God’s great love for me, so that I might imitate your ‘Little Way’ each day. Amen”

Part C - Praying With Scripture

“All scripture is inspired by God and can profitably be used for teaching, for refuting error, for guiding people’s lives and teaching them to be holy. This is how the man who is dedicated to God becomes fully equipped and ready for any good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

10. The Liturgy of the Hours

The Liturgy of the Hours, also known as the Divine Office, is a very easy and relaxing way to pray. The Liturgy of the Hours takes about ten to fifteen minutes as we pray the psalms in the morning, evening and night. Priests, nuns and brothers are required to pray the Liturgy of the Hours, but lay people are encouraged to as well.

Jesus prayed the psalms. We see in the gospel of Mark after the last supper, it says, *“After psalms had been sung they left for the Mount of Olives.”* (Mark 14:26) According to the gospels, even his last words on the cross were a prayer taken from the psalms: *“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”* (Psalm 22:1, Mark 15:34) and *“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”* (Psalm 31:5, Luke 23:46) If we live praying the psalms, they become a part of us and we may even have the good fortune to, like Christ, die praying the psalms. St. Paul calls on his readers to *“Sing the words and tunes of the psalms and hymns when you are together, and go on singing and chanting to the Lord in your hearts.”* (Ephesians 5:19)

St. Theresa of Lisieux enjoyed praying the Divine Office: “I recite the Divine Office with a great sense of unworthiness, but apart from that I can’t face the strain of hunting about in books for these splendid prayers – it makes my head spin.”¹⁸

You can buy a prayer book that gives psalms and scripture readings for morning, evening and night prayer (Liturgical Press). It is also on the web at www.liturgyhours.org. A good book that has a shortened divine office is *The Catholic Youth Prayer Book*, published by St. Mary’s Press.

Take your time and enjoy the Divine Office. I find it very relaxing. It is traditional to begin with the words, “God, come to my assistance – Lord, make haste to help me.” We begin prayer by asking God to help us pray. I find myself letting out a sigh as I say these words and enter into this time of prayer. It is liberating to let go and let God guide this time.

Appendix III below has Liturgy of the Hours you may want to try. Each one begins with an examine awareness, so this form of prayer incorporates two methods.

II. Lectio Divina

There is an ancient method for praying with scripture called *lectio divina*, or divine reading. It is a way of praying with scripture. You begin by deciding on the scripture passage you will pray with, and then there are four simple steps: 1) Read the passage very slowly and reflectively, pausing wherever a verse strikes you. 2) Think about what you are reading, reflecting on how it applies to your life. 3) Respond in prayer as you are led by the Spirit. 4) Hopefully after expressing yourself in prayer, you may come to a time of inner calm and peaceful rest in God’s presence. This method of prayer has been summed up nicely by a Southern Baptist minister who said, “I reads myself full; I thinks myself clear; I prays myself hot; I lets myself cool.”¹⁹

How can you decide which scripture verses to use? I have a small booklet that is mailed to my house each month that has the daily readings that the whole church around the world is using. (You can order this at 1-800-387-7164, living@novalis.ca, www.novalis.ca) You can also be guided through a process for praying with scripture while sitting at your computer at <http://www.sacredspace.ie/#chooseday>. This is an excellent site that uses an Ignatian five step

¹⁸Thérèse of Lisieux, *op. cit.*, 289.

¹⁹Chester P. Michael & Marie C. Norrissey, *Prayer and Temperament*, The Open Door, Inc., 1984, p. 32.

method of praying with scripture and uses the readings of the day. Another way to find the daily readings of the church is to use your bible and find the readings. You can find the Catholic Church's daily readings listed on the internet at http://www.olsj.net/mass_readings.htm.

Appendix II lists the Sunday readings in the Church's three year cycle, so you may want to choose the reading of the upcoming Sunday to pray with for your prayer time today.

12. Ignatian Contemplation

Another way of praying with scripture that may work better for some people is Ignatian contemplation. In this form of prayer, you take a few minutes to relax yourself and become aware of the presence of God. Then you read the scripture passage you have selected. You read the passage a second time, and pick a character in the story that you identify with. You visualize the scene of the Biblical text with yourself in the scene. It may be the story of Jesus healing the blind man in John, chapter nine. Can you imagine how exciting it would be to be that man, to have Jesus touch and heal you, to see for the first time and then have the authorities challenge you. This prayer relies on the use of a vivid imagination, and some people find their gift of imagination makes this an excellent form of prayer for them. For a more detailed description of this type of prayer, go to www.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Imagination/ and there you will find not only a description of this method of prayer but also some creative write-ups of some scenes imagined in prayer.

St. Theresa loved using the gospels in prayer: "Above all, it is the gospels that occupy my mind when I'm at prayer; my soul has so many needs, and yet this is the one thing needful. I'm always finding fresh lights there; hidden meanings which had meant nothing to me hitherto."

²⁰

Choose a Gospel passage and give it a try. Maybe this is the form of prayer that is just right for you.

13. The Way of the Cross

²⁰Thérèse of Lisieux, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

In most Catholic churches there are statues and paintings to bring the saints to our consciousness. Besides these, almost every Catholic Church has the Stations of the Cross. These are usually around the walls of the church and show Jesus at various stages as he is carrying the cross. We use these to help us meditate on Jesus' self-giving love and sacrificial death.

The person praying with the Stations of the Cross stops at each station to contemplate Jesus in his suffering. It is a powerful reminder that Jesus suffered and died for our sins, and also a great consolation to us as we go through our own struggles in life. People will often use prayer booklets that have scripture verses, prayers and meditations you can read as you walk around the Stations of the Cross.

The first station is usually Jesus being condemned by Pontius Pilate and the last one is Jesus being buried in the tomb. There is also a revised stations of the cross that was published by the Vatican's Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship. These Stations of the Cross are as follows:

1. The Last Supper (Luke 22:15-20)
2. In the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-38)
3. Before the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:53-55)
4. Before Pontius Pilate (John 18:28-30)
5. The whipping and crowning with thorns (John 19:1-3)
6. The carrying of the cross (John 19:16-17)
7. Simon of Cyrene (Mark 15:21)
8. The Women of Jerusalem (Luke 23:27-31)
9. The stripping and crucifixion (Matthew 27:33-35)
10. The second thief (Luke 23:39-43)
11. Mary and John (John 19:25-27)
12. Death on the cross (John 19:33-34)
13. The new sepulcher (Matthew 27:57-60)
14. The resurrection (Luke 24:1-3)

You may want to go to a church to give this a try. If you can't get to a stations of the cross, simply open your bible and reflect and pray on the scripture verses. You could choose to practice Lectio Divina or Ignatian Contemplation with some or all of these scripture verses.

