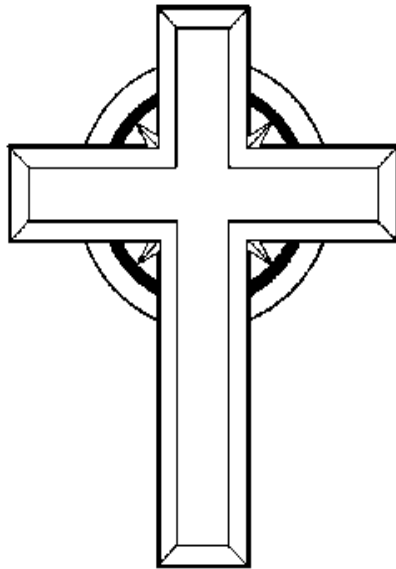


Section 8

LITURGY



"I tell you if two of you on earth agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three people are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

Matthew 18:19-20

Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board

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LITURGY

Liturgy, the collective work of acknowledging and responding to God's presence among us through prayer and faith sharing, is an essential element in the life of a Catholic School Council.

From the very beginning, those who were baptized "devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the community, to the breaking of the bread, and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). The Acts of the Apostles show us many instances of the Christian community praying together for the good of all.

Liturgy serves to centre the work of the Catholic School Council and maintain the critical focus on the vocational aspect of the work.

Catholic School Councils have access to a number of resources both at the local school and on-line. Of particular significance are the resources made available annually to support the thematic focus of CATHOLIC EDUCATION WEEK. These resources are found on-line at:

<http://www.ocsta.on.ca/resources/catholic-education-week-resources/>

PRAY THE DAY: A SIMPLE MODEL FOR LEADING GROUPS IN PRAYER

Often, as Catholic School leaders, we are called upon to open a meeting or a session with a prayer or a short liturgy. This can seem daunting, as we are being asked to publicly assume the role of the faith leader of the gathered community- a role which many of us find uncomfortable. On one hand, it may be tempting to turn to standard prayers like the “Our Father” or “Hail Mary” or perhaps even a pre-written prayer service. On the other, it may seem easier to delegate the prayer to a Chaplaincy Leader, Faith Ambassador or other willing staff member. We suggest to you that you resist both these impulses. Leading prayer with groups is a wonderful opportunity to build community, expand the optic of your role, and to call God’s blessing on the work that is about to take place.

This needn’t be a burden. This module presents a simple model that will add both meaning and simplicity to your opening prayers. Put simply, the underlying principle is: Pray the Day! The following box presents an outline of the “Pray the Day” format. The format uses seven steps.

- 1. Collect (You, Who, Do, Through)**
- 2. Reading of the Day**
- 3. Work of the People**
- 4. Petitions**
- 5. Our Father**
- 6. Concluding Prayer**
- 7. Sign of Peace**

What does ‘Pray the Day’ mean? Well, simply put, it means that we ask God for what we need at this *time*, in this *place* and for this *purpose*. There will always be an objective for your gathering, whether it be a council meeting, a PD session or a social. If nothing else happens, your prayer should ask God to support you in that gathering’s major objective. A clear way to do this is by using the prayer format of the “Collect” prayer. This should be your opening prayer.

Step 1: The Collect Prayer

The format of a Collect prayer is always the same. It looks like:

***You
Who
Do
Through***

Consider an example that could be used before a council meeting about school discipline and student conduct:

<i>"God of justice and compassion,</i>	1. You
<i>Who gave us commandments and beatitudes for our moral guidance,</i>	2. Who
<i>Be with us today, and help us to discern which laws and guidelines best serve our community.</i>	3. Do.
<i>We ask this through Christ, our Lord." "Amen"</i>	4. Through

- You:***
Call God (or Jesus) by a title or descriptor that reflects that aspect of God that you would like to call forth. Here we would like to focus on justice. In the case of a memorial we might use a descriptor like "Merciful" or "Consoling."
- Who:***
This is the tricky one. Recall a time in scripture where God (or Jesus) acted in a way similar to what you would like to ask for today. In our example, we knew we wanted to talk about rules and laws, so we recalled 2 times where God spoke about these things- the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes. Once again, if we were in a memorial setting, we might talk about the time when Jesus consoled the sisters of Lazarus, or when he healed the centurion's child.

