



OFW Prayerbook

A Companion for Filipinos





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A Companion Book for the Journey

In response to the need of many Filipino migrant workers throughout the world for ongoing formation in the Christian faith, Claretian Publications offers a series of prayer books and Scripture reflection booklets. These books aim to help the OFWs (Overseas Filipino Workers) to nurture and strengthen their baptismal commitment as Christians, to live the faith and share in the Church's mission of proclaiming the Gospel, even as they work abroad.

OFW Prayerbook hopes to provide the OFWs with a companion both in their life as migrant workers and in their journey of faith as Christians in foreign lands. This simple and handy booklet of prayers contains the common traditional prayers and devotions of the Church, contextualized prayers for migrant workers, and a simple guide to Christian living.







Let us pray

Remember how much you prayed when you were still arranging your application to work abroad? Not only did prayer become part of your daily life, but you also said novenas to Mary and to the other saints to ask for their help and intercession. And now, you are here... Thanks to God's grace, to the intercession of the saints and the help of your family, relatives and friends in the Philippines. But life as a migrant worker in a foreign country is not easy. It is difficult to leave what has been familiar to us: our family and home, our relatives and friends, our job, even our daily routine and schedule. Though poor and simple, our life in the Philippines gave us a sense of security.

Now, we are far from the Philippines, separated from our family, away from our home, detached from the familiar and the security we had before. We now live in a foreign country where people have different customs and ways of understanding. They speak a different language, and though they speak English, it is difficult for us to understand their accent. And here we miss the *adobo*, *sinigang* and *sinangag* which we used to share with our family in the Philippines.

It is, then, to God that we turn, specially in moments when we feel sad and lonely, or when we miss the Philippines. It is in prayer that we make our *buntung-hininga* as we open our hearts to God, at times, in sighs beyond words, for it is in God that we find consolation and joy, that we feel encouraged and strengthened to go on with





our work abroad, that we feel united with those we love, but who we had to leave.

We turn to God as God's children that we may know what God wants us to do. We talk to God because we know that God always listens to us. But prayer is not only talking to God, it is also listening to God.

Prayer is being with God. The time we spend remaining quiet – doing nothing and just being with God – is also important. It is like being with someone we love, sometimes talking with each other and at other times, simply enjoying each other's company. So we also have to set a definite time and place to pray and be with God, specially in the midst of our usually busy day.

But prayer, first of all, is God's gift to us. It is God who gives us the grace to pray, for it really is the Spirit of God praying in us. Let us ask God for this gift, which God will surely give us.

Here are some prayers to help you begin in the way of prayer. Use them as a guide and support until the Spirit prays in you and prayer wells from your heart.





Pope Francis on Prayer

The encounter with Jesus Christ happens in daily life, in one's personal search in prayer, in the wise reading of the signs of the times (Mt 24:32; Lk 10:25-37), and in the midst of our brothers and sisters (Mt 25:31-46; Lk 10:25-37).



Only in the contemplation of the mystery of love which goes beyond distances and creates closeness will we find the strength not to fall into the temptation of stopping along the way.



It isn't God who must change but the person. This is the obvious goal of prayer, and that is the reason why prayer is the privileged place of exile where the revelation is given, that is, the passage from what one thinks of God to what he truly is. It is an exodus of purification where we are led by God through the dark night of the exile on the way to the contemplation of his face. Then, we finally will be changed and transformed into the likeness of him.



The prayer of praise is born only in those who know how to see in our history the presence of God who works wonders.



Prayer will lead the way both in good and difficult times to recognize the Word in all the suffering flesh as well as surrender our flesh to the will of God in order to live according to the Spirit.





To worship is to be filled of the love we have for the one we enter into communion with. None of us worship anyone we don't love or who doesn't love us. *We are loved by God! We are dear to Him! "God is love!"*



Be close to your priests with affection and with your prayers, so that they may always be shepherds according to God's heart.



Let us always pray for one another. Let us pray for the whole world that there may be a great spirit of fraternity.



"Only the Lord you will worship!" It is the only great unshakable rock from which to confront so many alluring invitations from the evil ones which in reality bring us only void and emptiness. Do not worship contemporary idols nor listen to their siren's enchanting songs. It is the great challenge of our present day for us, believers.





Diocese of Macau

Message from the Bishop of Macau

A book of prayer comes in handy for every devout Christian. It reminds the faithful of the necessity of prayer in life's journey. It also expresses one's sublime trust in a God who manifests himself in various circumstances.

The OFW Prayerbook invites the Overseas Filipino Worker to take seriously a life of prayer. It is a compilation of the traditional prayers as well as methodologies in encountering our God in the Word and in the silence of our hearts amidst the pressures of the society we live in.

So pause for a while, and pray... And through the intercession of Our Blessed Mother, may the Almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

+ Bishop José Lai, D.D.

Bishop of Macau





Diocese of Hong Kong


Message from the Bishop of Hong Kong

Without prayer, we cannot be real Christians. Prayer is as essential as breathing. We sustain our spiritual lives by offering praise and thanks to God, our Creator and Redeemer. We all need exercise. Taking time to pray daily, the periodic exercise of prayer, is essential, especially for those who are far from home and who feel like strangers in a big city.

As Pope Saint John Paul II repeatedly said, “There is no stranger in the Church.” There are so many Overseas Foreign Workers in Hong Kong and Macau, and the vast majority of Filipinos are Catholic. We have to be concerned about them. So I am glad to see the Claretians publish this OFW Prayerbook. Of course, people can pray without books. No single book is the be-all and end-all of prayer. Yet this particular book will be a great help for individual prayer, as well as for prayer in community. I hope that the Filipino community will welcome this OFW Prayerbook and find it beneficial.


+ John Cardinal Tong, D.D.
Bishop of Hong Kong






Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People

Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines



About eight million Filipinos or ten percent now of the country's population have moved out of the country either as OFWs or have become immigrants. Their number continues increasing daily. Those who leave the country carry with them their culture and religion. In the midst of uncertainty, as they travel, live and work overseas, the Filipinos are known to have sought refuge in their faith. Many others, who could not leave their working environment due to certain prohibitions, simply depended on their Bible, novena or rosary. Many OFWs claimed to have survived the ordeal of the tough life overseas attributed it to their prayers. Hence, the OFW Prayerbook would be a brilliant companion.



It is an excellent compilation of traditional prayers mostly introduced to us when we were younger and had still remained popular even when we have become adults. The book would definitely be a good tool for those who would like to learn other prayers meant for specific needs and situation. Likewise, it would be a simple and useful reference for those who would like to renew their devout life or continue to deepen their faith and spirituality.

May this prayer book assist every OFW to keep their faith, share it with others as they continue to look for greener pastures while sacrificing themselves for the better future of their loved ones.



Allow me now to bestow my episcopal blessing to every OFW using this prayer book. May God accompany you where your travels bring you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

+ Bishop Precioso Cantillas SDB, DD
Bishop of Maasin






From Pope Francis' *Message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees*


I think of how even the Holy Family of Nazareth experienced initial rejection: Mary "gave birth to her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (Lk 2:7). Jesus, Mary and Joseph knew what it meant to leave their own country and become migrants: threatened by Herod's lust for power, they were forced to take flight and seek refuge in Egypt (cf. Mt 2:13-14). But the maternal heart of Mary and the compassionate heart of Joseph, the Protector of the Holy Family, never doubted that God would always be with them. Through their intercession, may that same firm certainty dwell in the heart of every migrant and refugee.

The Church, responding to Christ's command to "go and make disciples of all nations", is called to be the People of God which embraces all peoples and brings to them the proclamation of the Gospel, for the face of each person bears the mark of the face of Christ! Here we find the deepest foundation of the dignity of the human person, which must always be respected and safeguarded. It is less the criteria of efficiency, productivity, social class, or ethnic or religious belonging which ground that personal dignity, so much as the fact of being created in God's own image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:26-27) and, even more so, being children of God. Every human being is a child of God! He or she bears the image of Christ! We our-






selves need to see, and then to enable others to see, that migrants and refugees do not only represent a problem to be solved, but are brothers and sisters to be welcomed, respected and loved. They are an occasion that Providence gives us to help build a more just society, a more perfect democracy, a more united country, a more fraternal world and a more open and evangelical Christian community. Migration can offer possibilities for a new evangelization, open vistas for the growth of a new humanity foreshadowed in the paschal mystery: a humanity for which every foreign country is a homeland and every homeland is a foreign country.



Dear migrants and refugees! Never lose the hope that you too are facing a more secure future, that on your journey you will encounter an outstretched hand, and that you can experience fraternal solidarity and the warmth of friendship! To all of you, and to those who have devoted their lives and their efforts to helping you, I give the assurance of my prayers and I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.