Part D - Beyond Words

"For when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit himself expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words." (Romans 8:26)

"The Christian of the future will be a mystic or will not exist at all." - Karl Rahner²¹

A mystic is one who experiences God. Many times these experiences go beyond words. Following are types of prayer that are more about simply being in God's presence and experiencing God's love.

14. Centering Prayer.

This is a form of prayer that is both extremely simple and extremely rewarding. It is extremely simple and yet not easy, because you have to be able to focus. It's all about being attentive to the presence of God in the very core or heart of your being.

You simply sit still with an upright posture. Quiet yourself down. Choose a prayer word: Love, God, whatever it might be. Then you repeat the word over and over in a relaxed way with your breathing. This is called a mantra. This is a way to become centered and grounded in God. As the psalmist says, *"Be still, and know that I am God."* (Psalm 46:10) Spiritual writers suggest we do this for twenty minutes in the morning and again in the afternoon. It is a great form of prayer. Try it, and you will be amazed at how it can make a difference.²² You can learn more about it at www.centeringprayer.com and www.contemplativeoutreach.org.

John Main is a Benedictine priest (1926-1982) who taught this way of prayer. He taught that it is best to use the word Maranatha as your mantra. It is the last word in the bible, and it means, Come, Lord Jesus. The essence of this prayer is its simplicity. Here is a paragraph from his book, *Moment of Christ*:

²¹ Karl Rahner, *The Practice of the Faith*, Crossroad, New York, 1983, p. 22.

²² One great book on Centering Prayer is called *Moment of Christ, The Path of Meditation*, by John Main, OSB. Basil Pennington has also written numerous books and articles about centering prayer.

“The essence of meditation and the art of meditation is simply learning to say that word, to recite it, to sound it, from the beginning to the end of the meditation. It is utterly simple – say it like this: ‘Ma-ra-na-tha’. Four equally stressed syllables. Most people say the word in conjunction with their breathing, but that isn’t the essence. The essence requires that you say it right throughout your meditation time. The speed should be something that is fairly slow, fairly rhythmical – ‘Ma-ra-na-tha’. And that is all you need to know in order to meditate. You have a word, and you say your word, and you remain still.”²³

Most spiritual writers recommend doing this twice a day for twenty minutes each time.

It’s really that simple. Go ahead, give it a try for whatever time you decide.

15. Praying in Tongues/Charismatic Prayer Movement

In the 1960’s a new movement began in the church known as the charismatic prayer movement. It began at a retreat at Duquesne University of the Holy Spirit in Pittsburgh. Now there are many charismatic prayer groups all over the world.

One way of prayer you will often see at charismatic prayer meetings is praying in tongues. You can read about this strange phenomenon in the Book of Acts, chapter two. It is the event of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit on the disciples, and it says that the disciples gathered “*began to speak in other tongues*” and that people from various countries could understand them. (Verse 4)

A friend of mine told me that he went to a charismatic prayer meeting once and people were praying in tongues. He was new to this scene and not used to it at all. But a funny thing happened. He said that as they prayed in tongues, seeming to babble incoherently, he felt in his heart that he knew what was being said. He felt the message was that there is someone here at this gathering who God is calling to repent, to return to the Lord with all his heart. (That someone was himself of course.) Then the prayer leader asked if someone could give an interpretation of the tongues. He knew what was said, but did not want to talk and he kept it to himself. Then someone else in the gathering gave the interpretation, and it was the very message

²³ John Main, OSB, *Moment of Christ, The Path of Meditation*, Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., London, 1984, p. 1.

that he had in mind. Something extraordinary was going on here, but that is not unusual at charismatic prayer meetings.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul speaks of gifts of the Holy Spirit which are often used at charismatic prayer meetings: *“One may have the gift of preaching with wisdom given by the Spirit; another may have the gift of preaching instruction given him by the Spirit, and another the gift of faith given by the same Spirit; another again the gift of healing, through this one Spirit; one the power of miracles; another prophecy; another the gift of recognizing spirits; another the gift of tongues and another the ability to interpret them. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, who distributes different gifts to different people just as he chooses.”* (1 Corinthians 12:8-11) At charismatic prayer meetings there will be singing, praising the Lord spontaneously and with great feeling, and often people will break into praying in tongues.

Praying in tongues is hard to describe, but is a kind of babbling, making sounds with the tongue as a way of prayer. Saint Paul says in chapter 14 of First Corinthians that *“Anybody with the gift of tongues speaks to God, but not to other people, because nobody understands him... unless of course he offers an interpretation so that the church may get some benefit.”* (verse 2, 5b) So it cannot be understood, and that is why Paul is saying in this passage that he has a preference for the gift of prophecy to be used at prayer meetings, because prophecy is when God sends a message through a person and the message can be understood by everyone. Paul thanks God that he has the gift of tongues, and then says *“but when I am in the presence of the community I would rather say five words that mean something than ten thousand words in a tongue.”* (1 Corinthians 14:18-19)

The word charismatic comes from the word charism, which means *gift* in Greek. It is enthusiastic, expressive prayer in the Spirit, and the gifts of the Spirit are evident. It scares many people because it is not what we are used to, but we see in scripture that this kind of prayer was in the beginning of the church and if a rebirth of this way of prayer is happening in the church, then this is good news for us.

In March of 1992, Pope John Paul II had the following to say about the charismatic renewal: "At this moment in the Church's history, the Charismatic Renewal can play a significant role in promoting the much-needed defense of Christian life in societies where secularism and materialism have weakened many people's ability to respond to the Spirit and to discern God's loving call." (Address of Pope John Paul II to the ICCRO Council)

Many churches still have charismatic prayer meetings. This way of prayer is not for everyone, but it is one more of many approaches. Many people have been involved for a time, perhaps as much as a few years of weekly meetings, and then move on. For others, they find it is their preferred way and they stay with it for life. As Saint Paul says, *“There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always the same Lord, working in all sorts of different ways in different people.”* (1 Corinthians 12: 4-6)

Could this be for you? There’s only one way to find out. Put “Charismatic Prayer Meeting” in your search engine and see if there is one in your neighborhood. Maybe you would like to give it a try.

