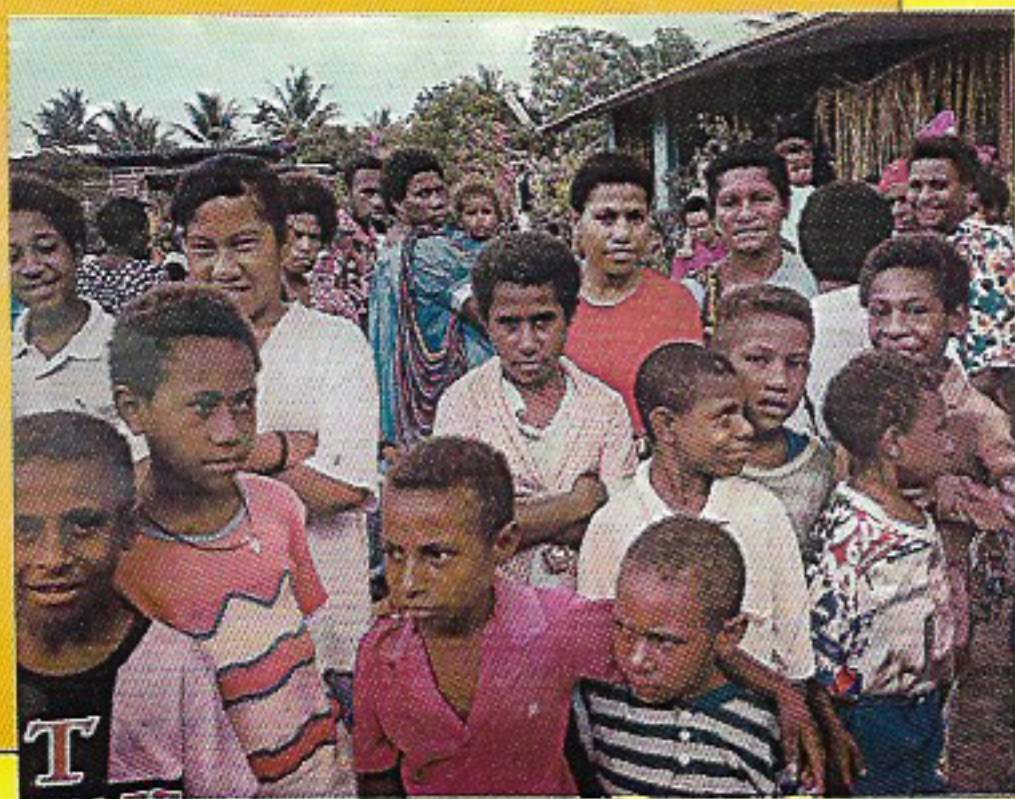
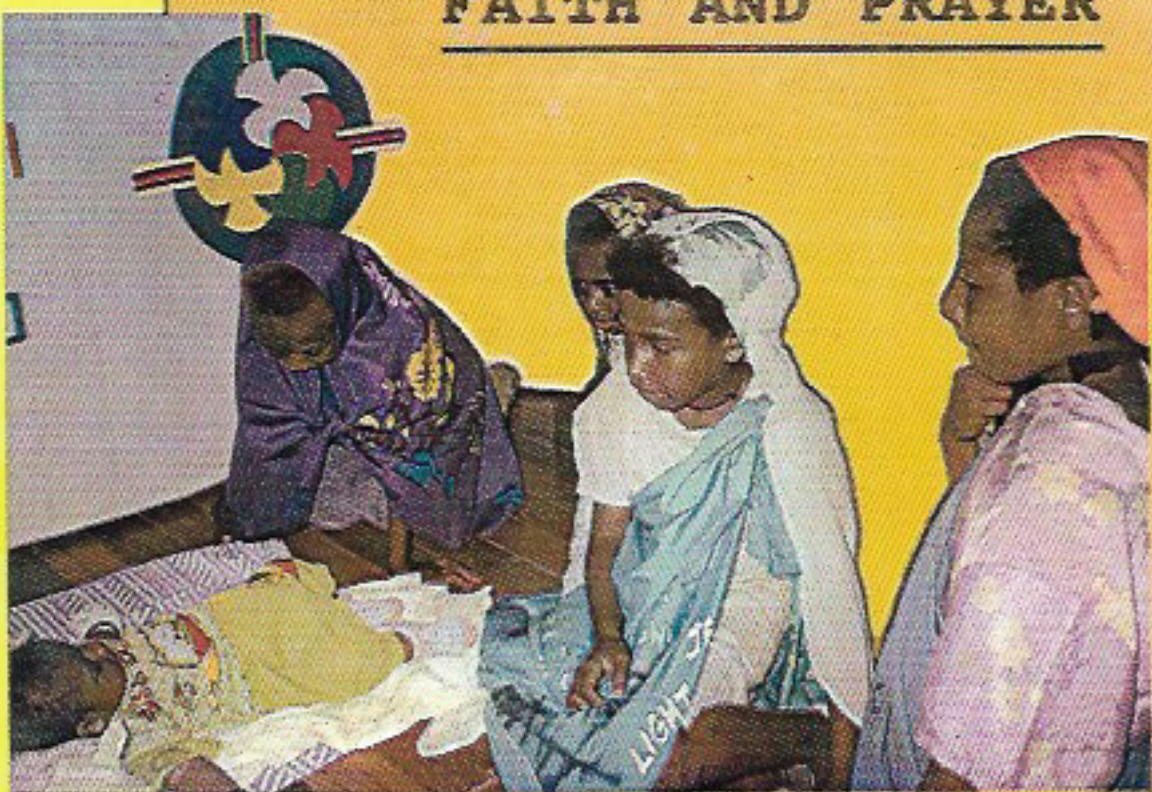


# GRADE 9 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

## BOOK 4

### FAITH AND PRAYER





# **Grade 9 Religious Education**

## **BOOK 4**

### **FAITH AND PRAYER**

**This book is the fourth of a series of four books which make up the Religious Education Programme for Grade 9.**

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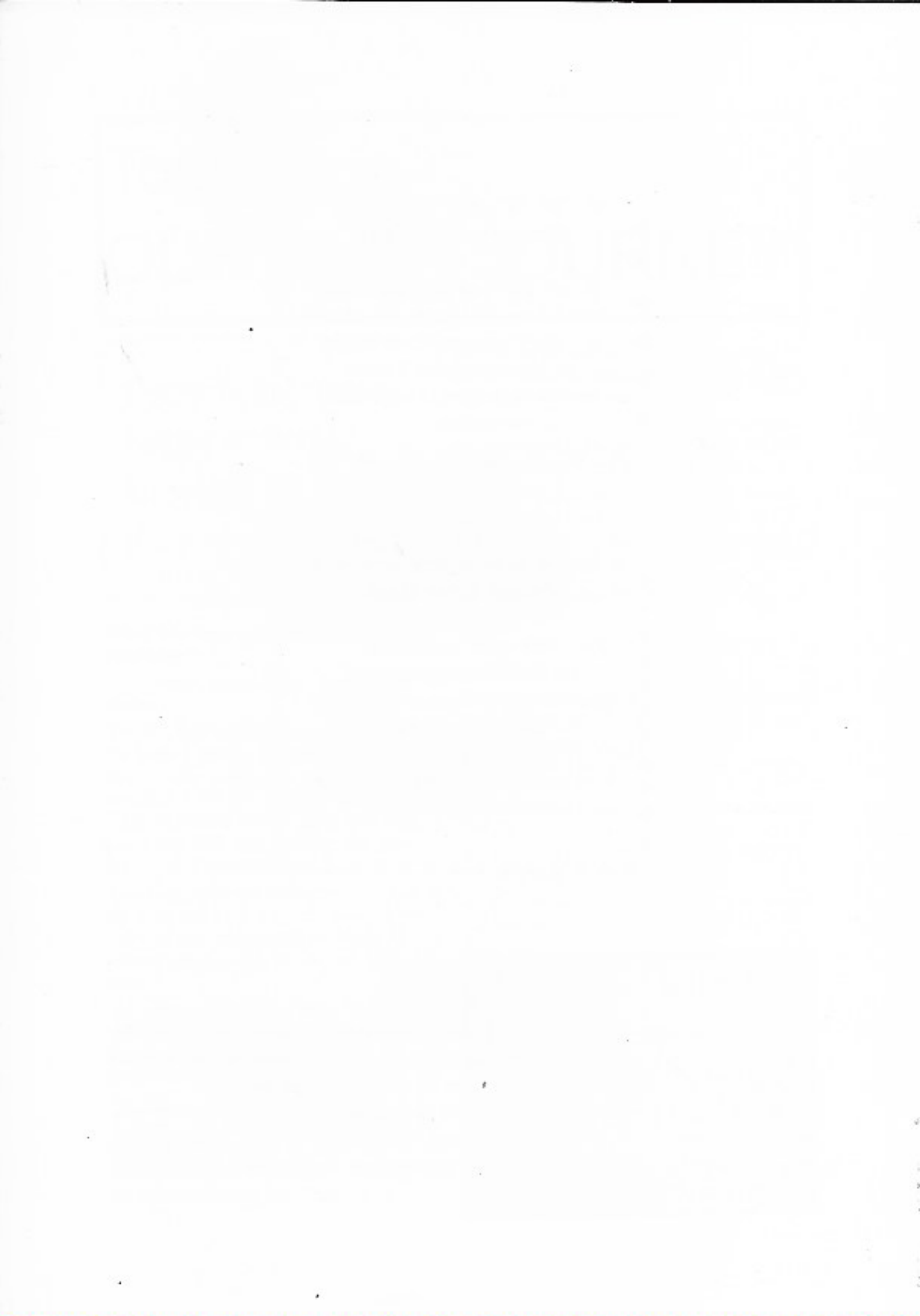
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Sr. Ehrentrude Pretzl, SSpS, Coordinator.





### Prayer before Class

O Holy Spirit of light and truth,  
help me now as I begin this class:  
to understand what I am taught,  
to remember what I learn,  
and to work hard to learn well.  
Amen.

### Prayer after Class

We thank you O God  
for all that we have learnt.  
Reward our teachers and bless our  
companions in class.  
Protect us, and help us to be happy and  
kind, now and throughout our lives.  
Amen.

Dear student:

Your exercise book is a companion to this book. By writing down your thoughts, sharing them with your teacher and with others, you will learn far more about yourself and God's action in your life, than by using this book by itself.

Faith and Prayer are topics that Grade 9's themselves asked for. They are very important topics. Faith is like a journey and it is linked to prayer. If we grow in prayer, we will grow in faith. May what you discover in this book, help you not just this year, but all through your life.

# Topic One

## OUR FAITH JOURNEY

Every faith journey  
begins with God  
knocking on the  
door of our hearts.

**When has God knocked on the door of your heart?**

Read these stories from some Grade 9 students.

**Freddy:** One morning when I came out of the house I saw the sun rising from the east and it was orange in colour and very beautiful. I felt full of praise and as I was thanking God I felt so good and light. I knew that God was touching me through the power of his creation.

**Leo:** One time I was fishing with my Dad in the river and I felt a special peace. I knew that God was present with us. Maybe God is present when people are at one with each other.

**Benedict:** One Sunday I went for Mass and when I was sitting quietly, suddenly my heart started to go up and down. I felt very happy and loved by God but I didn't tell anyone.

**Jeffrey:** One day I saw a mental man but instead of laughing at him, my heart changed. Instead, I felt sorry for him. I felt the compassion that Jesus feels for us.

**Gloria:** In the afternoon I was just sitting in the house and the words of a hymn came into my mind and really touched my heart.

**Theresa:** One time I was sitting on a chopped log on the field. The wind blew and I felt that God was in the wind, invisible but there.

**Shirley:** Yesterday I saw an old woman carrying a load and I didn't want to help her. But then I felt God talking in my heart and I had to go and do it.

*Do you think God knocked on the door of their hearts?*

*Now write a story about one of your own experiences.*

Your experiences and the experiences of these other Grade 9's, reveal some ways that God uses to knock on our heart door.

We can classify these ways into three groups:

- **Revelation** (God's self-communication to us)
- **Prayer** (The desire God has put into us to seek him)
- **Behaviour** (God's invitation to love and live as Jesus did, and our response).





On the previous page, it says faith is a 'journey'.

**Write a paragraph about a journey that you have been on recently.**

*What was the aim of your journey?*

*How did you travel? (By foot, truck...)*

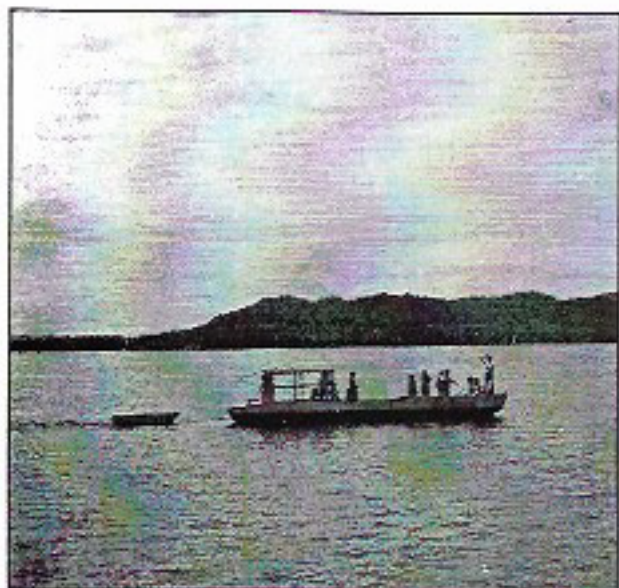
*Did you travel alone?*

*Did you meet someone during your journey?*

*Did you meet someone at the end of your journey?*

*Did you take anything with you?*

*Did you enjoy your journey?*



Now try to write 3 sentences about your faith journey, the journey you have been on since you were just a gorgeous little baby until now, a student nearly at the end of Grade 9.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

★ **MY FAITH JOURNEY:**

★ My faith journey began when ..