3. **Do:**
This is the easiest one (and might be the one you want to think of first!) Ask God to be active in your gathering in some specific way. In our example we have asked God to help us discern. But in a different setting we might have asked God to give us comfort, or open our hearts to new learning, or even to strengthen us for tough times ahead.
4. **Through:**
Finally, we conclude our prayer with an acclamation of intercession. In the example, we have used the simplest one, “We ask this through Christ, Our Lord.” But you might be more comfortable asking for the intercession of the Holy Spirit: “We ask this through the power of your Spirit.” And if you’re really feeling adventurous, you could use, “We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.”

The idea of a Collect prayer however is that it can be done quickly and spontaneously, even on the spot. Hopefully the formula “You, Who, Do, Through” will be a useful memory aid.

Step 2: Reading of the Day

Every day of the year, the Church offers us a set of readings. These readings are the same throughout the world Church. Regardless of where you are, and in what language you are speaking, today’s reading will be the same. This is part of the reason that we should use the reading of the day whenever possible:

It is meant for *all* of us.

By reading the reading of the day, we are plugging ourselves in to the world Church. There can be a tremendous feeling of solidarity knowing that every Catholic, everywhere in the world is hearing this particular reading, regardless of their situation. Moreover, the reading of the day calls our attention to the *liturgical season* and any relevant feast days that we might want to highlight. But there is more to it.

Scripture is more than just a book- it is God’s revelation. As such, we believe that every time we read it, we are meant to find our own particular meaning for our own particular lives. In other words:

It is meant for *each* of us.

As we grow and mature, and as our state of life changes, we may hear the same scripture very differently. Our hearing of a piece of scripture is intimately bound to our life circumstances, our moods and our feelings. It may even have special relevance when read in the context of a particular school function or event. By reading scripture together, we invite our colleagues to reflect on both their shared faith story, but also on their unique faith story.

Practically speaking, all you need for this is a missalette. But failing this, modern technology can always help us out with a free app for Smartphones at: <https://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/living-with-christ/id532160531?mt=8> or a conventional website (Living with Christ) <http://novalis.rightbrainmedia.com/portals/11/Novalis/mobile.aspx?page=readings>

Step 3: The Work of the People

This is the actual meaning of the word liturgy. Liturgy (*leitourgia*) is a Greek composite word which means “the work of the people.” This should be a reminder to us that in every liturgical setting, the people should actually do something. This often takes the form of communal responses. But for our purposes it can and should reflect something more thoughtful. One of the easiest ways to involve the whole group is to invite them to share a bit about what they got out of the previous reading. Two guiding questions may prove helpful, as they are simple re-statements of the observations offered in step #2. These are:

What do you think the reading is saying to us?

What do you think the reading is saying to you?

In this way we invite our gathered groups into a deeper contemplation of both the mystery of scripture, and of the potential relevance for the scripture for today’s gathering. These reflections need not be shared with the whole group but, depending on who is there, you may want to allow that opportunity. This empowers committee members to take pride and ownership in demonstrating their own interpretive skills.

Step 4: Petitions

It is always appropriate when we ‘pray the day’ to bring the petitions of the people forward in prayer. Again, as the prayer leader, you may wish to have a few petitions in mind, or it might be more appropriate to let the petitions come forth from the assembled group. This serves several important functions. It alerts the community to those issues that many individuals carry quietly with them, and therefore increases empathy within the group. It also gives the group the opportunity to offer immediate comfort and prayer to the individuals in need. When a petition is offered by an individual in a group, it is always an act of trust. So, even before the group response, the very offering of the prayer says that the petitioner feels a sense of trust in the assembled group. This is a feeling worth cultivating.

Step 5: Lord's Prayer

Step 6: Summary or Concluding Prayer

In no more than one or two phrases, the presider (namely you!) should offer a short summary of the key aspects of the liturgy. Although this does involve thinking on your feet a bit, there should be a lot to choose from. You have heard scripture, you have heard some reflections, some petitions, and you still have your meeting to get to. The key phrase that you want to include here is “Thank-You.” It is your opportunity to thank God in advance for God’s work today, but also to offer a public Thank-you for the gift of your gathered community and the work that they do.