If you want to try this, it may take some time to locate such a prayer meeting. You may be gifted with this strange form of prayer, or perhaps for now you can choose a way of the fifteen ways introduced so far and make that your prayer experience for today. It’s up to you.

16. Praying Before the Eucharist

“Jesus is present and lives in our midst in the Eucharist. Let us listen to him for he is truth. Let us look at him, for he is the face of the Father. Let us love him, for he is love giving himself to his creatures. He comes to our soul so that it may disappear in him and become divine. What union, however great, can compare to this? - St. Teresa de Les Andes

If you are able to go to a church or a chapel to pray, it would be natural to go and kneel before the Blessed Sacrament. When I am before the tabernacle in prayer, I can easily be aware of the person of Jesus and all he stands for. There is always a candle burning beside the tabernacle, a symbol of the presence of God. It is hard to explain, but it is such a powerful way to pray in the presence of Christ.

At times many churches will have exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, where the Eucharist is exposed. The Eucharist is brought out of the tabernacle and put in a monstrance. Monstrance is a Latin word that means to show, and in the monstrance you can see the Blessed Sacrament through a glass that is usually in the centre of a gold stand. If you can, try spending time before the Blessed Sacrament.

“Realize that you may gain more in a quarter of an hour of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament than in all the other spiritual practices of the day.” - St. Alphonsus Liguori

You may plan to make time for praying before the Eucharist. Again, this is likely not convenient for today, so perhaps for today’s prayer you can choose one of the ways of prayer introduced so far and make that your prayer experience for today.

Part E - Where Two or Three are Gathered

“Where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them.” (Matthew 18:20)

Henry Nouwen says that we usually set out to do things, then when we can’t get it all done alone, we look for help from others; when that doesn’t work, we cry out to God for help. We need to turn that around: Start with prayer, out of which we have the depth to be able to develop true intimacy and community, and then we can go forward together to do our work in the world. This pattern is established by Jesus when he spent the entire night in prayer to his father, then chose his twelve apostles. It was with this group that he did his work.

Prayer leads to true intimacy and community. As Albert Camus said, “It is in solitude and loneliness that we find the threads that bind human community.”

Following are some spiritual practices that involve connecting with others in the journey of faith.

17. Small Christian Community

It is a great idea to have a small group of friends who get together regularly to support one another in living faith. In the early church Christians gathered in people’s houses: *“They went as a body to the Temple every day but met in their houses for the breaking of bread.”* (Acts 2:46) In the Middle East breaking bread is a sign of friendship because as you share the source of life, you share your lives with one another. The breaking of bread in houses must have been a far more intimate sharing of Eucharist than the large gatherings we tend to have in our churches today.

I think it would be a good idea for Christians to gather in smaller groups to share what is going on in their lives, reflect together on some scripture, and perhaps share a meal. It might be a good idea to come together to reflect on the readings for the coming Sunday.

Here is a suggested process for these meetings:

Opening prayer

Leader invites participants to close their eyes for a moment to reflect on their lives.

Participants share what's been going on in their lives.

Scripture reading – perhaps the Gospel of the upcoming Sunday

Share thoughts about its meaning

Petitions

Our Father

A meal or some other social activity

This is just one suggested outline. There are many ways a group could decide to operate. Some will be social justice groups, some charismatic, or maybe even a Charismatic or Taizé prayer group.²⁴ This is something that takes time to discover or start up.

Once again, for today's prayer you can choose one of the ways of prayer introduced so far and make that your prayer experience for today.

18. Spiritual Direction

“The virtuous soul that is alone and without a master is like a lone burning coal. It will grow colder rather than hotter.” (St. John of the Cross)

It helps a lot to have someone you can turn to for advice and support on your spiritual journey. Spiritual direction is a conversation to enable the person being counseled to clarify how he is living a life of faith, hope and love. It helps a person to figure out what is going on within. You have to find someone you trust to express your life of faith, to talk about what you are experiencing in prayer, as well as how your faith is being lived out in the relationships of your life.

The book *Spiritual Direction* has the following advice: “So are you looking for a spiritual director? Begin with prayer. Follow that with conversations with clergy or religious leaders in your area. Listings of local retreat centers and a regional clearinghouse of spiritual directors is

²⁴ Taizé is an ecumenical community in France that uses candles, icons and meditative chanting in their prayer. You can now find Taizé prayer practiced in many places around the world.

available online through Spiritual Direction International at www.sdiworld.org. Online spiritual directors who are available via email and phone calls and are connected with the work of Henri Nouwen are listed at the Henri Nouwen Society: www.henrinouwen.org.”²⁵

Again, this is something that takes time to arrange. For today’s prayer you can choose one of the ways of prayer introduced so far and make that your prayer experience for today.

19. The Sacrament of Reconciliation

“As the father sent me, so am I sending you. After saying this he breathed on them and said: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven.’” (John 20:21-23)

One way to experience a form of spiritual direction is to take advantage of opportunities for the sacrament of reconciliation. It used to be that we would go into a dark box and the priest on the other side of the grill would not see who was speaking to him. More recently, the sacrament has changed so that you sit in a chair across from the priest and have a conversation, although the option of hiding behind a grill is often available as well. Sitting face to face makes it more like spiritual direction, discussed above. We should realize that the priest is human just like us and understands our weaknesses and failings.

Churches publish times for the sacrament of reconciliation, usually Saturday afternoons and sometimes before mass. Sometimes you can call the church and make an appointment as well.

Here are step instructions in case you decide you would like to take advantage of this sacrament, but have forgotten how:

First of all, it is important to spend time in reflection and prayer before going to the sacrament. Relax, close your eyes, pray that the Holy Spirit will enlighten your mind. You may pray the prayer of the blind man in the gospel, *“Lord, that I might see.”*

Rest and wait in silence. See what emerges. What is going on in your mind and heart?
Where do you feel need for healing?