★ .....

★ .....

★ .....

★ .....

★ .....

★ .....

★ .....

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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## STAGES OF FAITH

There are 3 main stages in our faith journey.

These are:

- the childhood stage (faith by birth)
- the teenage stage (faith in transition)
- the adult stage (faith by choice)

*Look up the word **transition** in your dictionary. What does this word mean?*

In each stage, faith does not stand still. The childhood stage is like a journey, the teenage stage is like a journey, and the adult stage is also like a journey.

When we understand faith as a journey, it makes much more sense of our experience.

Read Henry's story below. Have you ever felt like Henry?

*HENRY: 'I don't know what's gone wrong, but I just don't believe like I used to.'*

*When I was in primary, religion was really important to me.*

*Now I just don't seem to care any more.'*

We know that God knocks on the door of our heart, and that sometimes we feel very close to him. And yet at the same time we sometimes feel like Henry does. This is because our faith is in the middle or teenage stage.

### Faith in the Teenage Stage

Of the three stages, the teenage stage is usually the most painful one.

**It is also the most important.**

It is important because at this time in our lives we begin the transition or change, from being a Christian by birth, to being a Christian by choice.

In order for this to happen, our childhood faith must die so that our adult faith can be born.

It is the dying of our childhood faith that causes all the pain. It can even make us feel sick or guilty.



This is a pity because our faith hasn't died, it is simply going through an important growth time. This growth is a very slow process, it doesn't happen in one day. Also it is an activity that is never fully complete. The growth of our faith goes on all of our lives. It is like a seed that dies to being a seed, so that a new plant can grow, and bear fruit.

*Draw the seed of a plant in your book. Now draw its tree or its fruit.*

*What happened to the seed? Does it exist any more?*

*When we say the seed 'dies' what do we mean? Does the tree keep growing?*



*Write a prayer, asking God to water the seed of your faith. Ask God to help you become a strong plant.*

*Beside your plant, write down some 'weeds' that might be growing with your plant and stopping it from getting all the nourishment that it needs.*

*Ask God for the strength to pull out those weeds from your heart.*

Young people often find themselves questioning things about their faith that they once took for granted. They might even ask: 'Is there really a God?'

A question like this does not show that our faith is small. In fact it shows that we are thinking and growing up. It also shows that God is knocking on the door of our heart,

inviting us to travel a bit further along the way. Questioning our faith in God does not mean that there is no God. Nor does it mean that we have lost our faith in God. It just means that our view of God has been an incomplete and imperfect view, and it may have even been wrong.

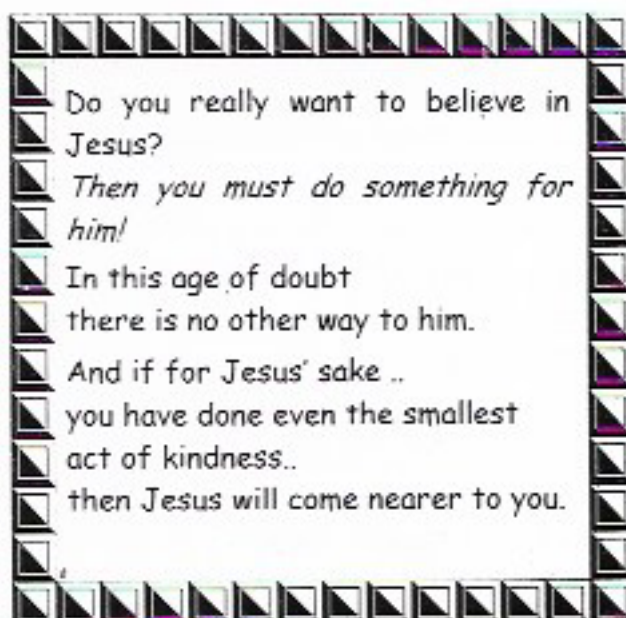
We have to expand our minds and try our best to learn more. We must open our hearts to a bigger view of God. We have to advance further along the road on our faith journey.

The moving on to adult faith involves not just believing, but also **doing things for others**.

*Read the story below about Albert Schweitzer.*

Albert was a famous musician in Europe. Many people came to his concerts. He was popular and rich. But one day he gave up his musical career to become a missionary doctor in Africa. He had to go back to school to learn to be a doctor. In Africa, he worked in very poor conditions. Many people used to ask him Why? Why do you do this? They would question him about how they too, could have such a big faith in Jesus.

This is the answer he always gave:



Copy Albert Schweitzer's answer into your books.

Have you done something for Jesus?



## Common Mistakes about Faith

1. The biggest mistake we can make about faith, is to think that faith is just about knowing things like the 10 Commandments. Faith is knowing, but it is more about trusting a person, the person of Jesus.

2. Another mistake is to think that we never have to do anything about our faith, it is all up to God. Like the seed we talked about earlier, it needs good gardening to grow.

3. It is also a mistake to think that faith is a 'once only' decision to believe. Faith is an ongoing decision, one that we make again and again on our journey. (We can never stop looking after our plant).

People who make this mistake can be really depressed when they decide to accept Jesus as their Saviour, and then find they are doing wrong things. Then they are likely to give up. Faith is not a 'once only' decision. We need to commit ourselves to Jesus over and over. He knows the weeds will grow, but he wants us to trust him and keep trying.

4. Another mistake that people make about faith, is to think that it should always be shining strongly for us. Faith is not like that at all. Our faith has a way of going in and out of focus. What was once clear to us becomes fuzzy for a while. Sometimes our faith seems to disappear altogether! Other times it shines very strongly in our hearts.

### Why does our faith go in and out of focus?

There are three reasons why our faith seems to do this. The reasons are:

- Because of human nature
- Through our own fault
- By God's plan

**Because of human nature:** Our faith also has its moods just like we do.

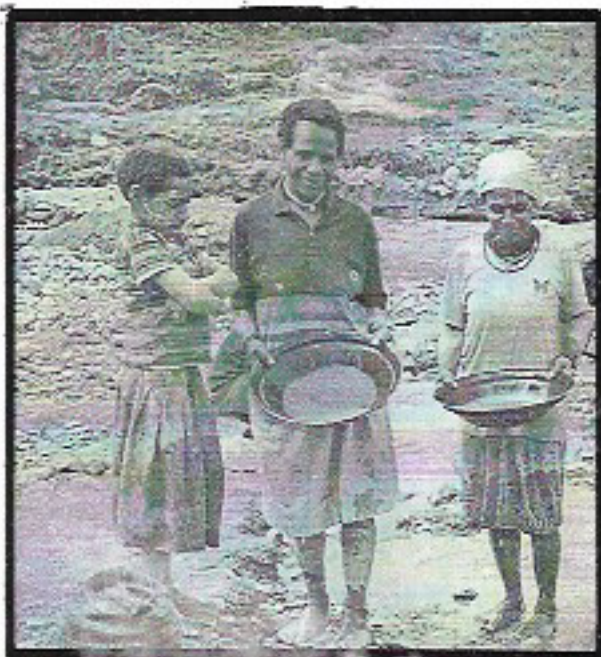
These mood changes go with the fact of being a human person. Sometimes we feel really happy and on top of the world. Then our faith feels strong. Sometimes we feel down, then our faith goes down too.

So we must try to keep ourselves fairly cheerful and happy, so that our faith will remain bright.

**Through our own fault:** A time of darkness may be caused by ourselves. We can neglect our faith. We can let our faith grow weak because of sin or from lack of spiritual food. Our faith needs food just like our bodies do.

*What do you think are suitable 'foods' for faith? When was the last time you 'fed' your faith?*

**By God's plan:** The dark periods of faith may be allowed by God. God sometimes lets them happen in order to strengthen and deepen our faith. If God allowed only happiness in our life, then we would be like a seedling whose roots stay at the top of the soil and do not go down into the ground. If a very hot day comes these plants wither and die because their roots are shallow. If a big wind comes they blow over, because they are not anchored deep in the ground. Our faith too, needs times of trial to make it strong. Think of how hard we pray before a test or when we are in trouble! Often we forget God when the sun is shining in our lives and everything is going well. Also, when everything is perfect, there is no need for faith at all.





# Describing my journey

Faith is a journey, but we also know that our whole life is a journey too. In fact, it is our faith journey which gives us a reason for living, for making the life journey. Thinking about our life journey, helps us to understand our faith journey.

For some, their life journey is exciting, it is like an adventure. These people like to really live life. They like to be the PMV drivers, in charge of where they are going. Others see life like passengers on a PMV. They sit on the bus and do not become really involved in the scenes going on outside.



Others think that life is tough and hard. And some people find life like a bad dream where they are trying to find their way through their problems.



How do you picture life's journey?  
Do you travel alone or with others?  
Is the experience frightening or exciting or just pleasant?  
Where are you going?  
Do you have a destination for your journey?

Copy the following images. Circle the image which best describes your experience of life.

Explain your choice to a person near you.

Life is like .....

- an exciting adventure
- a lot of steps going up to a house
- a picnic with friends
- a very hard unsealed road
- a boring trip
- a long journey to the promised land
- a sad experience
- a flower in the desert, trying its best to grow up and be good

Now think about your faith journey. Do you feel the same about your faith journey?  
What phrase would you use to describe it?

## St. Paul's Image of Life.

St. Paul compared life to two athletic contests. Read his words below:

Surely you know that many runners take part in a race, but only one wins the prize. Run, then, in such a way as to win the prize. Every athlete in training submits to strict discipline, in order to be crowned with a wreath that will not last; but we do it for one that will last forever. That is why I run straight for the finish line; that is why I am like a boxer who does not waste his punches. I harden my body with blows to bring it under complete control. (1 Cor 9:24-27)



St Paul writes that we should enter life's contest *to win*. The prize that our faith wins, is a much greater prize than any gold medal, even an Olympic gold medal.

Think of one of your major aims. How hard are you working right now, to reach your aim?

Choose one of the following to complete the sentence.

One of my major aims in life is ..... and

..... *I am giving it a lot of effort*

..... *I am working a bit hard*

..... *I give some effort sometimes*

..... *I am lazy and not really thinking about my aim.*



The effort we are making in our life journey, will match the effort we are making in regard to our faith journey. So if we are finding faith a bit difficult, then we will probably find that we do not have much of an aim in our life journey.

St. Paul says that as well as making an effort, we need to train ourselves to be self-controlled or 'disciplined'.

*Do you think you are a disciplined person who is making an effort to achieve the aims you have in life? How would your best friend, your parents and your favourite teacher score you on these two questions, effort and discipline? To find out the answer, copy the following chart into your book.*

*Choose a short term aim that you are willing to be judged on, e.g. participating in school activities, paying attention in class, getting good results, doing homework, etc.*

	from my view	best friend's view	parents' view	favourite teacher's view
A lot of effort				
Some effort				
Less effort				
Lazy				
Very disciplined				
Sometimes disciplined				
Not disciplined				

First of all, reflect on how much **effort** you are putting into achieving your aim.

Then think about how **disciplined** you are in your efforts.

Put two ticks only in the first column, one for effort (somewhere in the first four lines) and one for discipline (somewhere in the last 3 lines).

Then give your book to your best friend, a favourite teacher, and one of your parents or guardians.

Look at the results. What does this table tell you? Write a sentence about yourself.

**Reminder:** *There should only be two ticks in each column, one for effort and one for discipline.*



### Short term and long term goals:

All of us have short term goals (such as doing well in our next maths test, or being selected for the volleyball team), and long term goals (such as getting a job, or aiming to be a doctor). We can also have goals in our faith journey. Some are short term ones, like trying to make a good Lent, or prepare well for a feastday, and some are long term ones, like wanting to become a catechist, or wanting to come to know Jesus more.

It is foolish to have a goal, and not take the steps necessary to reach the goal.

The very biggest goal of our faith journey is to come to the Father. He is our destination. He is the one to whom we are travelling. To reach the Father is the purpose of our lives. Travelling with us on our journey is Jesus Christ. Not only does Jesus travel with us, but he knows the road.

In fact, he has already travelled the road we are taking, and has made the way smooth for us. He has suffered, he has loved, he has felt disappointed, he has felt happy, he has been rejected, in fact, he knows everything we have experienced.

*Have you ever been lost?*

*Can you remember what it felt like?*

If we have to go to a strange village, in another Province, we need a guide. None of us would like to travel alone, or with some one who has never been to that place. If the village is remote, and there are enemies trying to trick us, we are sure to be lost.

Jesus said that he had come 'to seek out and save what was lost'. He often talked about what was lost - the lost sheep, the lost coin.

When we are lost we have left the right road; we are wandering. When we are lost, we can do nothing to change our situation and find the way. We need someone to find us. We need someone who knows the way.

That person is Jesus. He is the only one who knows the right road and knows the goal at the end. Jesus leads us to the Father.

Jesus also asks the Father to send the Spirit to help us. This means that it is very, very important to come to know Jesus well.

Albert Schweitzer said that if we want to grow in faith then *we have to do something for Jesus*.

*We do not feel like doing things for people we do not know very well.* The thing that Jesus wants us to do most of all, is to become his very close friend.

### How can I improve my relationship with Jesus?

The only way to come to know a person better is to spend time with them. That is why this book is called "Faith and Prayer". To have faith is to trust Jesus, and to pray is to spend time with Jesus, so that we come to know and trust him more.