Step 7: Sign of Peace

Why not conclude with a physical gesture of goodwill? It may take a few moments to bring the group back to order, but in the interest of building up fellowship and morale, it may be a risk worth taking.

Let us now conclude with a summary of the key points. Once you get used to this format, all you will need to remember to bring is the reading of the day. The rest will emerge naturally from the flow of the liturgy. Best of luck in your ministry.

- 1. Collect (*You, Who, Do, Through*)**
- 2. Reading of the Day**
- 3. Work of the People**
- 4. Petitions**
- 5. Our Father**
- 6. Concluding Prayer**
- 7. Sign of Peace**

(“Pray the Day” Module by M. Harrison 2011)

OPENING PRAYER SERVICE

Invitation to Prayer

LEADER: As God's holy people we recall the promise that whenever two or three of us are gathered in God's name that our God is present among us. Remembering this Presence let us begin our prayer as we should begin all that we do – In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Gathering Hymn (Two Suggestions Follow)

Option 1: Gather Us In By Marty Haugen (CBW III, # 587)

Verse 1:

Here in this place, new light is streaming,
Now is the darkness vanished away;
See, in this space, our fears and our
dreamings,
Brought here to you in the light of this day.

Chorus:

Gather us in, the lost and forsaken,
Gather us in, the blind and the lame;
Call to us now, and we shall awaken,
We shall arise at the sound of our name.

Verse 2:

We are the young, our lives are a mystery;
We are the old, who yearn for your face;
We have been sung through-out all of
hist'ry,
Called to be light to the whole human race.

Chorus:

Gather us in, the rich and the haughty,
Gather us in, the proud and the strong;
Give us a heart so meek and so lowly,
Give us the courage to enter the song.

Verse 4:

Not in the dark of the buildings confining,
Not in some heaven, light years away;
But here in this place, the new light is
shining,
Now is the kingdom, now is the day.

Chorus:

Gather us in, and hold us for ever,
Gather us in, and make us your own;
Gather us in, all people together,
Fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

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Option #2: One Bread, One Body

By John Foley

(Gather Comprehensive- 2nd edition, #813)

Chorus:

One bread, one body, one Lord of all,
One cup of blessing which we bless.
And we, though many, throughout the earth,
We are one body in this one Lord.

Verse 3:

Grain for the fields, scattered and grown,
Gathered to one, for all.

Verse 2:

Many the gifts, many the works,
One in the Lord of all.

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A Profession of Belief

TOGETHER: We believe that:

- God calls us to be God's holy people in the world
- God's Spirit resides among us in community
- Community is at the heart of all education
- A faith community is the privileged residence of God's Spirit and the focus of all faith learning
- We are privileged to be called by God to create the faith community for Catholic Education

Opening Prayer

Leader: God, in the waters of Baptism, you have bonded us to yourself and to one another as your people. You have called us to be your Good News in the world. Release afresh within us the life of your Spirit and keep us faithful branches of the Vine Jesus who is Lord forever and ever. Amen

Scripture Reading

1 Corinthians 12: 4 – 28

There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them. The particular way in which the Spirit is given to each person is for a good purpose. One may have the gift of preaching with wisdom given him by the Spirit; another may have the gift of preaching instruction given him by the same 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.

Just as a human body, though it is made up of many parts, is a single unit because all these parts, though many, make one body, so it is with Christ. In the one Spirit we were all baptized, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as citizens, and one Spirit was given to us all to drink.

Nor is the body to be identified with any one of its many parts. If the foot were to say, "I am not a hand and so I do not belong to the body", would that mean that it stopped being part of the body? If the ear were to say, "I am not an eye, and so I do not belong to the body", would that mean that it was not a part of the body? If your whole body was just one eye, how would you hear anything? If it was just one ear, how would you smell anything?

Instead of that, God put all the separate parts into the body on purpose. If all the parts were the same, how could it be a body? As it is, the parts are many but the body is one. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you", nor can the head say to the feet, "I do not need you". God has arranged the body so that more dignity is given to the parts which are without it, and so that there may not be disagreements inside the body, but that each part may be equally concerned for all the others. If one part is hurt, all parts are hurt with it. If one part is given special honour, all parts enjoy it. Now you together are Christ's body; but each of you is a different part of it.