From the Vatican, 5 August 2013
Francis



Common Prayers

Here are some of the prayers our parents and grandparents, catechists and teachers taught us when we were young. Though we already know them by heart, may we rediscover the richness, even the newness, these prayers have when we pray them "heartily."

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail, Mary

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

Glory Be

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





The Apostles' Creed

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



Hail, Holy Queen

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy!
Hail, our life, our sweetness, and our hope.
To you do we cry,
poor banished children of Eve;
to you we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.
Turn, then, most gracious advocate,
your eyes of mercy toward us;
and after this, our exile,
show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus;
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!





Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known that anyone
who fled to your protection, implored your help,
or sought your intercession was left unaided.
Inspired by this confidence, I fly to you,
O Virgin of virgins, my Mother.
To you I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful.
O Mother of the Word Incarnate,
despise not my petitions,
but in your mercy, hear and answer me.
Amen.

Prayer for Peace

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 not so much seek
to be consoled, as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.





Prayer for Peace

Pope St. John Paul II

Lord Jesus Christ,
who are called the Prince of Peace,
who are yourself our peace and reconciliation,
who so often said, "Peace to you,"
grant us peace.
Make all men and women
witnesses of truth, justice, and brotherly love.
Banish from their hearts
whatever might endanger peace.
Enlighten our rulers
that they may guarantee and defend
the great gift of peace.
May all peoples on the earth become
as brothers and sisters.
May longed-for peace blossom forth
and reign always over us all.
Amen.

St. Benedict's Prayer


Gracious and holy Father, give us wisdom to perceive you,
intelligence to understand you, diligence to seek you,
patience to wait for you, eyes to behold you,
a heart to meditate on you, and a life to proclaim you
through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

Prayer for Generosity

St. Ignatius of Loyola


O Lord, teach me to be generous;






teach me to serve you as you deserve,
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labor and not to ask for reward,
save that of knowing
that I am doing your holy will.
Amen.

Soul of Christ



Soul of Christ, sanctify me,
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O Good Jesus, hear me.
Within your wounds shelter me.
Allow me not to be separated from you.
From the evil one protect me.
At the hour of my death call me
and bid me come to you,
that I may praise you
with all your saints for ever and ever.
Amen.



Prayer of Abandonment

Blessed Charles de Foucauld

Father, I abandon myself into your hands;
do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you:
I am ready for all, I accept all.



Let only your will be done in me
and in all your creatures—
I wish no more than this, O Lord.
Into your hands I commend my soul:
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart,
for I love you, Lord,
and so need to give myself,
to surrender myself into your hands
without reserve, and with boundless confidence,
for you are my Father.
Amen.

Apostolic Prayer of St. Anthony María Claret

O my God and my Father,
may I know you and make you known;
may I love you and make you loved;
may I serve you and make you served;
may I praise you and make all creatures praise you.
My Father, grant that all sinners may be converted,
all the just persevere in grace,
and all of us attain eternal glory.
Amen.

St. Francis of Assisi's Vocation Prayer

Most high, glorious God,
enlighten the darkness of our minds.
Give us a right faith, a firm hope
and a perfect charity,
so that we may always and in all things
act according to your holy will.
Amen.





Serenity Prayer

God, grant me
the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time,
enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardship as the pathway to peace.
Taking, as he did, this sinful world as it is,
not as I would have it.
Trusting that he will make all things right
if I surrender to his will;
that I may be reasonably happy in this life,
and supremely happy with him forever in the next.
Amen.

Prayer to the Sacred Heart

I give and consecrate myself
to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ,
my person and my life, my actions, pains and sufferings,
so that I may be unwilling to make use
of any part of my being other than to honor,
love and glorify the Sacred Heart.
This is my unchanging purpose, namely, to be all his,
and to do all things for the love of him,
at the same time renouncing with all my heart
whatever is displeasing to him.
I therefore take you, O Sacred Heart,
to be the only object of my love,
the guardian of my life, my assurance of salvation,





the remedy of my weakness and inconstancy,
the atonement for all the faults of my life
and my sure refuge at the hour of death.
Be then, O Heart of goodness,
my justification before God the Father,
and turn away from me the strokes
of his righteous anger.
O Heart of love,
I put all my confidence in you,
for I fear everything
from my own wickedness and frailty,
but I hope for all things
from your goodness and bounty.
Remove from me all that can displease you
or resist your holy will;
let your pure love imprint your image
so deeply upon my heart,
that I shall never be able to forget you
or to be separated from you.
May I obtain from all your loving kindness
the grace of having my name written in your Heart,
for in you I desire to place all my happiness and glory,
living and dying in bondage to you.
Amen.

Prayer to the Guardian Angel

Angel of God, my guardian dear
to whom God's love commits me here.
Ever this day be at my side
to light and guard, to rule and guide.
Amen.





Prayer Before Meals

Bless us, O Lord, and these your gifts which we are about to receive from your bounty through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Prayer After Meals

We give you thanks, O Lord, for all these gifts that we have just received from your bounty through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Act of Contrition

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy.

Come, Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful
— and enkindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created
— and you will renew the face of the earth.
Let us pray. Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit
you have taught the hearts of your faithful;
grant that through the same Spirit
we may be always truly wise
and ever rejoice in his consolation.
Through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.





Angelus

Leader: The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.

Response: And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary...

Leader: Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

Response: Be it done unto me according to your Word.

Hail Mary...

Leader: And the Word was made flesh.

Response: And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary...

Leader: Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

Response: That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray. Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts, that we to whom the incarnation of Christ, your Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may, by his passion and cross, be brought to the glory of his resurrection. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Queen of Heaven

Recited in place of the Angelus during Eastertide

Queen of heaven, rejoice! *Alleluia.*

For he whom you merited to bear, *Alleluia.*


Has risen, as he said. *Alleluia.*

Pray for us to God. *Alleluia.*

Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, *Alleluia.*

For the Lord has risen indeed. Alleluia.







Let us pray. O God, who through the resurrection of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, willed to fill the world with joy, grant, we beseech you, that through his Virgin Mother, Mary, we may come to the joys of everlasting life. Through the same Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

O Mary, Bright Dawn of the New World

Pope St. John Paul II



O Mary, bright dawn of the new world,
Mother of the living,
to you do we entrust the cause of life:
look down, O Mother, upon the vast numbers
of babies not allowed to be born,
of the poor whose lives are made difficult,
of men and women who are victims of brutal violence,
of the elderly and the sick killed
by indifference or out of misguided mercy.
Grant that all who believe in your Son
may proclaim the Gospel of life
with honesty and love to the people of our time.
Obtain for them
the grace to accept that Gospel as a gift ever new,
the joy of celebrating it with gratitude
throughout their lives
and the courage to bear witness to it resolutely,
in order to build, together with all people of good will,
the civilization of truth and love,
to the praise and glory of God,
the Creator and Lover of life.
Amen.




Prayer to Mary, A Migrant with Joseph and Jesus


Mary, when you accepted to be the mother of Jesus,
you also accepted to suffer with him
even before his time had come.

When he was an infant,
you had to leave your homeland
and flee to Egypt with Joseph and Jesus
that you may save your Child,
God's Son and our Savior.

You experienced being away from your home
and lived as a stranger in a foreign land;
you left behind the security and the comfort
of being in one's own country
and faced a life of uncertainty and insecurity.



Now, dear Mother,
we, too, are migrants and strangers in this land;
we had to leave our family and loved ones,
to suffer pain and loneliness away from our homes,
that we may provide them with a better future.
Accompany us as you accompanied Joseph and Jesus,
be with us to comfort us with your motherly care,
and teach us to trust and never lose hope
in the Father's unconditional love and concern
for us, his children,
so when that day comes when we finally go home,
we bring with us, not only our hard-earned wealth,
but the true Treasure God has given us—
Jesus, your Son and our Brother.
Make our family like yours.
Amen.





Prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe

O Mother of the Americas and the Philippines,
you came on a dark hill in a dark time
to one who had no documentation.
To the challenge of the authorities,
you offered roses and grace.
You wanted a space, simple and extraordinary,
a space where all could gather together,
equally as your children.
You call us again in this dark time
to create a space where all of us
are welcomed, cherished, offered bread, roses,
and what grace we can share.
May we bring that space wherever we are.
Our Lady, still shining,
Mama Mary, share with us again your mantle,
that we may also bring roses of goodness and grace
to the people to whom you send us
in the places where we work and live.
In this land far from home, dear Mother,
be our comfort and protection.
Amen.

A Prayer for Migrants

Almighty and merciful God,
whose Son became a refugee with Joseph and Mary,
and had no place to call his own,
look with mercy on us,
who today leave our homeland
for the sake of our families,





and suffer the loneliness of separation
from our country and loved ones.
Be with our families
as you were with the Holy Family;
bless those who welcome us into their midst;
strengthen our faith in your love and providence
that we may work not only for our wage,
but as our share in building your kingdom on earth.
Amen.