In the remaining topics in this book, there are different ways of thinking about prayer and different ways of spending time with Jesus. Some you might like, and some might not appeal to you. Choose whatever suggestions are helpful to you.

If you are willing to give time to prayer, your faith will grow strong. Not only that, but you will become more and more like Jesus.

The Russian word for 'saint' means 'very, very like'. This is how our faith journey is meant to change us as we travel along on life's road. We are meant to become very very like our friend Jesus.

Imagine Jesus is sitting on a chair next to you. Tell him you want to have more faith in him, and know the value of praying to him. Ask him to be with you. Ask him to keep your mind and heart open to him.





# Topic Two

# About Prayer

## Prayer is also a journey

At the end of our journey, we want Jesus to say to us:

*'Come, ..... beloved of my Father, and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'.*  
**Mt.25:34.**

*Copy the quote above, and fill in your own name.*

However, we are not at the end of our journey yet! We are just on our way. We are all at different places. Some might be looking for a ride, some might have hit a bad bit of road, or some may be spinning along quite well.

At the beginning of this book, we learnt that every faith journey begins with God knocking on the door of our hearts. Go back and read the examples given. What were the people doing when God knocked on their heart?

Many of the times when God knocked, that the person was either praying or at least quiet and still. So while it is certainly true that God knocks and calls to us, we too, have to provide some quiet times and opportunities for God. Otherwise God knocks, but we just don't hear him. He may be offering us a ride and we are too foolish to notice.

Of course, many of us are not foolish.  
Many students do pray:

*Emmanuel:* I pray at night when there is no sound and everyone is asleep. I feel good at that time.

*Mary:* I wake up very early in the mornings and I say my morning prayers before the prefect rings the bell.

*Madeline:* I pray before class, and when I don't understand lessons.

*Lucy:* I sometimes pray when I walk on the road.

*Jonathon:* Yes, I do pray, especially in the mornings, and for me it's a must that I do pray.

Like Jonathon, we usually think of prayer as something we do. But in a way, **we too are prayers.** Each of us is a prayer of God.

When people see us they see God's love in creating us, and so we speak of God's goodness to the rest of the world, (without saying a word!)

*When we do pray, each of us prays in a special and personal way.*



Without our prayer, the worship offered to God is less. We are like notes of music that together make a song. When some notes are missing, the song is not quite right.

Or we can compare ourselves to different flowers that together make the whole world beautiful.







about it? And why worry about clothes? Look how the wild flowers grow, they do not work or make clothes for themselves, but I tell you that not even King Solomon with all his wealth had clothes as beautiful as one of these flowers. So do not start worrying: Where will my food come from? or my drink? or my clothes? Your Father in heaven knows that you need all these things. Instead, be concerned above everything else, with the Kingdom of God and with what God requires of you, and God will provide you with all these other things. Do not worry about tomorrow; it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings.

Read Luke 12:22-34. What does Luke add that Matthew leaves out? Copy one sentence from this passage that you like.

**The second main excuse people give for not praying is lack of time.**



### FINDING THE TIME TO PRAY

Some of us say that we can't pray because we haven't got time. School, jobs, friends, problems, take up all our time.

If we think like this, remember that *all time belongs to God*.

We have been given the very special and wonderful gift of time, not to spend it only talking with our friends and so on, but to come to know and love God. In prayer we use the gift God has given us (time) for the purpose God intended (coming to know the Trinity). Every time we look at the Easter Candle we see the year written there.

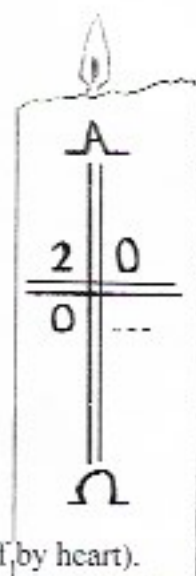
This date is a reminder of the words the priest uses when he marks the candle at the Easter Vigil:

**Christ yesterday and today,  
the beginning and the end,  
Alpha and Omega.**

**All time belongs to him  
and all the ages.**

**To him be glory and power,  
through every age  
and for ever. Amen.**

(Learn this beautiful prayer off by heart).



**Read this story about Sam's friend.**

Sam had a very close friend. This friend told Sam he had a great love for a girl called Susanne. Sam asked his friend when he last talked and met with Susanne. The friend hesitated and then said: "Oh, about five weeks ago".

Sam asked him why it was so long. He told Sam:

Well, I've called Susanne four weeks in a row. The first weekend she was busy with a family problem.

The second weekend she said she was sick.

Last weekend she was mourning the death of her pet gecko.

This weekend she wants to clean up her room. She just can't seem to find time for us to be together.

What do you think Sam should say to his friend?

If it was your friend you would probably try to tell him that his relationship is not what he thinks it is, because true friends want to be together.

**God is our very best friend.**

Friends want to spend time together; they want to enjoy the friendship they have.

If we really want to, we can find some minutes to spend with the Lord each day.

Ten minutes a day is excellent to begin with, while 20 minutes is better.

But 5 minutes is better than nothing at all.

Some people ask: 'when is the best time to pray?' Well, any time is good. Many people pray in the morning. Others pray during their lunch hour. Still others find the best time to pray is at night before going to sleep.

### PRAYER CONTRACT

Why not make a commitment to pray? If you are willing, you can write your promise in your exercise book. Make sure you include the following:

- 1. How long:** (Promise yourself 5, 10, 15 minutes each day for prayer.)
- 2. When:** (Unless you mark a definite time, you'll probably forget to pray).
- 3. Place:** (Write down the place you are going to pray in).
- 4. Witness:** Get a friend to witness your contract or promise and also make sure your friend checks up on how you are going from time to time.

#### MY PRAYER CONTRACT

Date: .....

I, ....., promise to spend  
..... minutes each day meeting  
God in prayer.

The time I will try to mark for prayer is  
.....

The place I will pray is .....

Dear Jesus, I ask you to bless my efforts  
at coming to know you better. Help me  
keep my commitment to you.

.....  
(signature) (witness)

1st Check Up: Date .....

Comment .....

2nd Check Up: Date .....

Comment .....

### Mark where you are now in regard to prayer.

I find prayer ...

easy \_\_\_\_\_ difficult

The difference prayer makes in my life is....

very great \_\_\_\_\_ very small

I pray....

often \_\_\_\_\_ never

Concerning my prayer life, I am....

satisfied \_\_\_\_\_ dissatisfied

*(At the end of this book, do this exercise again, so keep your results somewhere where you can find them again). See if there has been any change.*

One of the most famous definitions of prayer comes from St. Clement. He says that prayer is "conversation with God."

*Think of the last time you had a good conversation with a close friend.*

If it was a good conversation, you were really concentrating and probably did not pay too much attention to what was going on around you. Your attention was all for your friend. You were probably both talking to your friend, and listening to what he or she had to say.

**Prayer** also requires this same attention.

#### *Talking to the Lord.*

Like any good friend, the Lord wants to hear about our dreams and hopes. He doesn't mind at all if we go over and over our fears and disappointments.

It is all right with him if we complain. He is also interested in how our day went. We can share our feelings with him when we get a low score on a test, win a race, change our charges, or have a problem with our family.



This is one of the real values of having a friend, being able to share everything with him or her.

God wants us to talk to him like we do to our friends.

When we talk to our friends, we don't pay much attention to how we talk. We just talk. When we talk to God we usually use our own words.

This is called *spontaneous prayer*.

Sometimes, though, we use other people's words, even for people we love dearly. For example on Mother's Day we might spend a lot of time making or buying a special card for our mother.

Inside the card we often find or write a poem that someone else has written. We do this because we want to put into beautiful words the feelings we have for our mother.

It is like that in prayer. Sometimes we use *formal prayers*. These are prayers of the Christian community. Other times we use our own words.

*One formal prayer is the Glory Be. Name 3 other formal prayers that you know.*

*Write one out.*

### **What do you talk about with your closest friends?**

Think about some recent conversations you have had with your friends.

Copy out the list below and tick your favourite topics for discussion

- marks and studies
- family problems
- boy/girl friends
- your dreams/aims
- religion
- other people
- charges
- sports
- school activities
- teachers
- other students

Use a different colour to mark the topics you talk about to God.



### **Activity:**

Copy out the two sentences below three times (you will need six scrap papers).

I pray when -----

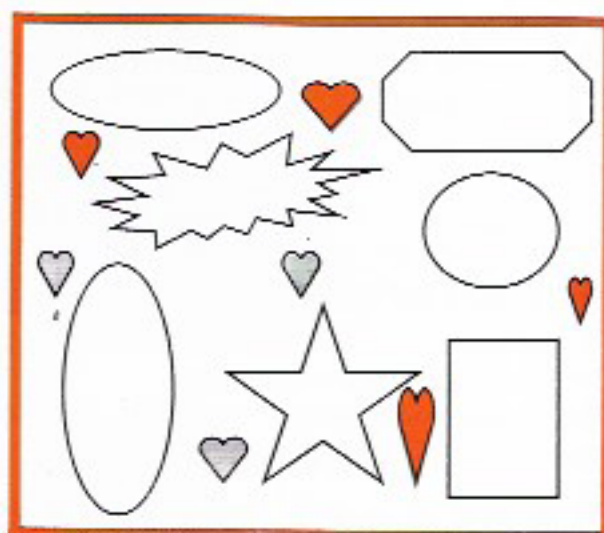
A time prayer helped me was -----

*Fill in one copy yourself.*

*Ask someone younger for their answers.*

*Also ask an adult for their answers.*

Collect all your pieces of paper and glue them in a frame in your book.





## THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

**We should expect to enjoy our prayer time.  
We should delight in the fact that God loves us.**

Remember though that praying to God does not mean we have to feel an emotional "high" every time we turn to him.

True love does not depend on feelings. Even if we don't always feel God's nearness, he is closer to us than we are to ourselves. His love is deep within us and will transform us. Before beginning to pray, think of yourself as a gift which you are giving to God, a gift he has already accepted.

You might find it very helpful to turn your mind and heart, body and soul to the Lord and say, "Here I am, Lord."

## FINDING A PLACE TO PRAY

Just as important as a regular time to pray is a special *place* to pray. Since Jesus came into the world, every place is holy.

You can pray anywhere.

Jesus himself prayed in many different places. He prayed in the synagogues on Saturday.

He prayed before and after meals.

He withdrew to the desert, climbed to the top of mountains, went among the olive trees, walked beside the seashore and found other places to be alone to pray.

He offered prayers during the Last Supper. He even uttered prayers from the cross while people tormented him.

Although we can pray in many different places, using the **same** place to pray has a number of advantages. One advantage is that you can create a prayerful atmosphere. For example, you can hang a picture or crucifix to help fix your attention during prayer. Or you can display your bible. You can also light a candle. All of these help us to forget everyday worries and think about the Lord's presence.

Try some different places until you find the best one for you. Make it your special place for meeting the Lord.



## RELAXATION

Relaxation is very important for prayer. The Lord instructs us to "be still and know that I am God." We cannot pray well unless we slow down and get in the proper mood.

We do this by relaxing and allowing the worries of the day to drain out of our spirits and bodies.

One way to do this is by concentrating on our breathing. First notice how fast or slow it is. Then notice the air as it comes in and goes out. Don't try to control your breathing. Just observe it for a few quiet, peaceful moments. When you are relaxed and aware, try the following meditation.

Think of the air as an immense ocean filled with God's presence.

You are like a fish in this ocean surrounded by the peace and love of God.

Feel the warmth of this ocean of love around you.

Now turn to your prayer. Imagine that every time you take in a breath you are drawing in the peace, love and power of God.

Stay with this awareness. Enjoy it.

When you breathe out, imagine that you are breathing out all your fears, all your bad attitudes, all your negative thoughts.

Imagine as you breathe in, that it is God's life and love that is entering your body.

Imagine as you breathe out that you are ridding yourself of all that is keeping you from being alive with his love.





### DISTRACTIONS IN PRAYER

Sometimes we are like this bird in the picture. Even when we have prepared ourselves for prayer, other thoughts flood our minds. And our prayer thoughts fly right away. We find ourselves thinking about what happened during the day or planning the future. These things are called *distractions*.

If we want to be serious about our prayer, we have to do something about the distractions that are sure to come. Here are some hints for you:

- \* Remember that prayer can happen even if you don't "feel" anything going on. Wanting to pray is itself a prayer. Keep reminding yourself that God is present to you.
- \* Be patient with yourself, and also don't rush God. He leads us in his own good time.
- \* Looking at a religious picture, a statue, a crucifix or a lighted candle sometimes helps us keep our attention on meeting God.
- \* Don't forget to ask the Holy Spirit, who lives within you, to guide you in your prayer time.

Sometimes it is helpful *not* to try and fight your distractions. Instead let them happen. Then do this exercise:

Make sure you are relaxed. Now picture your distracting thoughts as if each one was a bubble rising to the surface of the water. Every thought is like a different bubble. Watch the bubbles rise, burst and disappear. Try to clear the water of all the bubbles (thoughts).

Picture a clear, calm surface on your bit of

water. When the surface of your water is calm and clear and you feel at peace, then return to God's presence.

So far we have been learning that faith and prayer are about a relationship with Jesus. Are you ready to look at your relationship with Jesus and to think about what he means to you?

**See if you really trust him to guide your life.**

Copy the sentences below into your exercise book then place yourself somewhere on or between the numbers by putting a mark. (1 means you really believe the sentence, 5 means disagreement with the sentence)

1. It matters very much to me what the Lord Jesus thinks of me.

1    2    3    4    5

2. I always talk to Jesus in prayer before making an important decision.

1    2    3    4    5

3. I am willing to pay the price, even of suffering, to follow Jesus Christ.

1    2    3    4    5

4. Jesus is my best friend: I spend a lot of time with him.

1    2    3    4    5

5. Jesus is the centre of my life. I think about him often during the day.

1    2    3    4    5

6. Jesus is my guide to a happy life.

1    2    3    4    5

*Look at your results and then complete the following sentence:*

My relationship with Jesus is .....