Prayers from God's People

Response: Lord, release your Spirit among us.

For all parents, that they may always grow in appreciation of their call to be the primary educators of their children especially in handing on the faith, we pray:

For our Bishops, that as the chief teachers in our diocese, they will call all of us to ever greater witness to Jesus who is our Good News and our salvation, we pray:

For our elected trustees, that they may be gifted by God with wise and discerning hearts as they respond to the many challenges in Catholic Education, we pray:

For our administrators, teachers and all professional educators, that they may be deeply rooted in and draw hope from the Teacher from Nazareth, we pray:

For our students, may they always be open to the Spirit alive within them and generously use their talents and gifts for the good of all, we pray:

(Other prayers may be added by those present)

Lord's Prayer

Leader: Let us gather all our prayers into one as we pray our family prayer
OUR FATHER.....

Concluding Prayer

Leader: God of all unity, all things work together for good for those who believe in You.
Draw us closer to one another that we may be a source of strength for each other.
Keep us faithful to the work of Catholic Education and to the proclamation of
your Son Jesus Christ who is Lord forever and ever. *AMEN*

Closing Hymn

(Two Suggestions Follow)

Option #1: City of God

By Dan Schutte
(CBW III, #345)

Verse 1:
Awake from your slumber!
Arise from your sleep!
A new day is dawning for all those who
weep.
The people in darkness have seen a great
light.
The Lord of our longing has conquered
the night.

Chorus:
Let us build the City of God.
May our tears be turned into dancing!
For the Lord, our light and our love,
Has turned the night into day!

Verse 2:
We are sons of the morning;
We are daughters of day.
The one who has loved us has
brightened our way.
The Lord of all kindness
Has called us to be
A light for all people
To set their hearts free.

Chorus:
Let us build the City of God.
May our tears be turned into dancing!
For the Lord, our light and our love,
Has turned the night into day!

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Option #2: Here I Am Lord

By Dan Schutte
(CBW III, # 520)

Verse 1:

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin,
My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

Chorus:

Here I am Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.

Verse 2:

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them: they turn
away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
Give them hearts for love alone,
I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send?

Chorus:

Here I am Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.

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Closing Prayer

A Litany For Those Who Walk

Response: God of guidance, show us your way

“For you who walk, there is no road; the path is made by walking.” In these challenging times, as we seek new ways not only to be bearers of the “Good News” but to BE the Good News” (-Antonio Machado)

As we stand at the crossroads in this re-defining moment in Catholic education where we are challenged to name, claim and proclaim who we are.

As we seek your divine wisdom in our leadership and grace in our actions.

As we re-kindle the fire of our faith and our passion for Catholicity.

As we continue the “conversation behind the wall” with energy, courage and hope...

As we build a community in which gospel values are lived and loved ...

As we take new steps in proclaiming your goodness through our work ...

Spirit of God, you are stirring in our hearts. You urge us to move forward in new ways. You prompt us to follow. You encourage us not to give up. You call us to open our minds and our hearts to receive your energizing transforming radiance. Make us receptive so that we will follow your loving movement within our lives. We trust in your powerful presence within us. Amen.

From the Book: May I Have This Dance, by Joyce Rupp)

- *Taken from Putting Feet on the Gospel: Discussing and Living the Spirit of Catholicity on School community Councils: a workshop for Catholic School Community Councils of the Simcoe Muskoka CDSB, Facilitated by Suzanne Musters.*

PRAYERS FOR SEASONS AND OCCASIONS

Advent Reflection: Persons are Gifts

Persons are gifts..., at least Jesus thought so: “Father, I want those whom you have given to me to be where I am,” he said.

Persons are gifts which the Father sends to us ... wrapped. Some are very beautifully wrapped; they are very attractive when we first see them. Some come in very ordinary wrapping paper. Others have been mishandled in the mail. Once in a while there is a “Special Delivery” stamped on some. Some persons are gifts which come very loosely wrapped; others, very tightly.

But the wrapping is not the gift! It is so easy to make this mistake...babies do it all the time. Sometimes the gift is very easy to open up. Sometimes we need others to help. Is it because they are afraid? Maybe they have been opened up before and thrown away. We are all persons. Therefore we are all a gift too. A gift to yourself first of all. The Father gave you to you. Have you ever really looked inside the wrappings? Afraid to? Perhaps you’ve never accepted the gift you are. Could it be there is something else inside the wrappings than what you think there is?