Act of Consecration of the Church to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

O Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church,
we entrust to you the entire Church.
Remember all your sons and daughters;
make their prayer effective before God;
preserve them solid in faith;
strengthen their hope and increase their charity.
We entrust to your Immaculate Heart
the whole human race;
lead them all to know
the one true Savior, Christ Jesus.
Free them from the punishment of sin.
Grant the whole world true and lasting peace
in justice, in freedom and in love.
Make the whole Church rise to the God of mercies
a hymn of joy, thanksgiving and rejoicing
for the wonders the Lord has worked through you,
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.
Amen.





Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Pope St. John Paul II, 1990

Behold, as we stand before you, Mother of Christ, before your Immaculate Heart, we desire, together with the whole Church, to unite ourselves with the consecration which, for love of us, your Son made of himself to the Father: "For their sake," he said, "I consecrate myself that they too may be consecrated in the truth." We wish to unite ourselves with our Redeemer in this his consecration for the world and for humankind which, in his divine heart, has the power to obtain pardon and to secure reparation.

O Mary, who more than any other human being has been consecrated to the Holy Spirit, help your Son's Church to persevere in the same consecration, so that she may pour out upon all the wondrous benefits of redemption and sanctification for the liberation of the whole of creation. You, who were with the Church in the beginning of her mission, intercede for her in order that, going all over the world, she may continually teach all the nations and proclaim the Gospel to every creature. May the Word of Divine Truth and the Spirit of Love find an opening in the hearts of people, who, without this truth and without this love, really cannot live the fullness of life.

You, who have known in the fullest way the power of the Holy Spirit, when it was granted to you to conceive in your virginal womb and to give birth to the Eternal Word, obtain for the Church that she may continue to give new





birth through water and the Holy Spirit to the sons and daughters of the whole human family, without any distinction of language, race, or culture, giving them in this way the “power to become children of God.”

You, who are so deeply and maternally bound to the Church, preceding the whole People of God along the way of faith, hope and charity, embrace all who are on the way, pilgrims through temporal life towards eternal destinies, with that love which the Divine Redeemer himself, your Son, poured into your heart from the Cross. Be the Mother of all our earthly lives, even when they become tortuous, in order that we may all find ourselves, in the end, in that large community which your Son called the fold, offering his life for it as the Good Shepherd.

You, who are the first handmaid of the unity of the body of Christ, help us, help all the faithful, who feel so painfully the drama of the divisions of Christianity, to seek with constancy the way to the perfect unity of the Body of Christ by means of unconditional faithfulness to the Spirit of Truth and Love, which was given to them by your Son at the cost of the cross and of death.

O Mother of Jesus, now glorified in heaven in body and in soul, as the image and beginning of the Church, which is to have its fulfillment in the future age here on earth, until the day of the Lord comes, do not cease to shine before the pilgrim people of God as a sign of sure hope and consolation.

Holy Spirit of God, who are worshiped and glorified with the Father and the Son, accept these words of





humble consecration addressed to you in the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Nazareth, your bride and mother of the Redeemer, who the Church too calls her mother, because right from the Upper Room at Pentecost she has learned from her own motherly vocation. Accept these words of the pilgrim Church, uttered amid toils and joys, fears and hopes, words which are the expression of humble and confident trust, words with the Church, forever consecrated to you, Spirit of the Father and of the Son, in the Upper Room at Pentecost, does not cease to repeat together with you to her divine Bridegroom: Come! "The Spirit and the Bride say to the Lord Jesus, 'Come.'" "Thus the Church is seen to be a people brought into unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Thus we repeat today, "Come," trusting in your motherly intercession, O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary. Amen.

A Prayer for Refugees and Migrants

from The Scalabrinian Pilgrim's Prayer Book

Sisters and brothers, let us pray with confidence to God, our Father, who has promised through the words of Jeremiah the prophet: "When you will invoke me I will listen to you. I will gather you from all countries where you have been scattered and you shall return from the land of your exile."

For the refugees and migrants' countries of origin, as well as for the host countries: may they rid themselves of all violence and racism, and promote communion and solidarity. We pray to the Lord:

— *Protect, Lord, all refugees and migrants.*





For respect for minorities: may each person experience true equality of rights and duties in the school, at work, and in every other field. We pray to the Lord:

— *Protect, Lord, all refugees and migrants.*

For foreign workers: may they not be seen as competitors, but as qualified co-workers in building a more open and inter-ethnic society. We pray to the Lord:

— *Protect, Lord, all refugees and migrants.*

For migrant children: may they become instruments of communion among the various cultures, and the first fruits of a reconciled and brotherly society. We pray to the Lord:

— *Protect, Lord, all refugees and migrants.*

For elderly and lonely migrants: may they find the warmth of a family and a homeland which will give them not only assistance but a reason for living and hoping. We pray to the Lord:

— *Protect, Lord, all refugees and migrants.*

All powerful Lord, send your holy angel to go forth and accompany all the children of misery and labor scattered throughout the world.

As you have looked after the Family of Nazareth, exiled to the land of Egypt to avoid the sword of persecutor, renew the miracles of your mercy. Heal the wounds, forgive the offenses, restore the dignity which has been taken away. Help migrants to be ministers of communion and to work together for the creation of a new world. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.





Daily Prayers

Sunday Morning Prayer

Make every effort to keep among you the unity of Spirit through bonds of peace. Let there be one body and one spirit, for God, in calling you, gave the same Spirit to all. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God, the Father of all, who is above all and works through all, and is in all.
—*Ephesians 4:3-6.*

I praise you, Lord, this morning
on the day of your resurrection.
On this day, you triumphed over sin and death,
and brought us new life.
It is also this day when our whole family are at home,
away from work and school,
but now that I am away from them,
how I wish I could go to church with them,
to watch a movie and eat out,
or simply while away the time with them.
May you be ever present with my family;
console them when my loved ones miss me
and, though separated from one another,
unite us together in your love.
Be with me on this day of rest
as I join my sisters and brothers in church
to celebrate the Eucharist,
that we may be nourished and strengthened
by your body and blood.
Amen.





Monday Morning Prayer

If anyone is not willing to work, neither should that one eat. However, we heard that some among you live in idleness—busybodies, doing no work. In the name of Christ Jesus, our Lord, we command those people to work and earn their own living. And you, brothers and sisters, do not weary in doing what is right. —2 *Thessalonians* 3:10-13.

God, you began the work of creation
and entrusted to us to continue what you had begun.
I thank you for the strength you give us,
for the grace of work that we receive from you.
In the beginning of a new work week,
grant me the strength that comes from you
that I may truly share in your work
of creating and building up a world of peace,
of understanding, of love and compassion.
Be with me as I begin another week
that as I go to work, I may bring you with me
and that I may be a living sign
of your loving presence to those I will meet today.
Bless my workplace that there be harmony
among us who work there;
bless my colleagues that they, too,
may share in your goodness;
and bless my employers
that they may be gracious and just to us,
their cooperators
in the work you have entrusted to us.
Amen.





Tuesday Morning Prayer

This is the time to awake for our salvation is now nearer than when we first believed; the night is almost over and day is at hand. Let us discard, therefore, everything that belongs to darkness and let us put on the armor of light. As we live in the full light of day, let us behave with decency. —*Romans 13:11b-13a*.

Lord God, you make the sun rise
at the beginning of a new day;
you nourish the earth and fill us with your goodness.
Enlighten us throughout this day
that we may be aware of your abiding presence,
that we may ever walk in your ways.
Nourish us with your Word
that what you speak may take flesh in us
in our daily life and work.
Though far from my homeland,
may your light shine on the Philippines:
guide our government leaders
to be just and honorable,
bless those who are poor and weak,
and make us truly your people.
I pray for my family and loved ones
(here mention their names):
bless and guide them;
unite us all in your love
and together as one family,
we will praise and bless you, our Lord and God.
Amen.





Wednesday Morning Prayer

Do not do to another what you would hate done to yourself. Give your bread to those who are hungry and your clothes to those who are naked. Take counsel of those who are wise and do not despise any useful advice. In all circumstances, bless the Lord and ask him to make your ways upright, and to make your plans and projects succeed. —*Tobit 4:15a, 16a, 18-19a.*

Heavenly Father, you made us in your image
as brothers and sisters to one another.

I praise and thank you this morning
as you make the sun rise for all your children,
for the rich and the poor alike,
for the sinner and the just,
for both the residents and the foreigners.

I begin this day in your Name;
be with me to guide me
that I may do good to everyone I meet today.

Open my eyes to see your goodness in everything,
my ears to hear you speaking in the events of daily life,
my heart to welcome you into my life
and those who are in need of understanding and love.

Bless us, O God, in this land
and make us a living sign of your presence
to the people around us,
specially those who we work with
and those we work for.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

Amen.