.....





## CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

Contemplative prayer is a special kind of prayer. In it we go to that centre of our being where God is working a wonderful work.

Another name for contemplative prayer is soul praying. This style of prayer consists in simply resting in God's presence.

Contemplative prayer can be compared to the special human experience of being with someone we trust and not having to say any words to each other. To contemplate is to look at something with love.

All Christians are called to contemplative prayer, to a close relationship of love with God. We should want to be united with God and to desire to sit and enjoy the sunshine of his love. It is normal for us to want to rest in the arms of our loving Father who has made us out of nothing and keeps us in his love.

Contemplative prayer is described in this story:

*An old man used to spend hours and hours sitting still in the church, apparently doing nothing. When someone asked him what he was doing all those hours, the old man replied, "I look at him; he looks at me; and we are happy."*

Today, contemplative prayer is growing in popularity because more people have discovered that this prayer gives us a deep sense of God's love. We can pray this way alone, with a few other Christians, or with a small group. One way to start this prayer is to say something like:

Lord, I believe that you are present in me, at the very centre of my existence, keeping me alive in your love. For my prayer time, I want to just be with you. Draw me close to you, Lord. Let me experience your presence and your love.

Sometimes people say a word such as Father to stop them being distracted. They say this word slowly and in time with their breathing. Other people say a whole sentence, e.g.

Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

After a short time you can stop reciting the word as you become aware of the Lord at the centre of your being. If distractions come your way, and they often do, repeat your word to refocus on God and his loving presence.

*Note:* Ten to twenty minutes is a good time to spend on this style of prayer. Try it daily for two weeks and then reflect on your own feelings about this prayer.

### Try the following contemplation:

First, find a quiet place to pray. Then, relax yourself.

Now, close your eyes. Imagine you are entering a dark and quiet cave. There are no sights or sounds in this cave. You are alert, but very relaxed and quiet.

You travel further into the cave. It is very quiet. You do see a light at the other end though. You sense yourself getting closer and closer to the light.

Soon you reach the back of the cave and come into a bright, warm, peaceful light. You are wrapped in the light. You feel its warmth and are amazed by its glow.

Slowly, the image of Jesus comes into view. He has a smile on his face. His eyes are looking at you. Study his face.

Look at his love, warmth and acceptance.

Let his total love of you penetrate your being. Feel his love touch your heart. Deeply sense the joy he has for you.

Allow the Lord to look at you.

He does so lovingly and humbly. Enjoy his peaceful gaze and the love he puts around and in you.

At the end of your time with the Lord, thank him for all he has given you.

Tell Jesus of your love for him. Ask the Lord and his love to remain with you. Slowly and meditatively finish with the Our Father.



The Gospel shows Jesus praying in three settings:

- in private (Mark 1:35)
- with friends (Luke 9:28)
- with the community (Luke 4:16)

Praying *daily* to God in private is as important as eating and sleeping.

We need spiritual food as much as we need physical food. Also, unless we learnt to relate to God in private, we will find it extremely difficult to pray to him in the community.

Praying in private is the key that unlocks the door to praying in community.



If you find public prayer difficult, e.g. the Mass, then most likely you are not making any effort in your private prayer.

### PRAYING THE PSALMS.

The psalms are a collection of hymns sacred to both Jews and Christians. They are of great value in helping people to pray to God. These prayers or poems, were quoted and prayed by Jesus himself.

They are popular because they manage to put into words all our human emotions:

- joy and wonder before God's creation,
- sorrow for wrong doing
- complaints at the troubles which come along in life, and asking for help
- thanksgiving and praise for our God

#### Activity:

Read several psalms  
Find at least one example of each kind of emotion mentioned above.  
Copy one or two sentences of each kind into your books.

*Name a time when we use a psalm when praying together publicly*

Often Christians memorize certain psalms so they will be able to say them in times of trouble.

Many people have reported that the words of a very favourite psalm e.g. Psalm 23, gave them hope and comfort during their lonely hours of suffering.

*What is Psalm 23 about?*

**Hint:** Do not wait until you are very sick or suffering in order to learn a psalm. Learn some favourite words now and they will be of great comfort to you later.

### FOUR KINDS OF PRAYER

As human beings, there are four main feelings we wish to express to our God. We have already mentioned that the psalms put into words these feelings. The word **ACTS** helps us to remember these four kinds of prayer:

- A** Adoration (Praise, Wonder)
- C** Contrition (Sorrow)
- T** Thanksgiving
- S** Supplication (Asking for help in trouble)

**When you can't think of anything to pray about, think of the word ACTS. This short word will give you plenty of ideas.**

Below are examples of prayer in the Gospels. Read the passages. Which kind of prayer is being described?

Luke 23:34  
Mark 10:46-49  
Luke 1:46-55  
John 11:41-42



### ADORATION

When we adore God, we praise him. We praise him for his love, his wisdom, the beauty in his creation, his greatness.

Prayers of adoration are usually joy-filled prayers. Some people clap their hands, sing, dance or shout "Praise the Lord! Alleluia!"

Another example of an adoration prayer is when the apostle Thomas, fell on his knees before Jesus and said: *My Lord and my God!* (Jn 20:28)

### CONTRITION

Prayers of contrition are words of sorrow for sins we have committed.

When we think of God's goodness, we are sorry for our sinfulness and want to ask for God's forgiveness.

An example of a prayer of contrition is the tax collector in the gospels who prayed "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner".

The Act of Contrition is a popular form of this kind of prayer:

*O my God I am sorry for having offended you, because you are so good and with your help I will not sin again.*

### THANKSGIVING

Prayers of thanksgiving are expressions of gratitude to God for all he has done for us. They recognize the many gifts God has given us: all of creation, our family and friends, our health and our talents, the Lord Jesus, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

When we thank God, we tell him how much we appreciate everything he has done for us.

### SUPPLICATION

Prayers of supplication are prayers of asking. Most of us practice this kind of prayer more than any other. We believe Jesus' teaching, "If you ask for anything in my name, I will do it" (Jn 14:14).

We ask for all kinds of things: help on a test, for a sick person to get better, help to win a basketball game or to get a good job. All of these are prayers of supplication.

*What are you asking Jesus for these days when you go to pray?*

*If you are not asking for anything, you are wasting an opportunity! Some different things we can ask for are*

*a humble heart*

*generosity*

*knowing what God wants of us*

*courage to do what God wants*

*grace to overcome our faults*

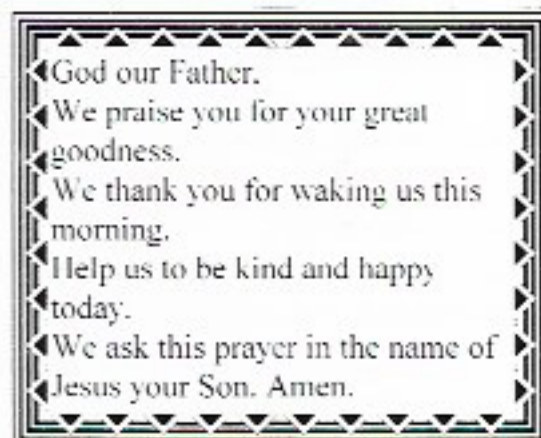
*a love for prayer... the Mass....children..*

### Composing a prayer

If you listen to the prayers that the priest says during Mass, you will notice they have a pattern. The pattern is like this:

- 1) Opening words, calling God by name
- 2) Praise
- 3) Thanksgiving
- 4) A petition
- 5) Ending, by asking in the name of Jesus.

Here is an example of this kind of prayer:



*See if you can compose a short prayer using this traditional pattern.*

Just as a help, you might start by calling God one of the following titles:

Father  
Almighty God  
Abba  
Friend  
Lord



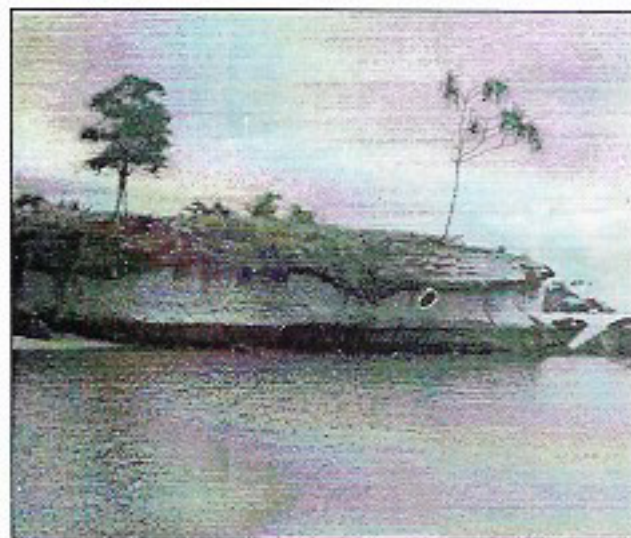
## Did Jesus pray? What styles did he use?

Jesus taught some important things about how and what to pray. But, like a good teacher, he backed up his words with his own example. Jesus prayed often. He is the very best person to look at if we want to learn how to pray.

After being baptized in the Jordan River, Jesus made a 40-day retreat in the desert before starting his public ministry.

This retreat showed that **prayer** was the way Jesus chose to prepare for the most important period in his life.

*Have you ever made a retreat? Ask your teacher to organize one for your class.*



Jesus also prayed before making a decision. He prayed the whole night before selecting his apostles, the ones who would carry on his work after his own time was over.

We also see Jesus praying in the garden, before his death on the cross. Like any normal human being who fears suffering and death, Jesus did not want to die. But he prayed:

*"Father," he said, "if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, let your will be done, not mine" (Lk 22:42).*

Jesus withdrew often to lonely places to pray. One time the apostles had to hunt Jesus down.

*Mk 1:35-39*

*In the morning while it was still very dark, Jesus got up and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. Then they found him, they said to him: 'Everyone is searching for you'.*

Jesus particularly liked to pray on hills; for example, after he performed the miracle of the loaves and fishes he sent away the crowd and his disciples, and withdrew to a hillside to pray. He also prayed on mountains. One time, in the presence of Peter, James and John, he was transfigured on a mountain.

Jesus used the styles we have mentioned. He offered prayers of praise, of thanksgiving and of petition, teaching us how to approach his Father. *Why didn't Jesus use prayers of contrition?*

Jesus *praised* his Father for revealing his will to the humble and lowly (Lk 10:21-22). Jesus also *thanked* God when he raised Lazarus from the dead. (Jn 11:41)

Like we so often do, Jesus *petitioned* his Father for many things.

He prayed that Simon Peter not be tempted. In his great prayer of intercession (Chapter 17 of John's gospel), Jesus remembered all those who have been entrusted to him by his Father that they may remain in the truth. We can take great comfort in knowing that Jesus prays for us.

Luke tells us that Jesus, like all good Jews, prayed every Saturday in the synagogue. Scripture also reveals that Jesus celebrated the various religious festivals so important to Jewish worship. As a good Jew, Jesus would have prayed in the morning when rising, at noon, and in the evening before going to sleep. He would have also recited prayers before and after eating his meals.





Jesus knew the Jewish scriptures well and often prayed the Psalms. He sang psalms with the apostles after the Last Supper on the way to the Garden of Gethsemani, and he recited Psalm 22 on the cross, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?" (Mk 15:34)

Although Jesus himself was without sin and did not need to offer prayers of contrition, he did pray for sinners. He forgave those who put him to death, "Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34). He died surrendering himself in trust to God when he prayed, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Lk 23:46).

Jesus, the Son of God, showed that prayer was essential to him. It kept him close to his Father and helped him live a life of service for us, his brothers and sisters.

The lesson to be learned from Jesus' example is an important one: To be close to Jesus' Father, we too must pray.

Read these passages which show some of Jesus' quiet times of prayer.

Then answer the questions which follow.

**Luke 4:1-11, Mark 1:35-37, Luke 6:12-13  
Luke 5:15-16, Matthew 14:13-33,  
Mark 14:32-42**

1. What is taking place in the gospel when Jesus decides to go off to pray?
2. Can you think of some times when you wanted to be alone to think? Share one example.
3. Is there a difference between being alone and being lonely? Explain.
4. Name one advantage of having some moments of quiet by yourself.

We have seen that Jesus himself prayed. But what did Jesus *teach* about prayer?

Jesus' teachings are very interesting.

**\* *Keep your prayers short.*** Some people think that by heaping up a lot of words, their prayers will be more effective. But Jesus taught us to keep our prayers short and to the point:

*"In your prayers do not babble as the pagans do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard. Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Mt 6:7-8).*

**\* *Pray with childlike simplicity.*** Jesus taught us to pray like little children. He reminds us of the Father's great love which is *greater than* the love of any earthly father.

**\* *Pray with faith.*** In Matthew's gospel Jesus instructs us to be confident when we pray: "And if you have faith, everything you ask for in prayer you will receive" (Mt 21:22).

**\* *Be persistent.*** Jesus also tells us not to lose heart, but to keep pestering our heavenly Father. In Luke 11:5-8

**\* *Pray with others.*** Jesus encourages prayer with others as well as private prayer. E.g. He instructs us to celebrate the Eucharist with others in his name (Lk 22:19). He also teaches that there is great value in joining our prayers with those of others:

*"I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them" (Mt 18:19-20).*

**\* *Pray with a forgiving heart.*** Finally, Jesus instructs us to pray with a forgiving heart. He doesn't want us to approach his Father full of anger and hate. We need a loving spirit in us to come to our Father in prayer.