Maybe you’ve never seen the wonderful gift that you are. Could the Father’s gifts be anything but beautiful? We love the gifts which those who love us give to us. Why not this gift from the Father?

And – we are gifts to other persons. Are we willing to be given by the Father to others? A servant for others? Or do others have to be content with the wrappings...never permitted to enjoy the gift? Every meeting of persons is an exchange of gifts.

Friendship is a gift not just to you but to others through you...when you keep a friend to yourself, possess them – then you destroy his chances of being a gift to others. If you save a life for only yourself, you lose it, but if you lose it for others then you save it.

Persons are gifts, gifts received and gifts given...just like the Son of God. Friendship is the response of persons – gifts to the Father. Friendship is Eucharist!

(Author Unknown)

Lenten Reflection

Lent is about change,
About conversion.
But how does change happen?
How do we, as human beings, change ourselves?

First, change always has to have a beginning.
There must be a first time,
A now as opposed to tomorrow.
Lent gives us that point; that now.

Second, change happens not when we do something once.
But often. When we practice it.
Lent gives us forty days,
forty chances to do it over and over again until it becomes a part of us.

And finally, there needs to be support.
We rarely get into bad habits alone and we rarely get out of them alone.
We need the love and support of others,
That is why we celebrate lent as a community.

Let us begin the process of change then together.
As it is written...
“Now is the favorable time, this is the year favorable to the Lord.”

(Author Unknown)

Holy Week
(Isaiah 53 in the present tense)

Who can believe what we hear?
And who can see the hand of God in this?

As a child he grew up before us
Like a young plant in dry ground,
Small and insignificant.
He has no dignity or handsomeness to make us take notice of him,
No beauty that attracts us to him
He is a simple and ordinary man.

And yet we despise him and reject him, he lives a life of sorrow, and grief;
And we yet we don't help him.

We hate him,
And we ignore him
As if he were nothing.

And yet it is our grief he carries and our sorrow he bears;
And though we blame him for his pain,
As though his suffering is God's punishment for an evil life.
It is because of our sinfulness that he is wounded,
He is beaten because of the evil in our own hearts.
But the punishment he is suffering is for our sake
And our healing is through his wounds.

We are all like sheep, stupid and lost,
Each of us looking out only for ourselves.
But the consequence of this is on him,
Even though we are the ones who deserve it.

His treatment is harsh,
But he accepts it and never complains.
He is arrested and sentenced to death.
But he dies for the sins of everyone.
And even though his is placed among criminals
He himself never committed a crime
Or told a lie.

And because he accepts this, God will lift him up.

(Author Unknown)

Ten Commandments of Human Relations

1. Speak to people. There is nothing so nice as a cheerful word of greeting.
2. Smile at people. It takes 72 muscles to frown, only 14 to smile.
3. Call people by name. The sweetest music to anyone's ears is the sound of his own name.
4. Be friendly and helpful. If you would have friends, be a friend.
5. Be cordial. Speak and act as if everything you do is a genuine pleasure.
6. Be genuinely interested in people. You can like almost everybody if you try.
7. Be generous with praise – cautious with criticism.
8. Be considerate with the feelings of others.
There are usually three sides to controversy; yours, the other fellow's and the right side.
9. Be alert to give service. What counts most in life is what we do for others.
10. Add to this a good sense of humour, a big dose of patience and a dash of humility, and you will be rewarded many-fold.

(Adapted from the Bible Tract Bulletin)

Beatitudes for Friends of Exceptional Children

Blessed are you who take time to listen to difficult speech,
For you help us to know that if we persevere we can be understood.

Blessed are you who walk with us in public places,
And ignore the stares of strangers,
For in your companionship we find havens of relaxation.

Blessed are you who never bid us to hurry up, and, more blessed,
Are you who do not snatch our tasks from our hands to do them for us,
For often we need time rather than help.

Blessed are you who stand beside us as we enter new and untried ventures,
For our failures will be outweighed by the times when we surprise ourselves and you.

Blessed are you who ask for our help, for our greatest need is to be needed.