Thursday Morning Prayer

The kingdom of God is not a matter of food or drink; it is justice, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, and if you serve Christ in this way, you will please God and be praised by the people. Let us look, then, for what strengthens and makes us better. —*Romans 14:17-19*.

Lord Jesus, you are the Word of the Father, made flesh,
you became one of us to proclaim
the coming of God's Kingdom among us,
the reign of justice, peace and joy in our world.

Send us your Spirit

that we may be your joyful witnesses
in the midst of selfishness and materialism;

make us instruments of your peace,
teach us how to be just

that we may live in harmony and peace
with the people of our host country.

Grant us the spirit of true service in our work
so that we may work not only for money,
but as a way of sharing in the continuing work
of changing the face of the earth
according to the Father's will.

May we remain firm in our faith
and strong in our determination to follow you,
who has brought us to this land of opportunity.

Bless my family and loved ones in the Philippines,
so that even if I am far from them,
we may feel united in the love we have for each other.
Amen.





Friday Morning Prayer

Do not let even one bad word come from your mouth, but only good words that will encourage when necessary and be helpful to those who hear. Do not sadden the Holy Spirit of God, which you were marked with. It will be your distinctive mark on the day of salvation. Do away with all quarreling, rage, anger, insults and every kind of malice: be good and understanding, mutually forgiving one another as God forgave you in Christ. —*Ephesians 4:29-32*.

God, our Father,
you sent to us your Word to show us your face
and you gifted us with the grace to believe in him.
You marked us with the Holy Spirit in baptism
as a people redeemed by your Son,
a chosen nation to be a light to the world
a living sign of your love for humankind.
As you had brought us to this place as migrant workers,
may we become the distinctive signs
of your compassion and love among those
with whom we live and work.
Throughout this day,
may I speak but words of encouragement
that build and not destroy;
take away from my heart any anger or malice,
that I may radiate your goodness and love.
I also pray for my family in the Philippines
and those who have asked me to pray for them:
bless them and grant them the grace they need.
Amen.





Saturday Morning Prayer

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not wish evil on anyone. Rejoice with those who are joyful, and weep with those who weep. Live in peace with one another. Do not dream of extraordinary things; be humble. —*Romans 12:14-16a*.

Lord,
this morning is your gift to us—
the beginning of a new day
and the end of a week of work.
You know how much we suffer
in our life as migrant workers.
Away from our homeland and our own families,
we bear the burden of loneliness and homesickness,
and endure being misunderstood and rejected by others.
Yet, you also understand us
for you yourself endured problems and persecution
as you became the Son of Joseph and Mary.
May we learn from your example
how to be good and not wish evil on anyone.
Make us more sensitive to the needs of others,
of our colleagues and employers,
and of those who live with us.
Send us your Spirit to unite us together
in our community of faith in this place,
sharing with one another the joys and sorrows,
the sufferings and the triumphs
that our life in a foreign land may bring.
Amen.





Sunday Prayer Before Going to Bed

They will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of lamp or sun for God himself will be their light and they will reign forever. —*Revelation 22:4-5*.

Personal Examination of Conscience

Now, O Lord,
you can dismiss your servant in peace
for you have fulfilled your word
and my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you display for all the people to see.
Here is the light you will reveal to the nations
and the glory of your people, Israel.
(*Luke 1:29-32*)

Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.

God, our Father,
forgive me whatever sins I have done this day:
the things I should not have done but did,
and the things I should have done but didn't do.
You have been with me throughout this day,
especially in the celebration of the Eucharist;
with you, my family and I remain united in spirit
though I am far from them.
Bind us more closely with one another
and grant that my family and I may waken to a new day,
strengthened by your grace and full of joy and hope.
Amen.

Hail, Mary...



Monday Prayer Before Going to Bed

For God has not willed us to be condemned, but to win salvation through Jesus Christ, our Lord. He died for us so that we might enter into life with him, whether we are still awake or already asleep. —1 *Thessalonians* 5:9-10.

Personal Examination of Conscience

Now, O Lord,
you can dismiss your servant in peace
for you have fulfilled your word
and my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you display for all the people to see.
Here is the light you will reveal to the nations
and the glory of your people, Israel.
(*Luke* 1:29-32)

Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.

Lord, thank you for this day,
for your grace of strength and work.
Thank you for the rest you give us every night,
for this time of quiet and rest to be alone with you.
It has been a tiring day, but with your help,
and the support of my family in the Philippines,
I am able to go on.
As I remember them,
may you be with them throughout this night;
protect us and grant us the rest we need,
so that we may awake to a new day in your Name.
Amen.

Hail, Mary...





Tuesday Prayer Before Going to Bed

Be sober and alert because your enemy, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Stand your ground, firm in your faith, knowing that our brothers and sisters, scattered throughout the world, are confronting similar sufferings. —1 Peter 5:8-9.

Personal Examination of Conscience

Now, O Lord,
you can dismiss your servant in peace
for you have fulfilled your word
and my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you display for all the people to see.
Here is the light you will reveal to the nations
and the glory of your people, Israel.
(Luke 1:29-32)

Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.

Father, with the setting of the sun,
you give rest to the world.
Give that same rest and comfort
to my country and my family;
gladden the hearts of those
who suffer the loneliness of this night.
As you have enlightened us throughout this day,
may your Spirit shed on us this night
the light that comes you,
a comforting light, a light that saves.
Amen.

Hail, Mary...





Wednesday Prayer Before Going to Bed

Be angry, but do not sin: do not let your anger last until the end of the day, lest you give the devil a foothold. —
Ephesians 4:26-27.

Personal Examination of Conscience

Now, O Lord,
you can dismiss your servant in peace
for you have fulfilled your word
and my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you display for all the people to see.
Here is the light you will reveal to the nations
and the glory of your people, Israel.
(*Luke 1:29-32*)

Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.

God, our Father,
thank you for this day;
you give us the night to rest and be renewed.
Bless this land and all those who live here;
may your Spirit reign in hearts
to make us your family,
whether residents or migrants,
poor or rich, believers or non-believers,
for we are all your children.
Bless the Philippines, too,
and my loved ones who wait for my return,
that someday we may all be united again.
Amen.

Hail, Mary...





Thursday Prayer Before Going to Bed

May the God of peace make you holy and bring you to perfection. May you be completely blameless in spirit, soul and body till the coming of Christ Jesus, our Lord. —1 *Thessalonians* 5:23.

Personal Examination of Conscience

Now, O Lord,
you can dismiss your servant in peace
for you have fulfilled your word
and my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you display for all the people to see.
Here is the light you will reveal to the nations
and the glory of your people, Israel.
(*Luke* 1:29-32)

Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.

Lord,
it has been a busy day.
Thank you for the moments of rest throughout this day
and for the occasions of having lifted up
my heart and mind to you in prayer.
As we come to the end of this day,
make the things we have done today
be like seeds sown to bear the fruits
of justice, mutual understanding and love.
Bless the people of our host country
even as you bless our families and homeland.
Amen.

Hail, Mary...





Friday Prayer Before Going to Bed

You are in our midst, Lord, and on your Name has been invoked. Do not abandon us!—*Jeremiah 14:9b*.

Personal Examination of Conscience

Now, O Lord,
you can dismiss your servant in peace
for you have fulfilled your word
and my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you display for all the people to see.
Here is the light you will reveal to the nations
and the glory of your people, Israel.
(*Luke 1:29-32*)

Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.

Our Father,
you have accompanied us this day
as we share in your work.
We saw you in the people we met this day,
we heard you in the events that happened today,
we were with you,
working and making things better
according to your will.
As we lie down to rest,
grant to us and those we love
your protection and blessing
that we may awake rested and joyful
in your presence.
Amen.

Hail, Mary...





Saturday Prayer Before Going to Bed

Listen, Israel: the Lord, our God, is One Lord. And you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength. Engrave on your heart the commandments that I pass on to you today. Repeat them over and over to your children, speak of them when you are at home and when you travel, when you lie down and when you rise. —*Deuteronomy 6:4-7.*

Personal Examination of Conscience

Now, O Lord,
you can dismiss your servant in peace
for you have fulfilled your word
and my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you display for all the people to see.
Here is the light you will reveal to the nations
and the glory of your people, Israel.
(*Luke 1:29-32*)

Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.

God, our Lord,
in your love, you brought us to the end of this day.
Inflame our love for you
with all our heart, soul and strength;
and may we put this love into practice
in our love for our sisters and brothers.
Bless us this night, refresh us with your Spirit,
engrave your words on our hearts.
Amen.

Hail, Mary...





Healing Prayer Before Going to Bed

Lord Jesus,
through the power of the Holy Spirit,
go back into my memory as I sleep.

Every hurt
that has ever been done to me,
heal that hurt.

Every hurt
that I have ever caused another person,
heal that hurt.

All the relationships
that have been damaged in my whole life
that I am not aware of,
heal those relationships.