## JESUS TEACHES THE PERFECT PRAYER: THE OUR FATHER

The Our Father, often called the Lord's Prayer, holds first place among all Christian prayers. From the earliest centuries until today, the Lord's Prayer has been used in the liturgy of the Church - in all the sacraments and especially in the Eucharist.

It is part of our daily prayer, and as well we recite it on special occasions, and whenever we gather to pray.



*Many schools pray the Our Father to begin assembly. Does your school do this?*

In the first part of the Our Father, we praise and honour God.

*What words in the Our Father do you think show this?*

In the second part we ask God for our daily bread.

*What are your needs at the moment? List two emotional and spiritual ones, as well as one physical or material one.*

In the Our Father, we also ask God to forgive us, in order for us to be forgiven ourselves.

*Share with a friend, someone that you need to forgive.*

In the last part of the Our Father we ask God to deliver us from evil.

*Make a list of some of the most common temptations you have in trying to live the Christian life. Write them on the Blackboard and agree on the three that are the greatest problems. What can you do about them?*

*Example:*

temptation to steal

temptation to gossip about others

temptation to spoil things

- • • • •
- The 'Our Father' has been translated •
- into many languages. Here it is in Tok •
- Pisin. Write out this prayer in another •
- language (but not English). •
- 
- Papa bilong mipela, yu stap long heaven. •
- Mekim nem bilong yu i kamap bikpela. •
- Mekim kingdom bilong yu i kam. •
- Strongim mipela long bihainim laik •
- bilong yu long graun, olsem ol i •
- bihainim long heaven. •
- Givim mipela kaikai inap long tude. •
- Pogivim rong bilong mipela, olsem •
- mipela i pogivim ol arapela i mekim •
- rong long mipela. •
- Sambai long mipela long taim bilong •
- traim. Na rausim olgeta samting nogut •
- long mipela. Amen. •
- • • • •

## PRAYER ACTIVITY: YOU AS GIFT

Imagine that you are entering a room to meet your friend Jesus. You are coming to him to give yourself to him. want to simply say, "Here I am, Lord."

What will he find? Look deeply into yourself and see what it is that you will show to him. Check off four things from the list below that describe the real you.

*hard-working, loyal, thoughtful, confident, open, affectionate, good, sensitive, humble, generous, friendly, courageous, forgiving, cheerful, humorous.*

After entering the room, what would you say first to Jesus?

Complete the following sentence:

*Here I am Lord, me, the one who is.....*



## CHARISMATIC PRAYER

Another style of prayer that is very popular in PNG with some people is charismatic prayer. You have probably heard of the Charismatic Movement which is strong in many Churches. *Charisma* in Greek means "gift".

Many parishes have active charismatic prayer groups. These groups often use a joyous, spontaneous, scripture-based way of prayer, with singing and enthusiastic praise of the Father. There may also be one or more of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

A common gift these groups have, is the gift of praying in tongues.

What is the gift of tongues?

Well, we are all temples of the Holy Spirit which means that the Spirit dwells within us and prays continuously on our behalf to the Father.

Sometimes when a person discovers the power of the Spirit within, and turns his or her life over to the Spirit, the Spirit uses the tongue and voice of the worshipper to praise, thank and worship the Father.

This gift is called the gift of tongues. It can sound quite unintelligible to others. Those not used to this kind of prayer can think the person is either faking prayer or is a bit crazy.

However St. Paul definitely says in the letter to the Corinthians, that this kind of prayer is a gift of the Spirit. He also says however, that it is one of the lesser gifts. He says that the gifts we ought to be concerned about and pray for, are the great gifts of faith, hope and love.

Chapters 13 and 14 of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians contain more about this style of prayer and you can read these chapters and study them. Some extracts are given below.

**1Cor 12:27-28:** *All of you are Christ's body, and each one is a part of it. In the church God has put all in place: in the first place apostles, in the second place, prophets, and in the third place, teachers; then those who perform miracles, followed by those who are given the power to heal, or to help others, or to direct them, or to speak in strange tongues.*

**Cor 13:8,13:** *Love is eternal. There are inspired messages, but they are temporary; there are gifts of speaking in strange tongues, but they will cease; there is knowledge; but it will pass. Meanwhile, these three remain: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love.*

**Cor 14:1-3:** *Set your hearts on spiritual gifts, especially the gift of proclaiming God's message. The one who speaks in strange tongues does not speak to others but to God, because no one understands him. He is speaking secret truths by the power of the Spirit. But the one who proclaims God's message speaks to people and gives them help, encouragement and comfort.*





### A Story:

Have you ever wondered what heaven and hell are like?

This was the answer that one person gave:

*Everyone in heaven and hell are in the same place!*

*They are all standing around a huge feast. The table is overflowing with the most delicious food. People can't wait to enjoy the feast.*

*Everyone in both heaven and hell is told that the food can be eaten only with a special spoon.*

*This spoon is one metre long - the same length as a blackboard ruler.*

*The people in heaven are very happy and enjoying their food while the people in hell are totally frustrated and unhappy.*

**Why? Can you guess?**

Can you get the end of a metre long spoon in your mouth? Try it with your blackboard ruler!

Well, those in hell are so used to thinking of just themselves, that they unsuccessfully try to feed themselves - an impossible task with a metre long spoon. So they are miserable and unhappy at the party.

Those in heaven, on the other hand, eat with out any problems because they use their very long spoons to feed each other. So they are content and happy at the same party!



True Christian prayer is a little bit like this description of heaven.

We do not stand alone before God. We are brothers and sisters who go to our Father together with our brother Jesus. Christian prayer is a communal thing.

Even if we sometimes think we are praying alone, Christian prayer is never just between one person and God.

Because of our baptism our prayers are united to those of the Lord Jesus and to those of the entire Christian family to which we belong. We are part of the Body of Christ. What a great thought, to know our prayers are joined with Jesus and with so many other holy people in the world!



In this last part of our unit we will look at our final style of prayer which is *shared prayer*. In this style we *consciously* join our prayers to those of our Christian brothers and sisters.

One of the simplest kinds of shared prayer is intercessory prayer, like the intercessions we say at Mass on Sundays.

### INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Another name for prayers of intercession, are prayers of petition, or a word we have already learnt in this book - supplication.

Some people do not put a lot of value into prayers of petition because they do not see the results of their prayer.



Maybe they prayed for good weather on their sports day and it rained. Or maybe they asked God to help them pass the test, and they failed. But, on the other hand, perhaps you have felt the power of prayer for others. Maybe you prayed that your unemployed father would find a job, and he did. Perhaps many times your prayers were answered - the way you wanted them to be.

Why is it that sometimes we feel that our prayers are answered and sometimes not? This is because we cannot totally understand everything about God and his plan for us.

Christians do believe that our loving Father answers all our prayers; it is just that we don't always recognize or want to recognize God's answer. **'No' can be an answer too!**

Also perhaps we are not persistent in our prayers.



I never thought that 'No' might be an answer to my prayers!

God is an all-loving Father who cares deeply for his children. But we must allow our Father the freedom to respond to our prayers in the way that is the

very best for us and for all others involved. We may never quite understand why our prayers are not answered the way we want them to be. But one thing is certain: God cares for us. And another thing, we will understand one day, when we get to heaven.

### Should we pray for each other?

Yes, because this is what the Lord himself did and continues to do today. As St. Paul writes in Romans:

**"He [Jesus Christ] not only died for us, he rose from the dead, and there at God's right hand he stands and pleads for us" (Rom 8:34).**

Jesus continues to be concerned about us today as he intercedes on our behalf before

the Father. He invites us to show this same concern for others, to pray for their needs.

*Answer the questions in the box below.*

*Record your answers in your book and then also share the exercise and the questions with a parent or another adult.*

*Record their answers next to your own.*

*Do you ever ask anyone to pray for you?  
Do others rely on you for your prayers?  
Do you believe in the value of praying for others - or for yourself?*

Another style of shared prayer is to pray with others. The value of this kind of prayer is stressed by Jesus himself:

***"I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them" (Mt 18:19-20).***

Many people find it easier to pray with others than alone. We are also more likely to be faithful to our prayer times when we have made a commitment to pray with others. Your parish or school might already have a prayer group that you can join.

But if not, have you ever thought of starting your own group?

It doesn't have to be a big group.

**If you are interested,  
the guidelines set out  
on the next page will  
help you**



At the first meeting, you need decide with your members on the following things:

*How often will you meet and for how long?  
Where and when can you meet?  
How large will the group be?  
Will you take turns leading the group?  
Will each session have a definite activity or will it just be time meditating together?  
Will you end with some social event?  
Will you invite any adult? You also need to inform those in charge of you, of your plans.*

A popular programme for prayer groups is reading and reflecting on God's word. There are three steps to this kind of group prayer.

### **Step 1: Reading God's Word**

Choose a bible passage.

Notify the members of the group so they can read the passage before the meeting. When the group meets, you can mention an intention for which the prayer session will be offered; e.g. for someone who is sick. You can also begin by singing a song or joining in with a tape. After the song, read the chosen passage. One person can read aloud while the others follow along from their own bible.

### **Step 2: Reflection on God's Word**

Have a period of silence and invite people to reflect on the bible passage. No one should be worried about the silence and trying to make conversation. Periods of silence are quite normal in group prayer and add to the quality of the sharing. The group can pray quietly at this time to have open hearts and to respect what others say. *Do not use group prayer to advise each other.*

### **Step 3: Shared Prayer**

Move into this third stage by singing a song or hymn related to the passage, or by reading the passage again. Shared prayer takes place when people are ready.

It must be spontaneous. Any person who wishes, just speaks his or her prayer directly to the Father.

Simplicity is the key word for shared prayer. If the group is seated in a circle, each person can have the opportunity to offer a prayer in turn, but no one should feel they have to.

It is a good idea to show you have finished your sharing by a short petition and "We pray to the Lord," to which everyone replies: "Lord, hear our prayer". When people know what is expected they feel more at ease. When everyone is finished, conclude with a song, or pray the 'Our Father'.

### **SILENT PRAYER PARTNERS**

The third and last style of shared prayer offered in this book is called 'silent' prayer partners. You might like to try this for a class project. Firstly, each person writes his or her name on a slip of paper. Anyone who wishes can also write a special intention for which he or she would like prayers.

Secondly, collect the slips of paper and put them in a box. Each student then draws out another person's name and in secret, prays for that person during the week. You can also offer sacrifices for that person as well as thinking about and praying for that person several times a day.

Lastly, at the end of the week, write a short note to the person for whom you prayed. Tell the person you liked the chance to pray in a special way for them. This is the time the person learns who has been praying for them.





# Topic Four

## Praying with the Saints

All of us have heroes: people we look up to and admire because of who they are, or what they have accomplished. Some of our heroes may be famous and well known; others might be known only by us.

1. List the name of the person you most admire in each of the following categories:

- a. Sport: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Politics: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Music: \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Television/movies: \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Share your list with your classmates and discuss the reasons for your choices. What is it that you admire about these people?

Well known sports stars, singers, movie and television stars, politicians and musicians are the most obvious of our heroes.

As well as these public figures however, we usually have an ordinary person we look up to and admire. They can be a parent or a grandparent, a friend, an auntie, a teacher, a fellow classmate. Whoever they are, they serve as a model for us. They are the kind of person we admire and would like to become.

The Christian community also has heroes, people we call saints. Saints were (and are) flesh-and-blood people like us. Saints laugh and cry, lose their tempers, have friends and families. They have to study and to pass exams. They have problems. They have good days and bad days.

The difference between most Christians and saints is that saints have decided, with their whole heart, to become what God wants them to become.

Saints have lived the following verses from the Book of Revelation. They have made a decision to be 'hot'.

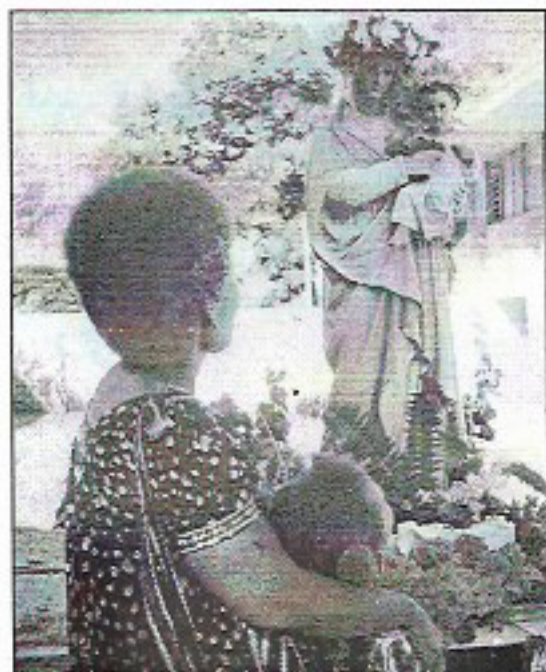
*"I know all about you: how you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were one or the other. Since you are neither, but only lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth" (Rev 3:15-16)*

Those we call saints are not lukewarm in their efforts to do God's will. We admire our saint heroes and heroines because they have done or are doing something that we know takes a lot of devotion, and perseverance. These people stand out as examples for us to admire and to imitate.

No saint became a saint without developing a friendship with the Lord. And this means praying. We are now going to look at four great Christian people to see what we can learn from them about prayer:

- **Mary, the Mother of Jesus**
- **St. Francis of Assisi**
- **St. Therese of Lisieux**
- **St Ignatius of Loyola**





There is no doubt that the greatest of saints is Mary. She provides an example to us, her spiritual children, of what it means to do what God wants. Mary shows many characteristics that make her the perfect model for Christian prayer.