Blessed are you, when, by all these things you assure us that
The thing that makes us individuals is not in our peculiar muscles, nor in our
Wounded nervous systems, nor in difficulties in learning,
But in our God given self which no infirmity can confine.

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad,
And know that you give us reassurances that could never be spoken in words,
For you deal with us as Christ dealt with all his children.

(Author Unknown)

Earth Day

You must teach your children that the ground
Beneath their feet is the ashes of our grandfathers.
So that they will respect the land, tell your children
That the earth is rich with the lives of our kin.
Teach your children what we have taught our children –
That the earth is our mother.
Whatever befalls the earth,
Befalls the children of the earth.

This we know.
The earth does not belong to us;
We belong to the earth.
This we know.
All things are connected like the blood that unites one family.
All things are connected.
We did not weave the web of life;
We are merely a strand in it.
Whatever we do to the web,
We do to ourselves.

(Chief Seattle)

God Will Wait

God will wait as long as it takes for us.
(*Rev. R. Walters*)

Scripture tells us that God loves us. We are loved. Regardless of all the painful experiences we may have had that convinced us love never lasts, or that love may be fine for others but it just doesn't work for us – regardless of any negative experiences we've had – we are told God loves us.

There is a familiar parable about the lost sheep and the steadfast love of the shepherd who did not simply write it off as the cost of doing business. The shepherd searched diligently until the lost sheep was found. No mention is made of scolding, abuse, or punishment – simply the shepherd's joy at finding one who was lost.

We are as loved as that lost sheep; and, at times, we are as lost. It is important to remember that; at times when we feel lost, or worthless, or down; that whether we feel worth it or not, the love of God, shaped patiently, faithfully searches us out. We cannot outrun God's reach.

(From: Days of Healing Days of Joy: Daily Meditations for Adult Children. By Earnest Larsen, Carol Hegarty)

Prayer for Humanity

I pray that we learn to love more and demand less...
so that our cooperation with each other will be our ever-present reality and consciousness.

I pray that our minds may become more flexible...
that we all graduate from power intelligence to love intelligence.

I pray that we experience our common humanity
and that we understand that all of us are more alike than different.

I pray that I realize that my life won't work well
unless your life works well and that our lives on this planet are deeply intertwined.

I pray that each of us finds the joy of heart-to-heart living and being...
that our minds learn to create perceptions of me-and-them...not me-vs.-them.

I pray that we be honest with each other...
so that person-to-person trust may be created between all of us.

I pray that we learn that we have one world...
and that we no longer create hostility across national boundary lines.

I pray that we learn to disagree without throwing each other out of our hearts...
and not keep ourselves upset over our differences.

I pray that we settle arguments in nonviolent ways...
that we learn to listen to one another and truly hear...so that all armaments become obsolete.

I pray that we no longer play with devices that can destroy life on this planet...
that we have no loaded nuclear pistols.

I pray that we all outgrow our nuclear adolescence...
that our passions and our destructive technology not overwhelm us.

I pray that all aggression and killing be as outdated as other forms of human folly...
so that we can create a wonderful fulfillment of our human destiny together.

I pray that we learn to forgive, for our own sake...
for a heart hardened with hatred is too heavy to carry.

I pray that we act less impulsively...so that love and wisdom may guide our actions.

I pray that we take responsibility for the way we feel...
and that we not blame others for the separating emotions we create within ourselves.

I pray that we learn from our great fund of human experience...
and that we not suffer from making the same mistakes over and over again.

I pray that we realize that there can be more than enough on this earth for all of us...
so that we do not separate ourselves through greed.

I pray that we learn to experience the beauty in ourselves and each other
and that we feel deep appreciation for the many good things we have.

I pray that we hear the message that God is love...
that we no longer separate ourselves in the name of religion.

And finally, I pray that we open our hearts and learn to live together on this globe...
so that we find our great birthright of a loving life.

(By Ken Keyes Jr.)

Prayer of Learners

Father of Light and Wisdom
Thank you for giving me
A mind that can know,
And a heart that can love.
Help me to keep learning every day of my life
No matter what the lesson may be.
Let me be convinced that all knowledge leads to You
And let me know how to find You and love You
In all the things You have made.