But, O Lord,
if there is anything that I need to do,
if I need to go to someone
because he or she is still suffering from my hand,
bring to my awareness that person.

I choose to forgive,
and I ask to be forgiven.



Remove whatever bitterness
may be in my heart, Lord,
and fill the empty spaces with your love
that I may rest and sleep in your peace
and in the Father's warm embrace.

Amen.



Prayer When One Cannot Sleep

God,
you created the day for us to work
and the night as the time to sleep and rest.
But tonight I find it difficult to go to sleep;
I feel restless and my mind seems to wander.
Grant me your peace, Lord,
to still my mind, to calm my heart,
and to relax my tired body.
Banish all the anxieties,
all the worries and concerns
that preoccupy me.
Let me hand them over to you
even for this night,
that I may rest safe and secure in your presence
for you are ever with me
and your love never changes.
Amen.





Marian Prayer Day by Day

Pope St. John Paul II

Sunday

Mary, Mother of our Redeemer and Mother of the Church, we offer you the praise of the Angel of the Annunciation—Hail, full of grace! Through you the Holy Spirit gave this world Jesus its Savior—Son of God, Word made Flesh, Foundation of the Church. Amen.

Monday

Through you God's holy people, his Church on earth, appeals for light and strength in its pilgrimage of faith. You have gone before us on the same journey and are now glorified in heaven. Be for us who are still on that journey of faith a true Star of the Sea, leading us to the presence of your Son where he sits at the right hand of the Father, enthroned in glory. Amen.

Tuesday

You were the first to believe. You persevered in prayer with the disciples in the Upper Room. You were a unique witness to the mystery of Jesus. All generations have called you blessed. Now in this Marian year God's holy Church looks yet again to you for inspiration and help. Amen.

Wednesday

Be our Mother. Share with us your limitless faith. Take and keep us within your protective arms in a world that has largely lost faith and abandoned hope. Petition for us from your Son—as once you did so powerfully at Cana of





Galilee—an increase of vocations to the priesthood and the religious life so that the Church may flourish in our time and thereby magnify his name. Touch the hearts of all our youth that they may see in every walk of life an opportunity to serve. Amen.

Thursday

Take from all our hearts the selfishness that sours relationships and keeps us centered only on ourselves. Give us hearts aflame with charity and filled with love. Make us, like the apostle John who was commended to your care, loving children of our heavenly Father, conscious always of your maternal presence in our lives. Amen.

Friday

Look favorably upon your children in our failure to provide the one flock under one shepherd for which Jesus prayed. Shine forth for us and for all the peoples as a sign of sure hope and solace as we strive to make our pilgrimage of faith hand in hand. Be our common Mother who prays for the unity of God's family. May we see in you our model of that obedience of faith which should be found in all who listen attentively to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches. Amen.

Saturday

He who is mighty has done great things for you. Humbly we ask that you in turn may do for us these things for which we pray in the name and through the power of that most Holy Spirit who lives and reigns in the unity of the Father and the Son, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.





Special Prayers

Prayer of a Wife

God, our Father,
marriage is your gift to me and my husband,
my beloved partner in raising our family.
I sometimes miss him now that I am far from him.

Bless us, Lord, and unite us in your love
that we may remain faithful to each other
in spite of our physical separation.

When that day comes
when I will go home and be with him,
strengthen the love we have for each other.

Amen.

A Mother's Prayer for Her Family

Father,
you know how I love my family,
how important they are in my life.
It is for them why I left the Philippines
and came to work abroad,
in the hope that I could provide
my children with a better future.
Yet, the pain of separation, specially from my kids,
is a very heavy burden to bear.

I know that they also miss me.
Be with them to guide them and help them,
accompany them in my absence
that they may grow in wisdom and love.

Amen.

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Prayer of a Husband

God, our Father,
I thank you for giving me the grace
of meeting the woman in my life.
She is your wonderful gift;
she has been an inspiration and a joy to me.
Now that I work in a foreign land
and so far away from her,
I miss her so much:
her smile, her warm embrace,
her understanding and encouragement.
I pray for her that you may console her in her loneliness
even as renew my commitment to love her
and to be faithful to our marriage vows always.
Amen.

A Father's Prayer for His Family

God,
you yourself are a father like me
and you know how it is to feel and be one.
It is not enough just to provide for the material
and physical well-being of my children,
for they, too, need my presence at home.
But as I have to work abroad to support my family,
may you be the Father of my family.
Bless my wife and my children,
bind all of us together in your love,
and make our family like that of the holy family
of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in Nazareth.
Amen.
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Prayer of a Single Parent

Dear God,
you, too, are a Parent—
the loving Father and caring Mother
of all your children.
You have gifted me with beautiful and loving children:
the joy of my heart and the reason for my life.
You know how difficult it is to raise them alone,
more so now that I work abroad
and am far from them,
but with your grace,
help me to be like you—
a loving father and a caring mother to them—
that they may grow to be your loving children.
Amen.



A Family Prayer

God made us a family;
he gave each one of us as a gift to each other.
We need one another; we accept one another.
We love one another; we forgive one another.
Together we work, play, rest, and worship you,
the God and Father of us all.
Make your Word alive in us
that we may love all people,
that we may serve you in them.
though we be in different places, far from one another,
be always near to us that through your love,
our family may remain one.
Amen.





Prayer for Healing the Family Tree

John H. Hampsch CMF

Heavenly Father, I come before you as your child, in great need of your help. I have physical health needs, emotional needs, spiritual needs, and interpersonal needs. Many of my problems have been caused by my own failures, neglect and sinfulness, for which I humbly beg your forgiveness, Lord. But I also ask you to forgive the sins of my ancestors whose failures have left their effects on me in the form of unwanted tendencies, behavior patterns and defects in body, mind and spirit. Heal me, Lord, of all these disorders.

With your help I sincerely forgive everyone, especially living or dead members of my family tree, who have directly offended me or my loved ones in any way, or those whose sins have resulted in our present sufferings and disorders. In the name of your divine Son, Jesus, and in the power of his Holy Spirit, I ask you, Father, to deliver me and my entire family tree from the influence of the evil one. Free all living and dead members of my family tree, including those in adoptive relationships, and those in extended family relationships, from every contaminating form of bondage. By your loving concern for us, heavenly Father, and by the shed blood of your precious Son, Jesus, I beg you to extend your blessing to me and all my living and deceased relatives. Heal every negative effect transmitted through all past generations, and prevent such negative effects in future generations of my family tree.

I symbolically place the cross of Jesus over the head





of each person in my family tree, and between each generation; I ask you to let the cleansing blood of Jesus purify the blood lines in my family lineage. Set your protective angels to encamp around us, and permit Archangel Raphael, the patron of healing, to administer your divine healing power to all of us, even in areas of genetic disability. Give special power to our family members' guardian angels to heal, protect, guide and encourage each of us in all our needs. Let your healing power be released at this very moment and let it continue as long as your sovereignty permits.


In our family tree, Lord, replace all bondage with a holy bonding in family love. And let there be an ever deeper bonding with you, Lord, by the Holy Spirit, to your Son Jesus. Let the family of the Holy Trinity pervade our family with its tender, warm, loving presence, so that our family may recognize and manifest that love in all our relationships. All of our unknown needs we include with this petition that we pray in Jesus' precious Name.

Amen.

Prayer for the Philippines

God, our Father,
it was your will that our country be evangelized
many centuries ago.
If only our country's economy were as rich as our faith,
then, the Philippines would indeed be paradise.
It is for this that so many of us, OFWs,
have to leave our homeland
and be separated from our families.







We pray, Lord, that you will gather us again
from the many nations of the world
to return us to our homeland and families,
happy and able to live a just and decent life.
Amen.

A Teacher's Prayer

I want to teach my students
how to live this life on earth,
to face its struggles and its strife
and improve their worth.
Not just the lesson in a book or how the rivers flow,
but how to choose the proper path
wherever they may go.
To understand eternal truth
and know the right from wrong
and gather all the beauty of a flower and a song.
For if I help the world to grow in wisdom and grace
then I shall feel that I have won
and I have filled my place.
And so I ask your guidance, God
that I may do my part for character and confidence
and happiness of heart.
Amen.



A Domestic Helper's Prayer

Lord,
the needs of my family brought me to work
as a domestic helper in this country.
I now take care of the home and household




of other people:
looking after their child (children),
preparing their meals,
cleaning their house,
staying practically the whole day at home.
But my own family misses me.
Help me to be strong in my present situation
and teach me to be faithful in my work of service,
that the people I live with and serve
may see how it is to be a Christian.
Bless this family, specially their child (children),
that peace and understanding may reign in this house;
give them health in mind and body.
Bless also my family in the Philippines,
console us as we miss each other
and long to be together.
Grant that someday all of us
may be united again as one family.
Amen.