When you go to the priest:

1. Greet the priest and begin with the sign of the cross. The priest will say a short prayer and invite you to confess your sins.

²⁵ Henri Nouwen, *Spiritual Direction*, Harper Collins, 1996 , p. 159-160.

2. Say, “Bless me Father, for I have sinned, it has been (so many weeks, months, years) since my last confession,” and then begin to talk about what is on your mind. The priest will listen, talk to you for a while, and suggest something you could do (penance) as a sign of your willingness to grow.
3. The priest will invite you to say prayer expressing your wish to be forgiven. You may use your own words, or the following prayer:

Lord Jesus, you came among us as the friend of sinners.

By your saving death and resurrection free me from my sins.

Help me to know your love and the peace it brings.

4. The priest will bless you with these words:

“God, the Father of mercies through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

Even if you forget what to do, it really doesn’t matter. The priest will walk you through the process and remind you as you go.

This is something that takes time to arrange. Most churches have the sacrament of reconciliation available on Saturday afternoons or before mass. For today’s prayer you can choose one of the ways of prayer introduced so far and make that your prayer experience for today.

20. Mass

A friend who was on holidays with me some years ago went to Mass with us, even though he doesn’t share our faith. The music was not very good, and neither was the homily. He said to me after Mass, “You can’t tell me you got something out of that.” Well, as it turns out, I did. After communion, my daughter Janet was cuddling with me and I held her and as I did I felt a deep sense of oneness with her and Christ whom we had just received in the Eucharist. I closed my eyes and relished the richness of the experience. I remember the moment now many years later as a very meaningful moment.

Every time I receive the Eucharist, it is a time of communion with God in Christ, a foretaste of heaven. I like to sit after receiving communion, close my eyes, and let it happen. What happens is a forgetfulness of self, as I think, *“I live now, not with my own life but with the life of Christ, who lives in me.”* (Galatians 2:20) It is a very contemplative moment, a foretaste of heaven, since heaven is to be one with or “know” our God who is perfect love. *“This is eternal life: to know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”* (John 17:3) For a Catholic, the Eucharist is the prime way we renew our unity with Christ, and unity with Christ is what the Christian life is all about.

For today, simply make a commitment to go to mass this Sunday, or whenever you can. Offer this intention to God and God will surely bless it. You may have a favorite form of prayer from the many introduced so far, so choose one of them for your prayer today.

F – So what do you think?

21. Journaling

To journal after the Examine Awareness or after time with scripture can be very helpful. Another good time to write is when you feel there is a lot on your mind and you need to figure things out or make an important decision.

If you have an important decision to make, prayer helps. It also helps to help to make a chart in which you list the reasons for and against a few different choices.

Go to university after high school		Join the Navy for a year before university	
pros	cons	pros	cons

Just getting it down on paper can give so much clarity.

Writing of your experiences of life and God and life is a way to get your thoughts together for yourself, and can also be helpful in leading you to share your thoughts with others, perhaps your spiritual director if you have one.

Why not take some time to journal right now. You may want to make it a regular practice, a way of helping to get your thoughts together as you reflect. But right now would be a good time

to write about which forms of prayer you think are best for you. After each of the first thirteen forms of prayer was introduced, I suggested you give it a try. Which types of prayer have you been choosing? Which types of prayer are you drawn to?

What do you think should be your habit of prayer? What type of prayer will you commit to, when and where? Make it our own. No need to be too stringent and get everything just “right”. For instance, I begin my day with the gospel of the day and then my Divine office. Then on the way to work I like to pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, but I end with one of my favorite prayers, “Pour forth we beseech you...” from the Angelus. I am privileged to work beside a chapel, so I often go before the Blessed Sacrament. I also see a spiritual director once a month and regularly go to mass and the sacrament of reconciliation. These are my spiritual practices. What will yours be? Take some time now to write and make a plan. Then try your best to practice what you say you will.

“The Spiritual Life is not a theory. We have to live it.”²⁶

Conclusion

I began this book with the statement that you are free. You were invited to make a choice to take your time and reflect and learn about various spiritual practices. These practices are important if we are to “feed the good wolf”, if we are to nurture love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:5)

If you have been reading a chapter a day, you may even have developed a habit of stopping regularly for prayer.

In the Gospel of John there is a story of a woman who encounters Jesus. She is overwhelmed by the experience and goes off to tell the whole town about him. They believed in him on the strength of her testimony and so they came and met him for themselves. Then they said to the woman, “*Now we no longer believe because of what you told us; we have heard him ourselves and we know that he really is the savior of the world.*” (John 4:42) It is my hope that the ways of prayer in this book will lead you to your own encounter. What happens from here is between you and God. It is your move. You are free.

²⁶ The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, quoted in *The Spirituality of Imperfection*, by Ernest Kurtz and Katherine Ketcham, Bantam Books, 2002, p. 103.

Appendix – Divine Office Night Prayer

Sunday

A prayer for help in praying:

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Examination of Conscience:

Pray the prayer of the blind man, "Lord, that I might see."
Then close your eyes. Relax and wait. See what comes to mind from your day.
Pray about what comes to mind – "*Give your cares to God, for God cares for you.*" (1 Peter 5:7)
(Or if praying with someone, share your insight/memory and then begin the rest of night prayer)

Antiphon: Night holds no terrors for me sleeping under God's wings.

Psalm 91

You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, Say to the LORD, "My refuge and fortress, my God in whom I trust."

God will rescue you from the fowler's snare, from the destroying plague,
Will shelter you with pinions, spread wings that you may take refuge; God's faithfulness is a protecting shield.

You shall not fear the terror of the night nor the arrow that flies by day,
Nor the pestilence that roams in darkness, nor the plague that ravages at noon.

Though a thousand fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, near you it shall not come.
You need simply watch; the punishment of the wicked you will see.

You have the LORD for your refuge; you have made the Most High your stronghold.
No evil shall befall you, no affliction come near your tent.
For God commands the angels to guard you in all your ways.

With their hands they shall support you, lest you strike your foot against a stone.

You shall tread upon the asp and the viper, trample the lion and the dragon.

Whoever clings to me I will deliver; whoever knows my name I will set on high.
All who call upon me I will answer; I will be with them in distress; I will deliver them and give them honor.