Encourage me when I find the learning difficult
And I am tempted to give up
Enlighten me when my mind seems slow
And help me to grasp the truth held out to me.
Grant me the grace to put my knowledge to use
In building the kingdom of God on earth
So that one day I may worthily enter the kingdom of God in heaven.

(By Charles Henderson)

A Precious Legacy of Memories

I rejoice in the life you lived,
Grateful for having shared it with you.
I loved you –
And was loved by you
We shared so much
So many memorable times
We've been through so much together,
How much sadder it would have been
If I'd never known you at all.
Even though you are gone,
You will always be a part of me.
For you have left me so rich –
With a "Precious Legacy of Memories."

(Author Unknown)

Jesus in Everyday Life

I see you Jesus
No longer just in my prayer,
No longer just in my bible,
But in the breaking of the bread of everyday life.
I see you Jesus
When you help me get done what's got to get done;
My homework, my exams, my everyday living.
Where do I see You?
More and more in the people around me;
My friends, the people at the dinner table,
My Mom and Dad, my sister, the guy on the bus home.
You have become flesh in them;
You are not just the spirit in the sky any longer,
But You are right here in them to love me,
For me to love.
How right it is to know that I can love them,
And in loving them, love You Yourself.
I feel so much more a part of them, a part of You,
And that's all I ever really wanted anyway.
Thanks for entering everyday life.
I'm glad I don't have to go to the desert to find You.
All I have to do is listen, right here and now and I'll find You coming through,
Gently and subtly touching my heart with Your love and wisdom.
I'm happy You love me just the way I am,
Helping me develop all the potential that's in me,
All the potential that's in the world,
Your precious gifts of every day.

Amen.

(By Dan McGraw)

May You Live all the Days of your Life

(-Jonathan Swift)

There is an old Irish blessing that goes: “May you live all the days of your life.” Life is much like a game. Both a serious one and one that demands laughter, relaxation, and the ability to play. Either way it demands attention.

There is much of life that is truly exciting and fascinating – are we watching for it? There is hilarity and humor – do we see it? There is that in life which is touching and full of heroism – are we open to experiencing it?

These are not general nebulous truths about life, but concrete realities about our lives. Right here where we live, in our lives today, there will be the hero and the goat, there will be disappointment and reason for celebration, there will be the beautiful and the horrible. The soap opera is not out there; it is right here with us, in us, all around us. The task is to be present in our own lives, to get our heads out of the fictitious world of movies and television and books and to find the enormous meaning and vitality of our own lives.

(From: Days of Healing Days of Joy: Daily Meditations for Adult Children. By Earnest Larsen, Carol Hegarty)

Native American Call to Prayer

O Great Spirit,
Whose Breath gives life to the world
And whose voice is heard in the soft breeze
We need Your strength and wisdom
May we walk in beauty. May our eyes
Ever behold the red and purple sunset
Make us wise so that we may understand
What You have taught us
Help us learn the lessons You have hidden
In every leaf and rock
Make us always ready to come to You
With clean hands and straight eyes
So when life fades, as the fading sunset
Our spirits may come to You without shame

(Call to prayer in UNEP's 1988 Environmental Sabbath Kit. From a Native American Prayer)

Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.

One's Daily Work

When God's Son became man
He didn't become a ruler or a great political leader.
He became a carpenter.
The gospels show us Christ
As a healer, a teacher, and a wonder worker.
But these activities lasted only three years.
For the rest of His life on earth
He worked as a carpenter.
There was nothing spectacular about His work.
He didn't make benches or tables by means of miracles,
But by the hammer and saw.
And, as far as we know,
Nothing He made ever became a collector's item.
Our daily tasks may seem dull and insignificant,
But we must not underestimate their importance.
In the long run,
The only thing that bears fruit, enabling us to grow,
Is the meager work and study of every day.