Two qualities needed for a good prayer life are faith and humility. Faith, the virtue of trusting on the word of another, was at the heart of Mary's life. Not fully understanding why or how, Mary accepted in faith and trust the invitation to become God's mother.

***'I am the handmaid of the Lord,' said Mary, 'let what you have said be done to me' (Lk 1:38)***

Mary's trust in God's word helped bring forth Jesus into human life. But Mary was also humble. She knew that all that was happening in and through her took place through God's power.

***"The Almighty has done great things for me" (Lk 1:49)***

Those who are close to God pray often. So did Mary. For example, she rushed off to visit her cousin Elizabeth and sang joyfully with her of God's great goodness. We know she and Joseph presented Jesus at the time of her purification.

We know that they celebrated the Passover at the Temple when Jesus was twelve. If it was their first trip, they would have been watching Jesus closely. The fact that Mary and Joseph travelled one whole day without worrying about him, shows they probably made this trip to the Temple every year and perhaps even more often.

Surely Jesus learned his daily prayers from his mother (as many children do). Through her and St. Joseph he learned to read and respect the sacred Hebrew scriptures. After Jesus' ascension into heaven, Mary helped lead the early Christian community in prayer.

***"All these joined in continuous prayer, together with several women, including Mary the mother of Jesus" (Acts 1:14).***

Mary also shows us how to meditate and contemplate. We have two references where Mary shows this kind of prayer.

***As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart (Lk 2:19).***

***His mother stored up all these things in her heart (Lk 2:51).***

## PRAYING THE ROSARY

The most popular devotion to Mary - and a good way to meditate - is the rosary. No one knows exactly how the rosary began. Some say that St. Dominic received the Rosary in a vision.





### The Joyful Mysteries

1. **The Annunciation:** The angel tells Mary that she is to be the mother of Jesus. Luke 1:26-38
2. **The Visitation:** Mary visits her cousin. Luke 1:39-56
3. **The Nativity:** Jesus is born. Luke 2:1-21
4. **The Presentation:** Jesus is presented at the Temple and dedicated to God. Luke 2:22-38
5. **The Finding of Jesus:** Mary and Joseph find Jesus after searching for him for three days. Luke 2:41-52

### The Sorrowful Mysteries

1. **The Agony in the Garden:** Jesus thinks of his death Mk 14:32-42
2. **The Scourging:** Jesus is beaten by the Roman soldiers Mt. 27:26
3. **The Crowning with Thorns:** Soldiers put a crown of thorns on Jesus. Mt. 27:27-31
4. **Jesus Carries his Cross:** Jesus carries his cross to Golgotha. John 19:12-17
5. **The Crucifixion:** Jesus is nailed to the Cross and dies. Jn 19:18-30.

### The Glorious Mysteries

1. **The Resurrection:** Jesus is raised from the dead. John 20
2. **The Ascension:** Jesus is taken up into heaven. Acts 1:6-11
3. **The Descent of the Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit comes upon the Apostles. Acts 2:1-4
4. **The Assumption:** Mary is taken up into heaven
5. **The Coronation:** Mary is called Queen of Heaven.

\*The final two glorious mysteries are not found in the bible; they are based on the teachings of the Church.

Other religions however, also use prayer beads. Muslim prayer beads are called *subha*. Each *subha* has 33 or 99 beads which are used to recite the 99 beautiful names of Allah.

The Muslims probably got this practice from the Buddhists and Hindus of Central Asia who were also known to use prayer beads. The term rosary, comes from the association of roses with Mary.

For Christians in the Middle Ages, the rose was a symbol of joy, love and spring time. These qualities they also associated with Mary, and so used the rose as a symbol for her. The word *bead* comes from the Middle English word *bead* which means "a prayer". Rosary Beads are divided into five sets of 10 Hail Marys with a single bead for the Glory Be and Our Father inbetween. These five decades are arranged in a circle.

An additional part, which includes five beads and a crucifix, is used for introductory prayers.

#### How do we pray the rosary?

We begin at the crucifix with a sign of the cross and then recite the Apostles' Creed. We proceed to the next bead and recite the Our Father and then go to the next three beads (which symbolize either the Trinity or the virtues of faith, hope and charity).

On these beads we pray three Hail Marys.

We follow this with a Glory Be.

It is a custom to offer these introductory prayers for the Pope's intentions. After these introductory prayers, we recite the decades of the rosary. Each decade consists of one Our Father and ten Hail Marys. The most common prayer in the Rosary is the Hail Mary. This prayer developed over a long period of time. It is one of the most popular of all Christian prayers. The Hail Mary has a scriptural background and is made up of the following parts:

- (1) the words of the Angel Gabriel (Lk 1:28);
- (2) Elizabeth's words to Mary (Lk 1:42);
- (3) the sacred name of Jesus; and
- (4) words of petition.



# ACTIVITIES

Draw the following grid in your books. Find the words in dark print, and then with the *leftover letters*, complete the sentence.

G	M	O	T	H	E	R	T
O	O	M	A	R	Y	H	L
D	I	S	C	I	P	L	E
S	F	T	P	J	S	T	D
P	L	O	V	E	D	R	O
L	A	R	Y	S	L	U	M
A	I	Y	O	U	T	S	I
N	C	H	O	S	E	N	N

GOD'S PLAN, DISCIPLE, GOSPEL, STORY, LOVED, JESUS, MODEL, YES, CHOSEN, YOU, MARY, MOTHER.

Complete this sentence:

Mary had great ..... and ..... God. She shows us how to say 'yes' to God.

Complete the prayer

Hail Mary, full of grace, .....

.....

.....

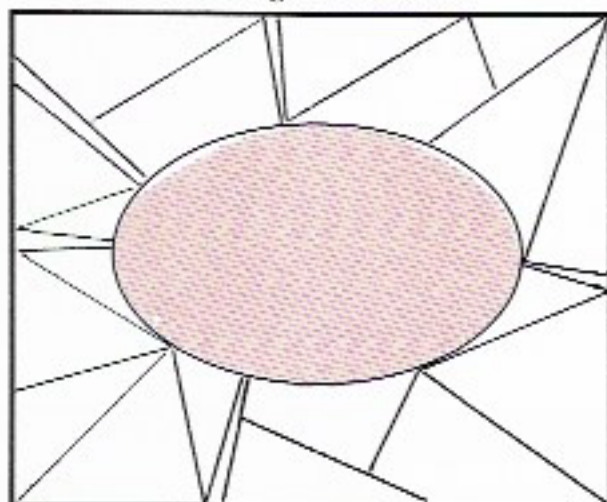
Hail Mary, full of grace  
the Lord is with you

Using the letters in the words given above, write down as many new words about Mary as you can.

People show their devotion to Mary in many ways. Add the first letter to the following words and you will have a list of the ways that people express their devotion to Mary.

1. By **praying** the \_ail \_ary, the \_osary, the \_ail \_ueen of \_eaven, the \_emorare, and by praying \_ovenas, asking Mary to intercede for us.
2. By **venerating** \_ictures, \_cons, \_tatues.
3. By **building** and **naming** \_hrines, \_onuments and \_churches in honour of her.
4. By **making** \_ilgrimages to special places that honour Mary.
5. By **reading** the \_criptures, and \_ories about Mary.

Draw a picture of Mary to complete the stained glass window.



## TEST YOURSELF

What cathedrals, and churches are named after Mary in Papua New Guinea?

How many girls in the school have the name Mary?

What special grace was Mary given?



## ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Next to Mary, the mother of Jesus, St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) is probably the most popular Christian saint. His joyous, simple and outgoing nature was dedicated to the spread of God's kingdom.

Before his conversion Francis was a rich young man who enjoyed the pleasures of a carefree life and the excitement of fighting. After a long imprisonment, a serious illness and a powerful religious vision, his life changed dramatically. He went to Rome on pilgrimage in 1206 and then devoted himself to a life of poverty, caring for the sick and the poor. His father, Peter Bernadone, did not understand him and disinherited him.

But Francis did not go back on his decision. After repairing some ruined churches, he came to understand what Jesus meant when he said 'Repair my Church' - not buildings but people. Francis attracted many followers and founded a religious community which was approved by the Pope. Francis and his friars dedicated themselves to a life of service to the poor, and to spreading the Good News of God's love.

Francis has much to teach us about prayer. He had a great devotion to the infant Jesus, building a crib at Christmas in the year 1223. The Christmas crib became a custom that is still honoured today.



We all like to meditate on this scene and it does us good to think about it often.

In it we are reminded that Jesus came to us as a tiny baby, not as a rich and powerful ruler. If you have a picture of the crib scene, put it near your sleeping place. When you make your examination of conscience at night, ask yourself

*'How have I been acting during the day?'*

*'With humbleness, like Jesus, or have I been proud and stubborn?'*

As well as meditating on Jesus' birth, Francis often meditated on the passion and sufferings of Christ.



*This is a picture of the crucifix from which Jesus spoke to Francis and said 'Repair my Church'.*

Francis never ceased teaching that God was a loving Father, and that we should not be afraid to approach him in a simple, childlike way. Francis also taught the importance of praising and thanking God. He composed many prayers.

One of the most famous is the 'Canticle of the Sun.' The word 'canticle' means 'song'. You have already learnt about this prayer in your Church history book.

Do you remember anything interesting about this prayer? **Hint:** How does Francis name the sun and the moon, and the other things God has created?



But Francis' most famous prayer, is his **'Prayer for Peace.'**

This prayer is as important today in the 21st century as it was 900 years ago.

Perhaps you know this prayer:

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;

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,

grant that I may never seek,

so much 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,

and it is in dying

that we are born to eternal life.

### MEDITATING WITH ST. FRANCIS

Read this prayer slowly. As you read each line, write down some examples of hatred, injury, doubt, despair, darkness and sadness in the following situations:

- (1) in the world
- (2) in Papua New Guinea
- (3) at your school
- (4) in your home

Ask the Lord to help you see how you can bring pardon, faith, hope, light, joy or consolation to someone, in at least one of these situations. Make up your mind to really do something with the suggestions God has given you in prayer.

### ACTIVITY

If we want to bring pardon, light, joy, and so on to others, we need to be a *compassionate* person.





**Complete the following sentence:**

Compassion is seen when

.....

.....

Change each picture to a compassionate one.

**Complete the prayer:** Loving God, we need your compassion in our world. Give us your spirit of compassion to.....



## St. Ignatius of Loyola

St. Ignatius of Loyola was a Spanish priest who founded the order of Jesuits. He taught his followers to reflect on their day and to think about the progress they were making on their spiritual journey. Many people have found his ideas about discernment very helpful.

In the next column is one of the activities he taught.

**This activity is best done at the end of the day. Do it in the quiet time when you are alone with yourself and your God. Practice it often and you will surely see progress on your spiritual journey.**

St Ignatius is also said to have written a prayer that we often use as a song, called the prayer of Self-Dedication to Jesus.

Do you know this prayer or song?



**Lord Jesus Christ,  
take all my freedom,  
my memory,  
my understanding,  
and my entire will.  
All that I have,  
All that I love,  
You have given to me.  
I surrender it all,  
to be guided by your will.  
Your grace and your love  
are wealth enough for me.  
Give me these, Lord Jesus,  
and I will ask for nothing more.**

1. Sit comfortably and close your eyes.  
Empty your mind  
of all thoughts.  
Let your body relax.  
Sit very still.  
Think of God, truly present  
within you.

2. Tell God about your life  
right now. Mention all  
the things that happened  
today.  
Did God's Spirit in you,  
help you today

.. to be kind to someone?  
.. to give help to someone?  
.. to encourage someone?

Remember these times.  
Thank God for helping you  
to be aware of others, and to  
respond to their needs.

3. Think: was anyone kind  
to me today?  
Thank God for the kindness.

4. Did you do anything today  
that you are now sorry about?  
Talk to God about the thing.  
Tell God how you feel.  
Ask God to help you  
deal with your problems.

5. Think about tomorrow, and  
what the day will be like.  
Ask God to help you to be aware  
of his loving presence  
within you and around you  
all through the day.  
Put tomorrow and all its cares,  
into God's loving hands.  
Leave them there.

6. Open your eyes,  
but keep still a bit longer.  
Move gently to your next  
activity.



## ST. THERESE OF LISIEUX

Therese was born in 1873 in France, the youngest of nine children. Her father was Louis Martin, a watchmaker. Her mother died when Therese was five; and she was raised by her older sisters and an aunt. Two of her sisters became Carmelite nuns, and Therese followed them at the unusual age of 15.

Therese had to get special permission to become a sister at such a young age. She took the name Therese of the Child Jesus. While in the convent she got tuberculosis, (TB) and died at the age of 24. At the insistence of two people, (one was her sister Pauline), Therese wrote her life's story called *The Story of a Soul*. It was completed shortly before her death. Now her autobiography is one of the most widely read books of the spiritual life.

**What can we today learn from a young nun who lived 100 years ago? Why does she remain a popular saint? What was it about her that inspired both generals and soldiers during World War 1, to carry a copy of her life with them and look to her as a symbol of bravery?**

The answer is that Therese showed us that we don't have to be among the famous people of the world to be a saint. She called her journey to the Father **'The Little Way.'** All it means is that we do the ordinary of things we usually do, but accepting each one as a gift from God, to be done out of love for Him.

Therese had the kind of trials that each of us experience. For example, she went out of her way to help a tired, complaining old nun. Nothing Therese did made the sister happy, but she continued to be kind to her, accepting her and not talking back. We too can do this. It is hard to accept the little crosses that come into our lives. It takes courage to keep quiet when we are unfairly blamed for something. We need great strength to go out of our way to help someone who doesn't like us. And it is very hard to suffer and not let others know about it! Therese did all these things. And so can we. She could do them because of her great love for Jesus and her strong faith.