A Security Guard's Prayer

Heavenly Father,
I thank for this work and responsibility.
Here I am standing guard in a foreign land
that people here may feel safe and secure.
Help me be worthy of their trust.
Give me strength, Lord,
that I may remain alert and ready
to defend and protect those under my care.
Save me from all harm and danger,







 specially when I work at night.
 Bless my family in the Philippines;
guard and protect them from all evils,
 and keep them safe.
 Amen.

Prayer of OFW in Service Industry

 God, our Father,
thank you for the grace of work and employment.
 Though far from my family in the Philippines,
 I know that you are always with them.

 Be also with me in my work,
 so that I may better serve those
 who come to rest or do business
 in my place of work.

 May I be diligent in my service
 and sensitive to needs of others,
 that I may give witness
 to what Christian service is.
 Amen.



An Office Worker's Prayer

 Lord God,
 our workplace is like that of a beehive
where everyone is busy with his /her work.
 Help me do my share in our work
 with diligence and dedication;
take away any boredom that may come
 that I may work with zeal and a smile.
 Send us your Spirit



that there be friendship and harmony
among my officemates and me;
form us into a community
as we work for a common good.
I also pray for my family:
may you always bless them
as I work far from my country and loved ones.
Bind us all in your love.
Amen.

Prayer for Migrant Workers

Heavenly Father,
we pray for millions of migrant workers
throughout the world,
who have left their homeland in order to work
and provide financial support for their families.
We pray for the many migrant workers
who are subject to a great deal of abuse
and are often victims of discrimination
because of their gender, race, color,
language, religion or origin,
especially for those living in places
where there is war or violent conflicts,
and are in a very difficult situation.
We pray for all the volunteers
from the church communities
who help them in their distress.
God, you stand with all who fight
against discrimination and injustice,
protect and give courage to all who continue





to speak out for these often forgotten people.
Challenge us all in the churches
that we are all created in the image of God
and remind us that Jesus came
so that we all may have life to the full.
Teach us to embrace all who are suffering,
and to recognize your presence
in the lives of the migrant worker.
Amen.

Prayer for the Country of Employment

Lord,
you brought me to this land,
a country different from the Philippines,
a place far from my home and family.
But even here, I know and feel
that you are always with me,
blessing me and guiding me.

Bless this land, O Lord:
though they speak a different language,
let there be understanding among us
through our common language of love;
with their own tradition and values,
let there be harmony among us
in our search for the common good.
Grant that we, the OFWs here,
may serve as a sign of your loving presence
and a bridge between our people and theirs,
for we are all your children.

Amen.





Prayer for One's Sponsor

Lord,
we are your special gift to one another.
It was by your grace
that my sponsor and I met
so that I can find employment in this country.
Bless her (him/they), Lord,
and make her (his/their) work prosper.
May there be understanding
and harmony between us.
Help me to know my sponsor better,
and in turn, make her (him/their) know me as well.
May there be a meeting
of different minds and cultures
in our relationship.
Teach us to accept and appreciate
what we have to offer to each other.
Amen.

When Applying for a New Job

Lord God,
work is a grace we receive from you,
even as you let us continue your work of creation.
You had brought me to this land
and had given me the grace
to work and support my family.
Now, that I am in need of a new job,
grant that I may find work,
not only to earn a living for my loved ones and myself,
but so as to share in your work.





Send your Spirit, Lord,
that I may radiate your love and goodness
to the people I will meet,
specially my prospective employers.
Amen.

When Renewing One's Work Contract

God,
I thank you for the grace
of having finished my contract.
With your blessing,
the days, the weeks, the months, the years
passed seemingly unnoticed,
and full of welcome surprises.
Now, as I will renew my contract,
grant me the grace to remain dedicated to my work,
steadfast in living the faith
and in giving witness to you.
Bless my sponsoring employer
that we may work in harmony
and mutual understanding.
Bless my family in the Philippines
as I begin another year of living away from them.
Amen.

On the Night Before the Day Off

Dear Lord,
tonight I end my work-week
and prepare for my day off tomorrow.
Thank you for this past week:





for the grace of strength
and for letting me use my talent and ability
as I worked in my place of employment.
Bless the many workers this night, O Lord,
that we may be refreshed and renewed
when we wake up and have our holiday tomorrow.
May our day off be a day of rest and relaxation,
a time to be with our friends and community,
a day to have fun and be united with you,
and with our loved ones in spirit,
and an occasion to strengthen
our commitment to you
and our families in the Philippines.
Amen.

On One's Day Off

God,
you rested on the seventh day
and asked us to make that day of rest holy.
We thank you, Lord, for this day
as you give us time to rest
after having worked for the past week.
As we have shared with you in your work,
may we also be with you on our day of rest.
Be with us that we may dedicate this day to you,
guide us that we may spend the day with you,
and teach us to enjoy the day with our friends
that we may go home, refreshed and renewed,
ready for another workweek.
Amen.





A Birthday Prayer

God, our Father,
you gave us life
and made us share in your Breath—
the Spirit, dwelling in us.
I celebrate my birthday today;
thank you, Lord, for the gift of life.
You have been with me throughout the years
and have always accompanied me
in my life's journey, even to this land.
I thank you for the many people
you sent into my life—
they who love and care for me;
we are you special gifts to one another.
How I wish I could be with my family
on this special day!
Make this day, then, a day of blessing
for my loved ones and me;
bind us in your love
and make us faithful to you and to one another
so that someday I may celebrate this day
with them in the Philippines.
Amen.

When Sad

Father,
at times, I cannot help feeling sad,
especially when I am alone
or when I have some problems at work,
and sometimes, I just feel sad for no reason at all.



Send me your Spirit, Lord, to console me;
give me the joy that comes from knowing
that you love me and care for me.
Let me feel your loving presence to make me smile.
Amen.


When Feeling Homesick

Jesus,
you experienced being away from the Father
when you became one like us.
You also experienced living in a foreign land
with Joseph and Mary in Egypt.
Now, as I live away from my country and family,
I cannot help but feel homesick—
I miss our place, our home, my family.
I miss the times my loved ones and I spent together,
chatting or playing,
or just being together.
Though poor, we were very happy then.
Don't let sadness or loneliness overwhelm me;
instead, give joy to my heart
and console me with the knowledge
that you are always with us,
blessing my family and homeland.
Amen.

When Overwhelmed by Problems



God, loving Father,
you want only what is good for us.
I thank you for bringing me to this place





to find work and so support my family.
I know that there will always be problems in life,
but may these not overwhelm me.
Strengthen my faith in you
that I may lift them all up to you.
Grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.
Amen.

When Sick



O Jesus,
you went around healing the sick
and making people whole;
you want us to live life to the full and be happy.
Now that I am sick,
and far from my family,
come and be with me,
let me feel your loving presence,
touch me with your healing hands
and drive away the illness
that keeps me on this bed,
heal me,
so that renewed and strengthened
with your Spirit,
I may return to my work
and serve you again
in my sisters and brothers.
Amen.



Prayer to Santo Niño

Most Sweet Jesus, in your love for humankind, you became one of us to show us the Father's love. You were born as a Child—our Santo Niño—the Baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, the Prince of Peace and the Everlasting Radiance of the Father. You have blessed our country, the Philippines, with the great devotion to your holy childhood for even as we now live and work in a foreign land, we still pray, sing and dance to you as we rejoice in your coming to live among us: true God, yet truly human and one like us in everything, except sin.

In our devotion to you, Lord Jesus, show us that you did not remain a baby and a child. As you grew in wisdom and age, help us to grow and mature as your disciples. As you went around preaching the Good News to people, strengthen our baptismal commitment that we, too, may preach your Gospel in our word and deed. As you carried the cross to die for our sins on Calvary, grant us the grace to offer our life for the sake of others, specially those closest to us in the Philippines. As we suffer and die with you, bring us with you to that new life of God's children.

Teach us, dear Santo Niño, not to be childish in our faith but to be a child of the Father like you—poor and weak and trusting only in God. Show us the Way, the Truth and the Life: God's way that we learn, grow and live a fully human life, which is the truth you proclaimed that we may share in the Father's life.

Amen.





Prayer to Saint Joseph

O most holy spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and father of Jesus, our Savior and Brother, guide and protect us with your fatherly love. You accepted to be the guardian of our Savior, you protected him and his Mother when in danger and provided them for their needs. You watched Jesus grow and formed and educated him to be a loving and faithful Child of God. Now, that I am away from my family, be their guardian and protector; guide my children to God and teach them to be loving and faithful. Pray for us to God that we may be like your family in Nazareth. Amen.