With length of days I will satisfy them and show them my saving power.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Psalm prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, when tempted by the devil, you remained loyal to your Father whose angels watched over you at his command. Guard your Church and keep us safe from the plague of sin so that we may remain loyal to the day we enjoy your salvation and your glory.

A reading from the Book of Revelation (22:4-5)

They will look upon his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. Night will be no more, nor will they need light from lamp or sun, for the Lord God shall give them light, and they shall reign forever and ever.

Responsory

Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.
- Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.
You have redeemed us, Lord God of truth.
- I commend my spirit.
Glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit
- Into your hands, lord, I commend my spirit.

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

*Lord, now you let your servant go in peace;
Your word has been fulfilled:
My own eyes have seen the salvation
Which you have prepared in the sight of every people:
A light to reveal you to the nations
And the glory of your people Israel. (Luke 2:29-32)*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

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

Prayer:

Lord,
We have celebrated today
The mystery of the rising of Christ to new life.
May we now rest in your peace,
Safe from all that could harm us,
And rise again refreshed and joyful,
To praise you throughout another day.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Conclusion:

May the all-powerful Lord grant us a restful night and a peaceful death.
- Amen.

Hail Mary

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

Monday

A prayer for help in praying:

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Examination of Conscience:

Pray the prayer of the blind man, "Lord, that I might see."
Then close your eyes. Relax and wait. See what comes to mind from your day.
Pray about what comes to mind. – "*Give your cares to God, for God cares for you.*" (1 Peter 5:7) (Or if praying with someone, share your insight/memory and then begin the rest of night prayer)

Antiphon: O Lord, our God, unwearied is your love for us.

Psalm 86

Hear me, LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and oppressed.
Preserve my life, for I am loyal; save your servant who trusts in you.
You are my God; pity me, Lord; to you I call all the day.
Gladden the soul of your servant; to you, Lord, I lift up my soul.

Lord, you are kind and forgiving, most loving to all who call on you.
LORD, hear my prayer; listen to my cry for help.
In this time of trouble I call, for you will answer me.
None among the gods can equal you, O Lord; nor can their deeds compare to yours.

All the nations you have made shall come to bow before you, Lord, and give honor to your name.

For you are great and do wondrous deeds; and you alone are God.
Teach me, LORD, your way that I may walk in your truth, single-hearted and revering your name.
I will praise you with all my heart, glorify your name forever, Lord my God.

Your love for me is great; you have rescued me from the depths of Sheol.
O God, the arrogant have risen against me; a ruthless band has sought my life; to you they pay no heed.
But you, Lord, are a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, most loving and true.

Turn to me, have pity on me; give your strength to your servant; save this child of your handmaid.

Give me a sign of your favor: make my enemies see, to their confusion, that you, LORD, help and comfort me.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Psalm prayer: God of mercy and goodness, when Christ called out to you in torment, you heard him and gave him victory over death because of his love for you. We already know the affection you have for us; fill us with a greater love of your name and we will proclaim you more boldly before all and happily lead them to celebrate your glory.

A reading from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians (5:9-10)

For God did not destine us for wrath, but to gain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live together with him.

Responsory

Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.
- Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.
You have redeemed us, Lord God of truth.
- I commend my spirit.
Glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit
- Into your hands, lord, I commend my spirit.

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

*Lord, now you let your servant go in peace;
Your word has been fulfilled:
My own eyes have seen the salvation
Which you have prepared in the sight of every people:
A light to reveal you to the nations
And the glory of your people Israel. (Luke 2:29-32)*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

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

Prayer:

Lord,
Give our bodies restful sleep
And let the work we have done today
Bear fruit in eternal life.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Conclusion:

May the all-powerful Lord grant us a restful night and a peaceful death.
- Amen.

Hail Mary

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

Tuesday

A prayer for help in praying:

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Examination of Conscience:

Pray the prayer of the blind man, "Lord, that I might see."
Then close your eyes. Relax and wait. See what comes to mind from your day.
Pray about what comes to mind. – "Give your cares to God, for God cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7) (Or if praying with someone, share your insight/memory and then begin the rest of night prayer)

Antiphon: Do not hide your face from me; in you I put my trust.

Psalm 143:1-11

LORD, hear my prayer; in your faithfulness listen to my pleading; answer me in your justice.
Do not enter into judgment with your servant; before you no living being can be just.

The enemy has pursued me; they have crushed my life to the ground. They have left me in
darkness like those long dead.
My spirit is faint within me; my heart is dismayed.

I remember the days of old; I ponder all your deeds; the works of your hands I recall.
I stretch out my hands to you; I thirst for you like a parched land.

Hasten to answer me, LORD; for my spirit fails me. Do not hide your face from me, lest I
become like those descending to the pit.
At dawn let me hear of your kindness, for in you I trust. Show me the path I should walk, for to
you I entrust my life.

Rescue me, LORD, from my foes, for in you I hope.
Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. May your kind spirit guide me on ground that is
level.

For your name's sake, LORD, give me life; in your justice lead me out of distress.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,

As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Psalm prayer: Lord Jesus, early in the morning of your resurrection, you made your love known and brought the first light of dawn to those who dwell in darkness. Your death has opened a path for us. Do not enter into judgment with your servants; let your good Spirit guide us together into the land of justice.

A reading from the first letter of Peter (5:8-9a)

Be sober and vigilant. Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in faith.

Responsory

Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.
- Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.
You have redeemed us, Lord God of truth.
- I commend my spirit.
Glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit
- Into your hands, lord, I commend my spirit.

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

*Lord, now you let your servant go in peace;
Your word has been fulfilled:
My own eyes have seen the salvation
Which you have prepared in the sight of every people:
A light to reveal you to the nations
And the glory of your people Israel. (Luke 2:29-32)*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

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

Prayer:

Lord,
Fill this night with your radiance.
May we sleep in peace and rise with joy

To welcome the light of a new day in your name.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Conclusion:

May the all-powerful Lord grant us a restful night and a peaceful death.
- Amen.

Hail Mary

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

Wednesday

A prayer for help in praying:

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Examination of Conscience:

Pray the prayer of the blind man, "Lord, that I might see."
Then close your eyes. Relax and wait. See what comes to mind from your day.
Pray about what comes to mind. – "*Give your cares to God, for God cares for you.*" (1 Peter 5:7) (Or if praying with someone, share your insight/memory and then begin the rest of night prayer)

Antiphon: Lord God, be my refuge and my strength.