## ST THERESE AND PRAYER:

Therese did not teach a complicated method of praying. She herself said she fell asleep during her prayers. But she said that God loved her just the same, just like parents love their children as much when they are asleep as when they are awake.

So Therese's message is very simple.

**We should do the most ordinary of things in an extraordinary way. True love does not hold back; it gives itself totally.**

Therese said she would spend her heaven doing good for people on earth, and those who pray to her, find this is true. She said when she died she would let fall a shower of roses (meaning blessings) on the earth and indeed she did. That is why she is always pictured with roses.

Even though she was a young person, who died in a faraway convent, she is patroness of the missions, because of the many graces that have come through her. She loved to offer sacrifices so that priests would be able to help people spiritually and bring them to Jesus. When something in her day was hard, she offered it to Jesus, to use for others.

What is different about Carmelite sisters?  
If you live close to a Carmelite convent, or any contemplative order, ask if you can go there for a class excursion.





# Topic Five

## Traditional prayers and prayer practices

In the last Grade 9 unit, we studied the seven Sacraments. We learnt that these are very special ways of coming close to Jesus. We found however, that one sacrament is above all the others, and that is the sacrament of the **EUCCHARIST**.

Some things are easy to explain and some are not. There are some things in life that are so rich in meaning that they cannot be described in just a few words. The Mass is one of these things. Its meaning and its value can never be fully explained. It has been the centre of Christian life from the beginning right down to our own time. Nothing can ever take its place.

There are many parts to the Mass. We studied some of them in the previous unit. Now, since we are talking about faith and growing in our relationship with Jesus, we come to the Mass again. The Mass is the greatest of all the traditional prayers or prayer practices of the Church, and the greatest way to come close to Jesus. St. Pius X, who was Pope at the start of the 20th Century, said:

*Holy Communion is the shortest and safest way to Heaven. There are others, innocence for instance, but that is for little children. There is penance, but we are afraid of it. There is generosity in suffering, but as soon as suffering comes, we cry and ask God to spare us. The surest, easiest, shortest way is by the Eucharist.*

Church teaching says that when we go to Mass, we are seated at two tables:

- the table of God's word,
- and the table of the Lord's body.

We do not wish to starve by missing either one of these meals.

Here is a hint for making these important parts of the Mass, opportunities to grow closer to Jesus. It may also make the Mass more interesting for you.

When you listen to the Gospel, pick out one of the people you feel close to at that moment. Then be that person as you walk up to receive Jesus in Holy Communion.

For example, we regularly come to Mass in a situation similar to that of one of the sick persons in the Gospel. Sometimes we feel leprous, unclean, unacceptable.

In communion then, we approach Jesus like the leper, and when the priest places the host in our hand, Jesus touches us and says: 'I will it. Be healed'. Remember these words from the Gospel, and hear them in your heart as you receive Jesus.

When the cure of the paralytic is read, then imagine it is you who are carried before Jesus by others. Who are the ones who support you and accompany you in your life? Imagine them taking you up to Jesus.





And then as the priest places the sacred host in your hand, hear the reply of Jesus: 'I command you: Stand up! Pick up your mat and go home.'

Or we can be the man with the withered hand. In the Mass, Jesus calls us from our place in the church, where perhaps we have been hiding.

We are forced to step out and stand before all the people. The others can see us. Listen to Jesus cry out to you: 'Stretch out your hand!'. We hold it out to him and he places himself in our hand. He puts himself in our hand, that we may stretch it out, dare to do something, allow ourselves to be touched by him. The body of Christ that we hold in our hand, is the promise that we can risk our life. If Jesus can risk himself in coming to us, then how much more reason have we to trust Jesus. He will most certainly treat us with respect.

The healing stories show that we do not have to go to Communion as perfect persons. We can approach Jesus with all our sicknesses and weaknesses, with all our faults and sins.

If our faith is little, and we are not even sure of who we are, we can come to Jesus like that man of Gerasene. When we hold out our hand to receive Jesus, imagine he asks us too: 'Who are you? What is your name?' And Jesus himself gives the answer: 'Here is my Body, it is given for you. You are worthwhile. I died for you.'

Sometimes we can be like the woman with the hemorrhage. Then Jesus says to us: 'Daughter, it is your faith that has cured you. Go in peace and be free of this illness'.

Perhaps we come to Communion like the woman bent over. He touches us, gives us his Body to show that it is all right to be as we are. Or perhaps we lie robbed and wounded by the roadside, alone and neglected by others. Jesus then approaches us as the Good Samaritan. He treats us with compassion and pours oil and wine on our wounds. The oil and wine are his body and blood. He carries us himself to the inn, which is his Father's place, until we are well again.

At another time in Communion, Jesus might

step into my boat, as he stepped into Peter's boat. Then I can be confident that together with him, I may quietly sail through the storms and waves of this life.

Or I can be one of the ten virgins, awaiting the bridegroom with great longing, careful to have enough oil in my lamp, coming to Jesus for a refill.



If we celebrate Mass with one of these images in mind, it will help to reveal to us, some of the wonder of what is actually happening during this great mystery. The Mass will take on newness each time, and will not be boring as some young people say.

*Take the image which the Gospel paints for you, and you will receive food from both the tables of the Lord.*

The Mass concerns us and our life. Try to answer the following questions honestly:

1. What are you doing right now to serve others at home?

-----

2. What are you doing right now to serve others at school?

-----

3. What are three things you can do to help others during a normal day?

a. -----

b. -----

c. -----



4. Which statement best describes you?

- I am doing a good job of helping others
- I am sometimes a help to others
- I need to help others more

## The Stations of the Cross

This prayer grew out of the custom of those lucky people who went to the Holy Land on a pilgrimage, to walk the steps Jesus took. They walked from where Pilate condemned him to death to where he was crucified. Most of us are unable to visit Jesus' country and see for ourselves, but in almost every church we can find the stations on the wall. Nowadays the stations of the Cross are mostly only made on Good Friday, but if you live near a Church, it is a very good thing to make them every Friday.

These stations are pictures that help us to imagine the sufferings of Jesus.

In meditation, we use our imagination to help us to pray. The Stations of the Cross then are a kind of meditation. They help us to use our imagination as they focus our attention on the passion and death of Jesus.

The Stations of the Cross bring to mind God's love for us. Reflecting on Jesus' suffering also helps us appreciate how valuable we are in God's eyes. Through the death and rising of our Lord Jesus Christ, comes eternal life for all of us. When we pray the Stations of the Cross - we are reminded that the Lord also tells us to join him in his passion, to pick up our own cross daily. Praying the Stations of the Cross is an excellent way to learn what it means to follow Jesus.

**A traditional prayer that is said when you come to each separate station is:**  
**We adore you O Christ and we praise you, because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.**

*Ask your teacher to take you to a church to make the stations of the Cross.*

## Novenas

The novena is another traditional Catholic devotion. A novena consists of saying certain prayers or one particular prayer for nine days in a row. The symbolism of the nine days is because Mary and the apostles spent 9 days in prayer between when Jesus ascended into heaven and when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost.

Many novenas are dedicated to Mary, Joseph or one of the other saints. They are prayed with the faith and hope that he or she will intercede for a special request that we have. Many students make novenas before their exams!

This is a novena prayer that is often said on the nine days before Christmas. However, it can be said at any time.

*Hail and blessed be the hour and the moment, when the Son of God was born of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Bethlehem. Remember that time dearest God, and hear my prayer and grant my petition because of this holy moment. I want to pray for*

*I ask this prayer through Jesus your Son. Amen.*

## Fasting

You might be surprised to see fasting as something we can do to help our prayer.

But when Jesus taught about **prayer** in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 6:1-18), he also taught about **fasting and almsgiving** (giving money to the poor). Jesus took for granted that his followers would pray, give alms and fast. He said 'When you fast...' This means it is expected. Otherwise he would have said: 'If you fast...' He taught that when we do these things we should not do them just to show off.

Fasting is a form of self-denial. This means we say no to some good thing out of love of God. Usually fasting is to do with food.



Three ways to fast from food are

- **We can stop eating between meals,**
- **We can take less at meals,**
- **Or we can also stop from certain foods, for a certain period of time.**

When we fast, we hunger - at least for a time. This hunger can remind us of our absolute dependence on God. Everything we have and everything we are is a gift from God. Fasting reminds us to be grateful to our loving Father who is the source of our life.

Abstaining from certain foods can also help to discipline us. Human nature tends to take the easy way out. We develop our spiritual strength when we freely deny ourselves some good things.

Following Jesus and living the kind of life he calls us to live, means that we must be ready to make sacrifices.

If we practice on little things, for example, not having vegemite or snacks on Fridays, then we will be more likely to be able to do the bigger things, like forgiving someone who has hurt us.

There is another time in the Gospel when Jesus connected prayer and fasting.

*Read the story below from Mark, Chapter 9:*

When they rejoined the disciples they saw a large crowd round them and some scribes arguing with them. The moment they saw them the whole crowd were struck with amazement and ran to greet him. 'What are you arguing about with them?' he asked.

A man answered him from the crowd. 'Master, I have brought my son to you: there is a spirit of dumbness in him, and when it takes hold of him it throws him to the ground, and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and goes rigid. I asked your disciples to cast it out and they were unable to.'

'You faithless generation' he said to them in reply. 'How much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me.' They brought the boy to him, and as soon as the spirit saw Jesus it threw the boy into convulsions, and he fell to the ground and lay writhing there, foaming at

the mouth. Jesus asked the father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' 'From childhood,' he replied 'and it has often thrown him into the fire and into the water, in order to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us.'

'If you can?' replied Jesus. 'Everything is possible for anyone who has faith.' Immediately the father of the boy cried out, 'I do have faith. Help the little faith I have!' And when Jesus saw how many people were pressing round him, he rebuked the unclean spirit. 'Deaf and dumb spirit,' he said 'I command you: come out of him and never enter him again.'

Then throwing the boy into violent convulsions it came out shouting, and the boy lay there so like a corpse that most of them said, 'He is dead.'

But Jesus took him by the hand and helped him up, and he was able to stand.

When he had gone inside, his disciples asked him privately, 'Why were we unable to cast it out?' 'This is the kind' he answered 'that can only be driven out by prayer and fasting.'

Try fasting as well as praying if you want something very special from God, and see what happens.

Jesus was able to cast out the devil from the sick boy, so he himself must have been practicing fasting.





## One-Liners

No one ever said prayers have to be long. In fact, Jesus tells us clearly: 'do not babble like the pagans'. Prayers can be as short as one sentence. One-line prayers often say what we are thinking better than many words or many hours of meditation.

One-line prayers can be used all through the day. When we say '*Jesus, I offer you the hard work of doing this assignment, or homework*' the time becomes a prayer.

Our morning offering can be a short one-liner:

e.g. **Lord, I offer you this day.**

Here are some more one-line prayers:

**Jesus, my Lord and Saviour, I love you.**

**Jesus, have mercy on me.**

**Lord, keep me from temptation.**

**Help me, Lord Jesus.**

**Holy Spirit, comfort me.**

**Mary, Mother of God, pray for me.**

**Thank you, Lord for creating this day.**

A very famous one-line prayer is called the **Jesus prayer**.

It is this:

**Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.**

This prayer has been said for many, many hundreds of years, both in the East and in the West, and people that pray it often say it becomes so much part of them, that it is one with their heart-beat. They pray it constantly.

Sometimes the prayer is reduced to just one word: **Jesus**.

**Try it and see what it does for you.**

*If you are too busy to pray,  
you are too busy.*

## TRADITIONAL PRAYERS

There are many other traditional prayers that people love, as well as the prayer practices that have been mentioned. You already know some of them, for example the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Creed.

Some others have been mentioned in this book - St. Francis' Prayer.

St. Ignatius' Prayer.

*Another loved prayer is one that is sometimes said when people are unable to go to Mass and receive Jesus in Holy Communion.*

**O Holy Angel at my side,  
Go to the church for me,  
Kneel in my place, at holy Mass,  
Where I desire to be.**

**At Offertory, in my stead,  
Take all I am and own,  
And place it as a sacrifice  
Upon the Altar Throne.**

**At holy Consecration's bell,  
Adore with Seraph's love  
My Jesus, hidden in the Host,  
Come down from heaven above.**

**And when the priest communion takes,  
Oh, bring my Lord to me,  
that His dear Heart may rest on mine,  
And I his temple be.**

In the next few pages there are some prayers that have been written for young people. You can use them sometimes when you want to pray, but can't seem to find the right words. You might like to copy some of them, or even make your own small prayer book.



**O God my Father,** help me today not to let anyone or anything stop me from being what you want me to be. Even if people are jealous of me, help me to be kind to them.

Even if people hurt me or laugh at me, help me to forgive them as Jesus forgave those who were crucifying him.

Even if things and people make it very hard for me to do what I know is right, help me still at least to try to do it.

Lord Jesus, help me to live today, in loyalty and obedience to you.

This I ask for your love's sake. Amen.



**Forgive me, O God,** for everything in which I have failed today. Forgive me for losing my temper when I should have controlled it. Forgive me for laughing at someone, when I ought to have kept quiet. Forgive me for refusing to listen to good advice and for being angry about correction, when we both know that I deserved it.

Forgive me for failing to do things as well as I could have done them. Forgive me for failing to work my hardest at my lessons, and my work. Forgive me for everything that I meant to do and failed to do, and for everything that I meant not to do and did do. Amen.



**O God,** give me a sense of responsibility. Keep me from doing things without thinking. Keep me from leaving an untidy mess behind me wherever I go.