Prayer to Saint Joseph, Patron of Workers

Glorious Saint Joseph, you are the pattern of all who work. Obtain for me the grace to work conscientiously and to put devotion to duty before my selfish inclinations. Help me to labor in thankfulness and joy, for it is an honor to employ and to develop by my labor the gifts I have received from almighty God. Grant that I may work in order, peace, and patience without shrinking from weariness and difficulties, in appreciation of the grace of work God has given me. May there be harmony and mutual understanding among my colleagues, my employers and me in our workplace. For Jesus through Mary, all in imitation of you, good Saint Joseph. Amen.

Prayer to Saint Jude

O most holy apostle, St. Jude, faithful servant and friend of Jesus, the church honors and invokes you universally,





as the patron of hopeless cases, of things almost despaired of. Pray for me, I am so helpless and alone.

Make use, I implore you, of that particular privilege given to you, to bring visible and speedy help where help is almost despaired of. Come to my assistance in this great need that I may receive the consolation and help of heaven in all my necessities, tribulations, and sufferings, particularly (state your request) and that I may praise God with you and all the elect forever.

I promise, O blessed St. Jude, to be ever mindful of this great favor, to always honor you as my special and powerful patron, and to gratefully encourage devotion to you. Amen.


Prayer to Saint Anthony to Find What Is Lost

St. Anthony, when you prayed, your stolen book of prayers was given back to you. Pray now for all of us who have lost things precious and dear. Pray for all who have lost faith, hope or the friendship of God. Pray for us who have lost friends or relatives by death. Pray for all who have lost peace of mind or spirit. Pray that we may be given new hope, new faith, new love. Pray that lost things, needful and helpful to us, may be returned to our keeping. Or, if we must continue in our loss, pray that we may be given Christ's comfort and peace. Amen.

Prayer to St. Zita, Patroness of Domestic Helpers

Dear Saint Zita, follower of the Son of God, you desired to become a servant and died the death of a slave. You were not only faithful in your work as a servant, but helped





and loved the poor. Like Mary you could have said: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord.” Prompt all domestic helpers to be just and charitable, seeing in their employers children of God and setting an example for them as servants of God. Amen.



A Blessing of the Family or Household

Household Blessings and Prayers

National Conference of (U.S.) Catholic Bishops (1988) pp. 207-210

All make the sign of the cross. The leader begins:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all, now and for ever.

Response. Amen.


The leader may use these words, or words adapted to the specific occasion, to introduce the blessing:

We are a family. For one another, we are love and trial, strength and trouble. Even when far apart, we belong to one another and, in various ways, we remember and pray for one another. We join now to give thanks to our God and to ask God's blessing on our family (those who are present and those who are not here).

Then the Scripture is read:

Col 3:12-17. ¹²Clothe yourselves, then, as is fitting for God's chosen people, holy and beloved of him. Put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience ¹³to bear with one another and forgive whenever there is any occasion to do so. As the Lord has forgiven you, forgive one another. ¹⁴Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵May the peace of Christ overflow in your hearts; for this end you were called to be one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you in all its richness. Teach and admonish one another with words of wisdom.

With thankful hearts sing to God psalms, hymns,



and spontaneous praise. ¹⁷And whatever you do or say, do it in the Name of Jesus, the Lord, giving thanks to God the Father through him.


(Alternative readings may be used, such as Eph 4:1-6, or 1 Cor 12:31-13:7.)

*The reader concludes. The Word of the Lord.
All respond. Thanks be to God.*


After a time of silence, all offer prayers of intercession, remembering especially those who have died. Then all join hands for the Lord's Prayer.

Shared intercession / Our Father...

The Leader says the prayer of blessing.



O God,
you have created us in love and saved us in mercy,
and through the bond of marriage
you have established the family
and willed that it should become
a sign of Christ's love for his Church.
Shower your blessings on this family
gathered here in your name.
Enable those who are joined by one love
to support one another
by their fervor of spirit and devotion to prayer.
Make them responsive to the needs of others,
and witnesses to the faith in all they say and do.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
Response. Amen.



Or...



In good times and in bad, in sickness and in health,
we belong to each other as we belong to you,
God ever faithful.

By morning and by night
may your name be on our lips,
a blessing to all our days:
so may kindness and patience be ever among us,
a hunger for justice, and songs of thankfulness
in all we do.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

Response. Amen.

Or...

You willed, Lord,
that we meet one another in this place
and gathered us together in this house.
As we live away from our families in the Philippines,
bind us as one family of God
in our love and concern for one another.
May your love reign in this house.

Response. Amen.

*The leader may sprinkle all with holy water, or each one may take
holy water and make the sign of the cross.*

May the Lord Jesus,
who lived with his holy family in Nazareth,
dwell also with your (our) family,
keep it from all evil, and make all of you (us)
one in heart and mind.

Response. Amen.

The leader says. Let us bless the Lord.

All respond, making the sign of the cross.





Praying the Holy Rosary

The holy rosary is a series of prayers and reflections on the story of our salvation in Jesus Christ. It is composed of twenty decades, divided into four parts. Each part consists of five decades. Every decade refers to a mystery in our Lord's life. The first part recalls the birth and the hidden life of Jesus (Joyful Mysteries); the second part remembers his passion and death (Sorrowful Mysteries); while the third part brings to mind Jesus' resurrection (Glorious Mysteries); and the fourth recalls Jesus' public life (Luminous Mysteries or Mysteries of Light). Meditating on each mystery, we say one Our Father, 10 Hail Marys and one Glory Be.

Joyful Mysteries

Recited on Mondays and Saturdays, Sundays of Advent and Sundays after the Epiphany up to Lent.

1. The Annunciation of the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary
2. The Visitation of the Virgin Mary to the Parents of St. John the Baptist
3. The Birth of Our Lord at Bethlehem
4. The Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple
5. The Finding of Jesus in the Temple

Sorrowful Mysteries

Recited on Tuesdays and Fridays, and Sundays of Lent.

1. The Agony of our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane
2. The Scourging of our Lord at the Pillar
3. The Crowning of our Lord with Thorns
4. The Carrying of the Cross by our Lord to Calvary
5. The Crucifixion and Death of our Lord

Luminous Mysteries or Mysteries of Light

Recited on Thursdays.

1. The Baptism of Jesus in the
2. The Wedding at Cana





3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God
4. The Transfiguration
5. The Institution of the Eucharist

Glorious Mysteries

Recited on Wednesdays and Sundays; and the Sundays after Easter up to Advent.

1. The Resurrection of our Lord from the Dead
2. The Ascension of our Lord into Heaven
3. The Descent of the Holy Spirit on Mary and the Apostles
4. The Assumption of Mary into Heaven
5. The Crowning of Mary as Queen of heaven and Earth



The Mysteries of the Rosary

Joyful Mysteries

Recited on Mondays and Saturdays, Sundays of Advent and Sundays after the Epiphany up to Lent.

The First Joyful Mystery: The Annunciation of the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary

The angel Gabriel came to Mary and said, "Rejoice, full of grace, the Lord is with you...you shall conceive and bear a son, and you shall call him Jesus. He will be great and shall rightly be called the Son of the Most High...." Then Mary said, "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me as you have said." (Lk 1:28, 31-33, 38)

The Second Joyful Mystery: The Visitation of the Virgin Mary to the Parents of St. John the Baptist

Mary set out for a town in the Hills of Judah. She entered the



house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leapt in her womb. Elizabeth was filled with holy spirit, and giving a loud cry, said, "You are most blessed among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" (Lk 1:39-42)

**The Third Joyful Mystery:
The Birth of Our Lord at Bethlehem**

They were in Bethlehem when the time came for Mary to have her child, and she gave birth to a son, her firstborn....he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him... (Lk 2:6-7, 21b)

**The Fourth Joyful Mystery:
The Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple**

Simeon took Jesus in his arms and blessed God. Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, "See him, he will be for the rise and fall of the multitudes of Israel. He shall stand as a sign of contradiction, while a sword will pierce your own soul. (Lk 2:28, 34)

**The Fifth Joyful Mystery:
The Finding of Jesus in the Temple**

The boy Jesus remained in Jerusalem and his parents did not know it. They went back to Jerusalem searching for him, and on the third day they found him in the Temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. (Lk 2: 43,45-46)





Sorrowful Mysteries

Recited on Tuesdays and Fridays, and Sundays of Lent.