Psalm 31:1-6

Jesus prayed this psalm on the cross: "*Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.*" (Luke 23:46)

In you, LORD, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame. In your justice deliver me;
incline your ear to me; make haste to rescue me! Be my rock of refuge, a stronghold to save me.

You are my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead and guide me.
Free me from the net they have set for me, for you are my refuge.

Into your hands I commend my spirit; you will redeem me, LORD, faithful God.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Psalm prayer: God of might and compassion, you sent your Word into the world, a watchman to announce the dawn of salvation. Listen to your church pleading with you. Respond to her trust, and pour out in her the fullness of your redeeming grace.

A reading from Paul's letter to the Ephesians (4:26-27)

Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun set on your anger, and do not leave room for the devil.

Responsory

Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.

- Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.

You have redeemed us, Lord God of truth.

- I commend my spirit.

Glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

- Into your hands, lord, I commend my spirit.

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

Lord, now you let your servant go in peace;

Your word has been fulfilled:

My own eyes have seen the salvation

Which you have prepared in the sight of every people:

A light to reveal you to the nations

And the glory of your people Israel. (Luke 2:29-32)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,

As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

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

Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ,

You have given your followers

An example of gentleness and humility,

A task that is easy, a burden that is light.

Accept the prayers and work of this day,

And give us the rest that will strengthen us

To render more faithful service to you

Who live and reign for ever and ever.

Conclusion:

May the all-powerful Lord grant us a restful night and a peaceful death.

- Amen.

Hail Mary

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

Thursday

A prayer for help in praying:

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Examination of Conscience:

Pray the prayer of the blind man, "Lord, that I might see."
Then close your eyes. Relax and wait. See what comes to mind from your day.
Pray about what comes to mind. – "*Give your cares to God, for God cares for you.*" (1 Peter 5:7) (Or if praying with someone, share your insight/memory and then begin the rest of night prayer)

Antiphon: In you, my God, my body will rest in hope.

Psalm 16

Keep me safe, O God; in you I take refuge
I say to the Lord, you are my Lord, you are my only good.

Worthless are all the false gods of the land. Accursed are all who delight in them.
They multiply their sorrows who court other gods. Blood libations to them I will not pour out,
nor will I take their names upon my lips.

LORD, my allotted portion and my cup, you have made my destiny secure.
Pleasant places were measured out for me; fair to me indeed is my inheritance.

I bless the LORD who counsels me; even at night my heart exhorts me.
I keep the LORD always before me; with the Lord at my right, I shall never be shaken.

Therefore my heart is glad, my soul rejoices; my body also dwells secure,
For you will not abandon me to Sheol, nor let your faithful servant see the pit.

You will show me the path to life, abounding joy in your presence, the delights at your right
hand forever.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Psalm prayer: Lord Jesus, uphold those who hope in you and give us your counsel, so that we may know the joy of your resurrection and deserve to be among the saints at your right hand.

A reading from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians (5:23)

May the God of peace himself make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Responsory

Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.
- Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.
You have redeemed us, Lord God of truth.
- I commend my spirit.
Glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit
- Into your hands, lord, I commend my spirit.

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

*Lord, now you let your servant go in peace;
Your word has been fulfilled:
My own eyes have seen the salvation
Which you have prepared in the sight of every people:
A light to reveal you to the nations
And the glory of your people Israel. (Luke 2:29-32)*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

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

Prayer:

Lord God,
Send peaceful sleep
To refresh our tired bodies.
May your help always renew us
And keep us strong in your service.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Conclusion:

May the all-powerful Lord grant us a restful night and a peaceful death.

- Amen.

Hail Mary

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

Friday

A prayer for help in praying:

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Examination of Conscience:

Pray the prayer of the blind man, "Lord, that I might see."
Then close your eyes. Relax and wait. See what comes to mind from your day.
Pray about what comes to mind. – "Give your cares to God, for God cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7) (Or if praying with someone, share your insight/memory and then begin the rest of night prayer)

Antiphon: Day and night I cry to you, my God.

Psalm 88

LORD, my God, I call out by day; at night I cry aloud in your presence.
Let my prayer come before you; incline your ear to my cry.
For my soul is filled with troubles; my life draws near to Sheol.
I am reckoned with those who go down to the pit; I am weak, without strength.

Like one among the dead, with the slain who lie in the grave.
You remember them no more; they are cut off from your care.
You plunged me into the bottom of the pit, into the darkness of the abyss.
Your wrath lies heavy upon me; all your waves crash over me. Selah
Because of you my friends shun me; you make me loathsome to them; Caged in, I cannot escape;
my eyes grow dim from trouble. All day I call on you, LORD; I stretch out my hands to you.

Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the shades arise and praise you? Selah
Is your love proclaimed in the grave, your fidelity in the tomb?
Are your marvels declared in the darkness, your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion?
But I cry out to you, LORD; in the morning my prayer comes before you.

Why do you reject me, LORD? Why hide your face from me?
I am mortally afflicted since youth; lifeless, I suffer your terrible blows.
Your wrath has swept over me; your terrors have reduced me to silence.
All the day they surge round like a flood; from every side they close in on me.
Because of you companions shun me; my only friend is darkness.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Psalm prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, you chose to suffer and be overwhelmed by death in order to open the gates of death in triumph. Stay with us to help us on our pilgrimage; free us from all evil by the power of your resurrection. In the company of your saints, and constantly remembering your love for us, may we sing of your wonders in our Father's house.

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah (14:9)

You are in our midst, O LORD, your name we bear: do not forsake us!

Responsory

Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.
- Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.
You have redeemed us, Lord God of truth.
- I commend my spirit.
Glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit
- Into your hands, lord, I commend my spirit.

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

*Lord, now you let your servant go in peace;
Your word has been fulfilled:
My own eyes have seen the salvation
Which you have prepared in the sight of every people:
A light to reveal you to the nations
And the glory of your people Israel. (Luke 2:29-32)*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

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

Prayer:

All powerful God,
Keep us united with your Son
In his death and burial
So that we may rise to new life with him,
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Conclusion:

May the all-powerful Lord grant us a restful night and a peaceful death.
- Amen.