Keep me from being careless or deliberately destructive. Help me always to use my time, and my life, wisely and well.

Help me always to be considerate of others.

Help me to realize all that is done for me, and to show by my good and cheerful conduct, that I am grateful for it. Hear this my prayer, for Jesus' sake. Amen.



**Lord God,**

Bless those who are ill, and who cannot sleep tonight because of their pain. Bless those who are in hospitals, in clinics and suffering in any way. Bless the doctors and nurses who are trying to help and to cure them. Bless those who are sad and lonely.

Bless those who are in prison and all those who are in any kind of trouble or disgrace.

Bless those who are far way from home, amongst strange people in a strange place.

Bless all those whom I love and all those who love me.

Bless me and help me to sleep well tonight.

I ask this in Jesus name. Amen.

**Lord God,**

Bless my school. Bless the headmaster, the teachers, the scholars and everybody in it. Help us all to work so hard and to play so well that everyone will respect and admire our school.

When I am in classes, help me to be good and attentive. When I am out of school, help me always to behave in such a way that I will be a credit to my school.

Help me to remember all that time that I am at school, that I am preparing myself to be a good citizen of my country, and a good servant of yours. Amen.



**O God**, thank you for keeping me safe all day today, from the time I got up in the morning until now it is time to go to bed and to sleep. Thank you for giving me health and strength to work and to play. Thank you for food to eat, clothes to wear and a place to sleep. Thank you for giving me people to care for me, teachers to instruct me, friends to work and to play with me. **Thank you for bringing me to this night, and for giving me sleep and a bed to sleep in.**

Thank you above all, for giving me Jesus to be my Friend, and to be with me all through the day and all through the night.

Grant that the memory of his presence may keep me from all wrong things by day, and from all fear by night. Amen.

### **Help me today, O God,**

To concentrate on my work at school, and not to let my thoughts wander, To do my share of the work without being told and without complaining, To enjoy my free time in a way that does good to myself and no harm to others. Help me to make this a happy day for myself and for all that I meet.

I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Lord God**, bless those who have to work while I sleep:

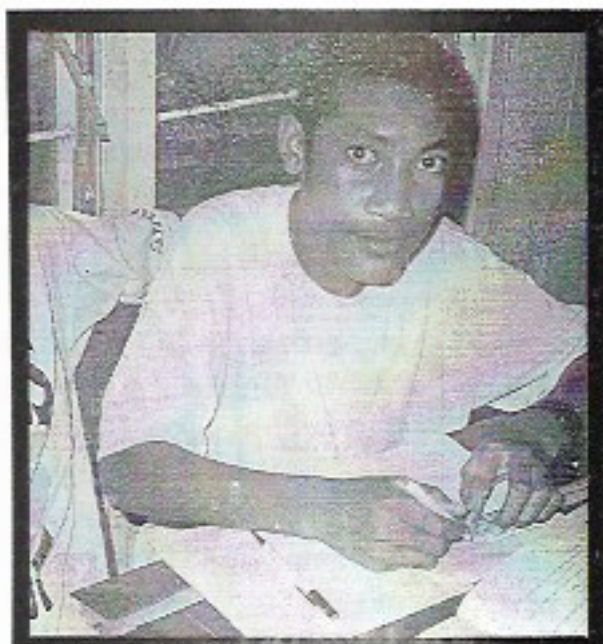
Those who work night shift, factory workers, those who bake our biscuits and bread;

Those who go on journeys on the roads and the sea and in the air, to bring us our letters, our newspapers, our food; Those who watch through the night to protect public peace and safety, such as police and security; Doctors and nurses and all who through the night must care for those who are ill and in pain; Help me to remember all those whose work keeps the world going while I sleep.

Lord, I know that you never sleep and that your care for me and your watch over me are unsleeping and unceasing.

Help me to sleep without fear, and to waken refreshed tomorrow.

I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.



**O God**, today I have a test. Help me at my test today, to remember all the things which I have learned and studied.

Help me to remember well and to think clearly.

Help me not to be so nervous and excited that I will not do well, and keep me calm and clear-headed. Help me to try my hardest and to do my best.

This I ask in Jesus name. Amen.

**O God**, I know quite well that I bring most of my troubles on myself. I leave things until the last minute, and then I have to do them in too big a hurry to do them properly. So I come to school with homework half-learned and half-done. I don't spend all the time I ought to spend in work and in study, although I always mean to. I get angry and impatient far too easily, and the result is that I upset myself and everyone else. I do things without thinking first, and then I am sorry I did them. I hurt the people I love most of all, and then, too late, I am sorry for what I said or did. It is not that I do not know what is right. I do know, but the trouble is I do not do it. I need your help to strengthen me and to change me. Please help me to do what I cannot do, and be what I cannot be, by myself. This I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.



Lord Jesus,

Help me to be a good follower of yours:

Always to follow your example;

Always to ask what you want me to do before I decide to do anything;

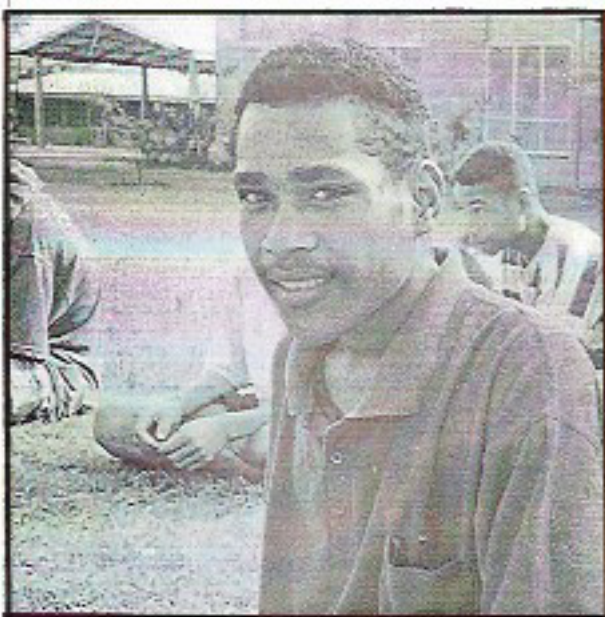
Always to ask for your help and your guidance.

Always to remember that you are with me, to hear what I say, to see what I do, to keep me from doing wrong, and to give me the help I need to do the right thing.

Never let me be afraid to show my loyalty to you, or to be ashamed to show that I belong to you.

Help me to remember all you have done for me, and to try to love you as you first loved me.

This I ask in your holy name. Amen.



Lord God,

Forgive me for all the things that I have left undone today; and forgive me for all the things I have left half-finished, and for the things which I never even started.

Forgive me for not saying 'thank you' to the people who have helped me, and for not saying that I am sorry, to the people whom I have wronged and hurt.

Give me your help tomorrow. Amen.

## ACTIVITIES

1. Explain the following terms in your own words. *Do not use a dictionary.*

adoration: contrition: supplication: thanksgiving: friendship

2. Put the following kinds of prayer from 1 to 4 in the order of how often you pray them:

Adoration - Thanksgiving - Contrition - Supplication.

3. Put the following ways of praying in order of how often you do them:

say morning and night prayers

join in the Eucharist

love God and think about Him

practice devotions such as the rosary or the stations of the cross

talk to God informally during the day

pray in a prayer group

read and meditate on the Bible

4. How much time do you give to prayer?

a. Over an hour each day

b. Half an hour per day

c. Less than half an hour per day

d. One or two hours per week

5. Are you satisfied with how much time you pray?

6. If God were each of the things listed below, what kind of thing would he be for you? E.g. if God were a flower, which kind of flower would he be: hibiscus, frangipani, or ....? Why did you choose this flower?

And if God were a tree... occupation... person... animal... jewel... building...

b) Explain why you described God in each way.

7. Choose a line from a favourite song, story or poem that could be a message from God to you.



## BENEFITS OF PRAYER

We Christians pray not only to adore and thank God, not only to ask him for things or to express sorrow, not even just because Jesus asks us to.

**We also pray because we get something out of it, something of great value.**

Here are some of the things that people often mention:

***\*Prayer contributes to my sense of self-worth.***

In prayer I discovered that God loves me and that he stays with me forever. In prayer I found out that I am worthwhile and very important.

***\* Prayer leads to happiness.***

We live in an age when people really search for happiness. But many look in the wrong place, in things or money or sex. These only satisfy us for a time. In prayer I learnt that our true source of happiness is God. Only God can fulfil me and all the secret longings of my heart.

***\*Prayer changes us.***

Just as water produces good plants in a garden, so prayer produces virtues in the one who prays.

I found that when I prayed, I increased in things like faith, hope, love, and humility. My heart became more compassionate and I had a desire to work for God's kingdom. What marvellous things these are!

***\*Prayer gives me more energy.***

Sometimes I am really busy during the day. And I think that I haven't got time to pray. When I don't pray, I find that I don't seem to get much done. But when I stop and pray, somehow the day goes better. I even get more energy. Prayer seems to calm me down so I can cope better with all the things that I have to do.

***\*Prayer has a healing effect.***

When I meet Jesus in prayer, I am healed. He touches and cures me. He forgives my sin and relieves my guilt over harm I have caused.

***\*Prayer helps solve our problems.***

I find that prayer helps me solve my everyday problems. Solutions often come to me when I settle down to pray and open up to the Lord. Sometimes I realize that the thing I thought was so important, is not really so important after all.

Other times I get the courage to act, even if I think other people are against me. When I pray, I am a happier, a more peaceful and more "together" person.

*Can you add anything else to these benefits that people have mentioned?*

We can see then that there are many good reasons for to pray.

No reason is greater, though, than deepening our relationship with God who loves us very much.

We will only discover these benefits, we will only deepen our relationship with our divine friend, if we take the risk and have the courage to pray.





## More prayers!

**Today O God,** make me  
 Brave enough to face the things of which I  
 am afraid;  
 Strong enough to overcome temptations;  
 Persevering enough to finish every task that  
 is given to me to do;  
 Kind enough to be ready to help others;  
 Obedient enough to obey your voice when  
 you speak to me through my conscience.  
 Help me  
     To live in purity;  
     To speak in truth;  
     To act in love  
 All through today. Amen.



**Thank you O God,** for all the gifts which  
 have made today and every day so wonder-  
 ful.  
 Thank you for books to read, wise books to  
 make me wise, books full of information to  
 help me learn, great stories to inspire my  
 heart and linger in my memory;  
 Thank you for music of every kind,  
 Thank you for games to play, for friendships  
 and places where I can meet and talk and  
 play with others.  
 Thank you for  
 My school in which to learn;  
 My home in which to love and to be loved  
 My church in which to worship,  
 Glory and thanks and praise be to you, for  
 all your kindness and your goodness to me.  
 Hear this prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

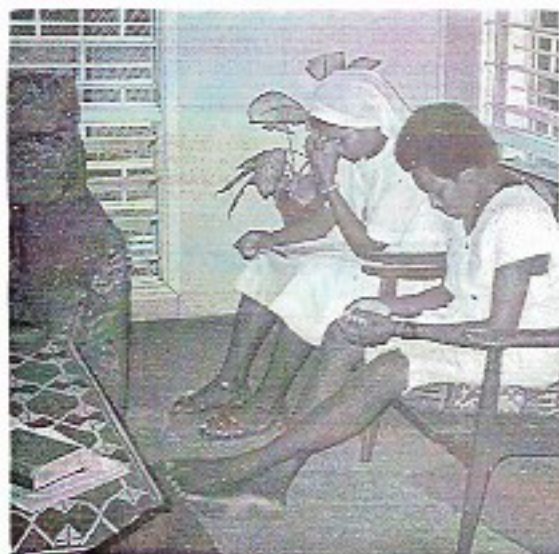


**O God,** give me in my life, the gift of peace.  
 Help me to take things calmly. Help me not  
 to get into a panic when things go wrong.  
 Help me not to worry but to take things as  
 they come, one day at a time. Help me not to  
 be nervous but to keep cool, when I have  
 something difficult or important to do.  
 Help me never to lose my temper, no matter  
 how annoying things or people may be.  
 Keep me Lord, calm and steady, so that I will  
 never collapse, and so that others may be able  
 to rely on me when they have difficulties.  
 I ask this prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Lord God,** give me in my life,  
     the gift of gentleness.  
 Help me never to speak an angry or a cruel  
 word, and never to do harmful things.  
 Grant that I may not find pleasure in hurting  
 any person or any animal.  
 Help me to be as careful of the feelings of  
 others, as I want others to be careful of my  
 feelings.  
 Help me not to be too rough and wild in my  
 behaviour, especially with those who are not  
 as strong as I am.  
 Make me especially gentle and thoughtful to  
 those who are little, those who are easily hurt,  
 and those who are sad or old. Amen.



**You  
special, miraculous,  
fragile,  
fearful, tender, lost,  
sparkling ruby,  
emerald jewel,  
rainbow-splendour  
person,  
it's up to you.  
Would it embarrass  
you  
very much  
if I were to tell you  
that I love you?**



Whether through the Mass, or by ourselves or in a prayer group, the time we spend with the Lord in prayer is the most valuable part of our day. Jesus demands very little of us. He just wants us to slow down a bit so that he can tell us that we are special, that we are miraculous, rainbow-splendour persons. He wants us to know both in our heads and in our hearts that he, his Father and the Holy Spirit love us very, very much. God does not shout at us. His presence in our life is like a gentle breeze, or a fresh river of crystal-clear water. He's there to give us his life, to assure us of his love, to strengthen us for the journey. But we need to stop, to pay attention, to listen to him. If we give time to prayer, our relationship with Jesus will grow. We will come to know who we are. Our faith will be strong. Faith and Prayer, they cannot be separated.