(Author Unknown)

**Peace Prayer for International Day for Peace
(Month of April)**

*Jesus said in His last discourse to His disciples
“My peace I leave with you,
My peace I give to you,
A peace the world cannot give,
This is My gift to you...do not let your hearts be troubled.”
Let us pray today for that peace...*

Give me peace, O God, a central peace,
Let me know that at the heart of turbulence
There is the final calm that comes from faith in You.
That at the core of life
There is the great confidence from which comes courage and gladness.
When I leave my prayer, let me go with the assurance that I carry within
Your central peace which no agitation can shake.
I see the divisions among human beings and hear the shouts of hatred and anger.
Keep me from giving into the mad idea that peace among us is impossible.
Keep me from being content with things as they are.
Out of my central peace, let there ripple forth concern and compassion,
Indignation at injustice, and a willingness to give of myself in the Spirit of Christ.
May each of us be a sign to each other that points us down the road to peace –
At home, at school, in our neighborhoods.
Let us even dare to hope for peace in our hearts, and in the hearts of the world.

(By Ken Phifer)

Prayer for Right

Heavenly Father, God of tenderness and compassion,
Kind and loving Father of the poor and the powerless.
Strengthen each of us today and every day
So that we may be gentle to ourselves and to each other, but never weak.
People who search for peace, but never at the price of fairness and justice.
Poor in spirit but never lazy and unconcerned.
Merciful and forgiving but always ready to confront
Injustice and prejudice,
Ready to suffer persecution if need be but strong in
Our defense of the rights of others.
May we not be afraid of confrontation;
Never flinch in fight for what is right;
Never turn away from another's pain and distress;
Each day may we build justice and community right here;
Each day may we recognize your Son, Jesus Christ,
And serve Him in everyone we meet.

(Author unknown)

The Samaritan Prayer

Lord, my God,
You may have missed me today,
Since I did not have time to kneel and pray.
I did pray, my Lord,
But not the usual prayer of my day.
Instead, I prayed the prayer of the Samaritan.

You see, my Lord,
My neighbor was in need;
I saw the trouble, heard the cry for help.
In my neighbor's need, I saw you in need.
In my neighbor's plea for help,
I heard a call to prayer
And could not pass by.
For in the midst of the difficulty,
I felt Your Sacred presence.
I tasted the flavor of communion
In all that happened between us.
So my Lord,
While absent from formal prayer,
I was present
To You and to my neighbor,
In this my Samaritan prayer.
While I was unable to say my prayers,
I thank you for the gift of being prayer.
May all the spoken prayers of my life
Prepare me to be always ready
To pray the helping prayer
And provide me with the grace
To be the Emmanuel prayer.

Blessed are You, Lord our God,
Who gifts us with the opportunities
To pray the Samaritan prayer
Of compassionate concern.

Amen.

(By Edward Hays)

Take time...

Take time for what is important to you, what makes you the happiest.
Take time to be with those you love, sharing wishes and secret dreams.
Take time to look around you at all the gladness the world offers.
All of it is yours, if only you take the time.

Lord, we often find ourselves getting wrapped up in our busy schedules and rule by deadlines and time clocks. However, through all of this confusion, may we realize that the beauty of the world and those around us will pass us by, unless we make the effort and take time to enjoy them. In the same way, Lord, you always have time for us, but we will never quite know You until we take the time to let You into our hearts.

Take Time for 10 Things

Take time to work
It is the price of success

Take time to think
It is the source of power

Take time to play
It is the secret of youth

Take time to read
It is the foundation of knowledge

Take time to worship
It is the highway of reverence and washes the dust of the earth from our eyes.

Take time to help and enjoy friends
It is the source of happiness

Take time to love
It is the one sacrament of life

Take time to dream
It hitches the soul to the stars

Take time to laugh
It is the singing that helps with life's loads

Take time to plan
It is the secret of being able to have time to take time.

(By Northwest Synod of Wisconsin)

The Cross in my Pocket

I carry a cross in my pocket,
A simple reminder to me
That I am a Christian,
No matter where I may be.

This little cross isn't magic,
Nor is it a good luck charm.
It isn't meant to protect me
From every physical harm.

It's not for identification
For all the world to see.
It's simply an understanding
Between my Savior and me.

When I put my hand in my pocket
To bring out a coin or a key,
The cross is there to remind me
Of the price He paid for me.

It reminds me too, to be thankful
For my blessings every day,
And to strive to serve Him better
In all that I do or say.

It's also a daily reminder
Of the peace and comfort I share
With all who know my Master
And give themselves to His care.

So, I carry a cross in my pocket
Reminding none but me
That Jesus Christ is Lord of my life,
If only I'll let Him be.

(By Vera Mae Thomas)