Hail Mary

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

Saturday

A prayer for help in praying:

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Examination of Conscience:

Pray the prayer of the blind man, "Lord, that I might see."
Then close your eyes. Relax and wait. See what comes to mind from your day.
Pray about what comes to mind. – "*Give your cares to God, for God cares for you.*" (1 Peter 5:7) (Or if praying with someone, share your insight/memory and then begin the rest of night prayer)

Antiphon: Have mercy, Lord, and hear my prayer.

Psalm 4

Answer when I call, my saving God. In my troubles, you cleared a way; show me favor; hear my prayer.

How long will you people mock my honor, love what is worthless, chase after lies?

Know that the LORD works wonders for the faithful; the LORD hears when I call out.
Tremble and do not sin; upon your beds ponder in silence.

Offer fitting sacrifice and trust in the LORD.

Many say, "May we see better times! LORD, show us the light of your face!" Selah

But you have given my heart more joy than they have when grain and wine abound.
In peace I shall both lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me secure.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Psalm prayer: You consoled your Son in his anguish and released him from the darkness of the grave. Lord, turn your face toward us that we may sleep in your peace and rise in your light.

A reading from the Book of Deuteronomy (6:4-7)

Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone! Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today.

Drill them into your children. Speak of them at home and abroad, whether you are busy or at rest.

Responsory

Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.

- Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.

You have redeemed us, Lord God of truth.

- I commend my spirit.

Glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

- Into your hands, lord, I commend my spirit.

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

Lord, now you let your servant go in peace;

Your word has been fulfilled:

My own eyes have seen the salvation

Which you have prepared in the sight of every people:

A light to reveal you to the nations

And the glory of your people Israel. (Luke 2:29-32)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,

As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

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

Prayer:

Lord,

We beg you to visit this house

And banish from it

All the deadly power of the enemy.

May your holy angels dwell here

To keep us in peace,

And may your blessing be upon us always.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Conclusion:

May the all-powerful Lord grant us a restful night and a peaceful death.

- Amen.

Hail Mary

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

Appendix II - Sunday Gospel Readings

It is a great idea to spend some time with the readings that will be proclaimed at Sunday mass. Each year is devoted to a different Gospel, Matthew, Mark or Luke. The Gospel of John appears throughout each of the three years, especially during Lent and Easter.

The following chart provides all the Sunday readings through the three year cycle. The Liturgical year begins with the season of Advent, a word that means coming. The first Sunday of Advent is four Sundays before Christmas day.

Advent and Christmas		
Year A 2010, 2013, 2016, 2019, 2022, 2025, 2028, 2031, 2034...	Year B 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020, 2023, 2026, 2029, 2032, 2035...	Year C 2012, 2015, 2018, 2021, 2024, 2027, 2030, 2033, 2036...
<p>Advent</p> <p>1st Sunday - Matthew 24:37-44 2nd Sunday – Matthew 3:1-12 3rd Sunday – Matthew 11:2-11 4th Sunday – Matthew 1:18-24</p> <p>Christmas</p> <p>- Midnight mass: Luke 2:1-14 - Dawn mass: Luke 2:15-20 - Day mass: John 1:1-18 First Sunday after Christmas - Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23 Second Sunday after Christmas – John 1:1-18 Third Sunday after Christmas; Epiphany – Matthew 2:1-12</p>	<p>Advent</p> <p>1st Sunday - Mark 13:33-37 2nd Sunday – Mark 1:1-8 3rd Sunday – John 1:6-8,19-28 4th Sunday – Luke 1:26-38</p> <p>Christmas</p> <p>- Midnight mass: Luke 2:1-14 - Dawn mass: Luke 2:15-20 - Day mass: John 1:1-18 First Sunday after Christmas – Luke 2:22-40 Second Sunday after Christmas – John 1:1-18 Third Sunday after Christmas; Epiphany – Matthew 2:1-12</p>	<p>Advent</p> <p>1st Sunday - Luke 21:25-28,34-36 2nd Sunday – Luke 3:1-6 3rd Sunday – Luke 3:10-18 4th Sunday – Luke 1:39-45</p> <p>Christmas</p> <p>- Midnight mass: Luke 2:1-14 - Dawn mass: Luke 2:15-20 - Day mass: John 1:1-18 First Sunday after Christmas – Luke 2:41-52 Second Sunday after Christmas – John 1:1-18 Third Sunday after Christmas; Epiphany – Matthew 2:1-12</p>

“Ordinary Time” begins the first Sunday after the three weeks of Christmas.

These years below for Lent and Easter are a year after the years given above for Advent because Advent occurs at the end of the year in December, although it is the same liturgical year.

Ordinary Time, Lent and Easter are after the Christmas season, which is the following year.

Ordinary Time

Year A, Matthew 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020, 2023, 2026...	Year B, Mark 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2021, 2024, 2027...	Year C, Luke 2010, 2013, 2016, 2019, 2022, 2025, 2028...
Sunday 1... Matthew 3:13-17	Sunday 1... Mark 1:7-11	Sunday 1... Luke 3:15-16,21-22
Sunday 2... John 1:29-34	Sunday 2... John 1: 35-42	Sunday 2... John 2: 1-11
Sunday 3... Matthew 4:12-23	Sunday 3... Mark 1: 14-20	Sunday 3... Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21
Sunday 4... Matthew 5:1-12	Sunday 4... Mark 1: 21-28	Sunday 4... Luke 4:21-30
Sunday 5... Matthew 5:13-16	Sunday 5... Mark 1: 29-39	Sunday 5... Luke 5:1-11
Sunday 6... Matthew 5:17-37	Sunday 6... Mark 1:40-45	Sunday 6... Luke 6:17, 20-26
Sunday 7... Matthew 5:38-48	Sunday 7... Mark 2:1-12	Sunday 7... Luke 6:27-38
Sunday 8... Matthew 6:24-34	Sunday 8... Mark 2: 18-22	Sunday 8... Luke 6:39-45
Sunday 9... Matthew 7:21-27	Sunday 9... Mark 2:23-3:6	Sunday 9... Luke 7:1-10
Sunday 10... Matthew 9:9-13	Sunday 10... Mark 3: 20-35	Sunday 10... Luke 7:11-17
Sunday 11... Matthew 9:36-10:8	Sunday 11... Mark 4: 26-34	Sunday 11... Luke 7:36 – 8:3
Sunday 12... Matthew 10:26-33	Sunday 12... Mark 4: 35-41	Sunday 12... Luke 9:18-24
Sunday 13... Matthew 10:37-42	Sunday 13... Mark 5: 21-43	Sunday 13... Luke 9:51-62
Sunday 14... Matthew 11:25-30	Sunday 14... Mark 6: 1-6	Sunday 14... Luke 10:1-12, 17-20
Sunday 15... Matthew 13:1-23	Sunday 15... Mark 6: 7-13	Sunday 15... Luke 10:25-37
Sunday 16... Matthew 13:24-43	Sunday 16... Mark 6: 30-34	Sunday 16... Luke 10:38-42
Sunday 17... Matthew 13:44-52	Sunday 17... John 6:1-15	Sunday 17... Luke 11:1-13
Sunday 18... Matthew 14:13-21	Sunday 18... John 6: 24-35	Sunday 18... Luke 12;13-21
Sunday 19... Matthew 14:22-33	Sunday 19... John 6:41- 51	Sunday 19... Luke 12:32-48
Sunday 20... Matthew 15:21-28	Sunday 20... John 6: 51-58	Sunday 20... Luke 12:49-53
Sunday 21... Matthew 16:13-20	Sunday 21... John 6: 60-69	Sunday 21... Luke 13:22-30
Sunday 22... Matthew 16:21-27	Sunday 22... Mark 7:8,14-15,21,23	Sunday 22... Luke 14:1,7-14
Sunday 23... Matthew 18:15-20	Sunday 23... Mark 7: 31-37	Sunday 23... Luke 14:25-33
Sunday 24... Matthew 18:21-35	Sunday 24... Mark 8: 27-35	Sunday 24... Luke 15:1-32
Sunday 25... Matthew 20:1-16	Sunday 25... Mark 9: 30-37	Sunday 25... Luke 16:1-13
Sunday 26... Matthew 21:28-32	Sunday 26... Mark 9:8-43,45,47-48	Sunday 26... Luke 16:19-31
Sunday 27... Matthew 21:33-43	Sunday 27... Mark 10: 2-16	Sunday 27... Luke 17:5-10
Sunday 28... Matthew 22:1-14	Sunday 28... Mark 10: 17-30	Sunday 28... Luke 17:11-19
Sunday 29... Matthew 22:15-21	Sunday 29... Mark 10: 35-45	Sunday 29... Luke 18:1-8
Sunday 30... Matthew 22:34-40	Sunday 30... Mark 10: 46-52	Sunday 30... Luke 18:9-14
Sunday 31... Matthew 23:1-12	Sunday 31... Mark 12: 28-34	Sunday 31... Luke 19:1-10
Sunday 32... Matthew 25:1-13	Sunday 32... Mark 12: 38-44	Sunday 32... Luke 20:27-38
Sunday 33... Matthew 25:14-30	Sunday 33... Mark 13: 24-32	Sunday 33... Luke 21:5-19
Sunday 34... Matthew 25:31-46	Sunday 34... John 18: 33-37	Sunday 34... Luke 23:35-43

Easter Sunday is on the first Sunday after the first full moon of Spring. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, six and a half weeks before Easter. The Sunday readings can change at times in Lent because of special Sunday readings if there are adults going through the process of becoming Christians. This process is called the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

Lent and Easter		
Year A 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020, 2023, 2026...	Year B 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2021, 2024, 2027...	Year C 2010, 2013, 2016, 2019, 2022, 2025, 2028...
<p>Lent</p> <p>1st Sunday – Matthew 4:1-11 2nd Sunday – Matthew 17:1-9 3rd Sunday – John 4:5-42 4th Sunday – John 9:1-41 5th Sunday – John 11:1-45 Palm Sunday – Matthew 21:1-11 and 26:14 – 27:66 Holy Thursday – John 13:1-15 Good Friday – John 18:1 – 19:42</p> <p>Easter</p> <p>Easter Vigil – Matthew 28:1-10 Easter Sunday – John 20:1-9 2nd Sunday – John 20:19-31 3rd Sunday – Luke 24:13-35 4th Sunday – John 10:1-10 5th Sunday – John 14:1-12 6th Sunday – John 14:15-21 7th Sunday – Matthew 28:16-20 Pentecost Vigil – John 7:37-39 Pentecost Sunday – John 20:19-23 (1st reading is always the story of Pentecost told in Acts 2:1-11)</p>	<p>Lent</p> <p>1st Sunday – Mark 1:12-15 2nd Sunday – Mark 9:2-10 3rd Sunday – John 2:13-25 4th Sunday – John 3:14-21 5th Sunday – John 12:20-33 Palm Sunday – Mark 11:1-10 and 14:1 – 15:47 Holy Thursday – John 13:1-15 Good Friday – John 18:1 – 19:42</p> <p>Easter</p> <p>Easter Vigil – Mark 16:1-7 Easter Sunday – John 20:1-9 2nd Sunday – John 20:19-31 3rd Sunday – Luke 24:35-48 4th Sunday – John 10:11-18 5th Sunday – John 15:1-8 6th Sunday – John 15:9-17 7th Sunday – Mark 16:15-20 Pentecost Vigil – John 7:37-39 Pentecost Sunday - John 20:19-23 or 15:26-27;16:12-15</p>	<p>Lent</p> <p>1st Sunday – Luke 4:1-13 2nd Sunday – Luke 9:28b-36 3rd Sunday – Luke 13:1-9 4th Sunday – Luke 15:1-3, 11-32 5th Sunday – John 8:1-11 Palm Sunday – Luke 19:28-40 and 22:14 – 23:56 Holy Thursday – John 13:1-15 Good Friday – John 18:1 – 19:42</p> <p>Easter</p> <p>Easter Vigil – Luke 24:1-12 Easter Sunday – John 20:1-9 2nd Sunday – John 20:19-31 3rd Sunday – John 21:1-19 4th Sunday – John 10:27-30 5th Sunday – John 13:31-35 6th Sunday – John 14:23-29 7th Sunday – Luke 24:46-53 Pentecost Vigil – John 7:37-39 Pentecost Sunday – John 20:19-23 or 14:15-16, 23b-26</p>