The First Sorrowful Mystery:

The Agony of our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane

Jesus left to go as usual to Mount Olives and the disciples followed him. When he came to the place, he told them, "Pray that you may not be put to the test. "As he was in agony, he prayed even more earnestly and great drops of blood formed like sweat and fell to the ground. (Lk 22:39-40, 44)

The Second Sorrowful Mystery:

The Scourging of our Lord at the Pillar

Pilate went out to the Jews and said, "I find no crime in this man. Now, according to a custom, I must release a prisoner of yours at the Passover. With your agreement I will release for you the King of the Jews." But they insisted and cried out, "Not this man, but Barabbas!.." Then Pilate had Jesus taken away and scourged. (Jn 18:38–19:1)

The Third Sorrowful Mystery:

The Crowning of our Lord with Thorns

The soldiers twisted thorns into a crown and put it on his head... Jesus then came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple cloak and Pilate pointed to him saying, "Here is the man!" (Jn 19:2, 5)

The Fourth Sorrowful Mystery:

The Carrying of the Cross by our Lord to Calvary

Then Pilate handed Jesus over to them to be crucified. They took





charge of him. Bearing his own cross, Jesus went out of the city to what is called the Place of Skull, in Hebrew: Golgotha. (Jn 19:16-17)

The Fifth Sorrowful Mystery
The Crucifixion and Death of our Lord

When they had led him to the place called Golgotha ... they nailed him to the cross and divided his clothes among themselves... When noon came, darkness fell over the whole land and lasted until three o'clock; and at three o'clock Jesus cried out (his last words)...and gave up his spirit.... The Captain who was standing...saw how Jesus died and he said: "Truly, this Man was the Son of God!" (Mk 15:22, 24, 33, 37, 39)

Luminous Mysteries or Mysteries of Light
Recited on Thursdays.

The First Luminous Mystery:
The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan

The Baptism in the Jordan is first of all a mystery of light. Here as Christ descends into the waters, the innocent one who became "sin" for our sake (cf. 2 Cor 5:21), the heavens open wide and the voice of the Father declares him the beloved Son (cf. Mt 3:17 and parallels), while the Spirit descends on him to invest him with the mission which he is to carry out.

The Second Luminous Mystery:
The Wedding at Cana

Another mystery of light is the first of the signs, given at Cana





(cf. Jn 2:1-12), when Christ changes water into wine and opens the hearts of the disciples to faith, thanks to the intervention of Mary, the first among believers.

**The Third Luminous Mystery:
The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God**

The preaching by which Jesus proclaims the coming of the Kingdom of God, calls to conversion (cf. Mk 1:15) and forgives the sins of all who draw near to him in humble trust (cf. Mk 2:3-13; Lk 7:47-48): the inauguration of that ministry of mercy which he continues to exercise until the end of the world, particularly through the Sacrament of Reconciliation which he has entrusted to his Church (cf. Jn 20:22-23).

**The Fourth Luminous Mystery:
The Transfiguration**

The mystery of light par excellence is the Transfiguration, traditionally believed to have taken place on Mount Tabor. The glory of the Godhead shines forth from the face of Christ as the Father commands the astonished Apostles to "listen to him" (cf. Lk 9:35 and parallels) and to prepare to experience with him the agony of the Passion, so as to come with him to the joy of the Resurrection and a life transfigured by the Holy Spirit.

**The Fifth Luminous Mystery:
The Institution of the Eucharist**

A final mystery of light is the institution of the Eucharist, in which Christ offers his body and blood as food under the signs of bread and wine, and testifies "to the end" his love for humanity (Jn 13:1), for whose salvation he will offer himself in sacrifice.





Glorious Mysteries

Recited on Wednesdays and Sundays; and the Sundays after Easter up to Advent.

The First Glorious Mystery: The Resurrection of our Lord from the Dead

After the Sabbath, at the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to visit the tomb. Suddenly there was a violent earthquake: an angel of the Lord descending from heaven...rolled the stone from the entrance... and said to them: "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen as he said.... go at once and tell his disciples that he is risen. (Mt 28:1-2,5-6)



The Second Glorious Mystery: The Ascension of our Lord into Heaven


He was taken up before their eyes and a cloud hid him from their sight. While they were still looking up to heaven where he went, suddenly, two men dressed in white stood beside them and said: ... "This Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven, will return in the same way as you have seen him go there." (Acts 1:9-11)



The Third Glorious Mystery: The Descent of the Holy Spirit on Mary and the Apostles

When the day of Pentecost came they were all together in one place. And suddenly out of the sky came a sound like a strong rushing wind and it filled the whole house where they were sit-





ting. There appeared tongues as if of fire which parted and came to rest upon each one of them. All were filled with Holy Spirit and began to speak other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak. (Acts 2:1-4)


**The Fourth Glorious Mystery:
The Assumption of Mary into Heaven**

*Who is this coming like the dawn, fair as the moon,
bright as the sun, majestic as bannered troop?
—but my dove, my perfect one, is unique,
the only daughter and favorite of her mother,
she was called blessed by the virgins
and praised by queens and concubines.
(Song of Songs 6:10, 9)*



**The Fifth Glorious Mystery:
The Crowning of Mary as Queen of heaven and Earth**

*Among your ladies of honor are daughters of kings;
at your right hand, in gold of Ophir, stands the queen.
Listen, O daughter, pay attention;
forget your father's house and your nation,
and your beauty will charm the King,
for he is your Lord....
All glorious as she enters is the princess
in her gold-woven robes.
(Ps 45:10-14)*





The Way of the Cross for OFWs

We accompany Jesus on the Way of the Cross, meditating on the different events in his life, suffering, death and resurrection.

First Station: The Last Supper

On the night before he suffered, Jesus celebrated the Jewish feast of liberation, the Passover Meal, with his friends, his disciples. The bread becomes his body which he breaks for us and the wine becomes his blood which he sheds for us.

Jesus,

I remember the last supper I had with my family
the night before I left for my work here.

I was happy to be with my loved ones, though I knew
that the following day,

I would have to leave and be separated from them.

Now, I understand better how you felt that night.

I am here not for myself, but for my family;

with you, I break the bread of my life

that those I love may have a better life;

with you, I drink the bitter cup of suffering

that those I left home may have joy.

As we make present your sacrament of life and love,

may we be renewed and strengthened

by your Body and Blood

which we receive in the Eucharist,

you who laid down your life for your friends.

Our Father...





**Second Station:
Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane**

Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was deeply troubled and prayed to the Father. In spite of seeing the horror of what he had to suffer, he accepted the will of God for him.

Jesus,
there are times that sadness overwhelms me,
I feel homesick and miss my family.
Such is the burden I have to bear,
a cup I have to drink
as I work in a foreign land, away from my family.
Comfort us in our times of sadness,
heal the wounds of our heart,
and come to wipe away and dry our tears.
Help us to see beyond ourselves,
beyond the here and now;
help us to overcome the feeling of loss;
help us to see the joy that awaits those
who truly love and believe.

Our Father...

**Third Station:
Jesus Before the Sanhedrin**

Jesus was presented to the authorities; the whole Council was convened at night and tried to find evidence against him, so that they might put him to death, but they were unable to find any.

Jesus,
as we, Filipinos, go to work in other countries,





some regard us with suspicion
that we come to stay as illegal immigrants.
But who wants to be away from one's homeland?
Who would want to be separated from one's family?
Give us strength to be proud of our dignity as Filipinos,
and to give witness to our Christian faith
before other people in this land.
Make us non-violent but strong
to stand up for justice and peace.

Our Father...

**Fourth Station:
Jesus Before Pontius Pilate**

*Jesus was presented to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor.
With the insistence of his own people, Jesus was sentenced to
death.*

Jesus,
many still suffer injustice and oppression;
some are exploited and ill-treated.
But as we are in need of employment,
we are forced to accept any conditions imposed on us,
just so we can work.
You stand condemned
with the victims of this world;
you stand with us to give us courage and hope.
Teach us how to be on the side of justice and truth,
help us to be strong before any authority
as we live according to the values of the Gospel.

Our Father...





**Fifth Station:
Jesus Is Whipped and Crowned with Thorns**

Pilate had Jesus taken away and scourged. The soldiers also twisted thorns into a crown and put it on his head. They also mocked him, beat him and insulted him.

Jesus,
you never lost your humanity
in the face of the inhumanity you suffered.
As migrant workers, we also suffer humiliation;
at times, we are mocked and looked down by others.
Yet, in spite of being whipped
and crowned with thorns like you,
may we never lose our humanity,
may we never give up seeing the good in others.
Teach us to resist the different forms of evil
and overcome it by doing good.

Our Father...

**Sixth Station:
Jesus Carries the Cross**

Jesus laid the cross on his shoulders without any complaints. He carried his cross and went out the city to the Place of the Skull, Golgotha.

Jesus,
you invited us to follow you without reserve
for your yoke is easy and your burden light.
My life away from my family is a cross,
at times, too heavy to bear.





Grant me strength to bear the cross up to my Golgotha,
so that suffering and being crucified with you,
I may rise with you to a new life;
may we always find consolation in you
not only in times of trials and problems,
but everyday of our life.

Our Father...

**Seventh Station:
Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry His Cross**

On the way they met a man named Simon from Cyrene who was entering the city. The soldiers forced him to carry the cross of Jesus.

Jesus,
thank you for the people who help us carry
the cross we bear as migrant workers
in this foreign land;
through them, we feel that we are never alone
for you are always with us.
Teach us to help those in need:
to offer them a smile of friendship and understanding,
a pat on the back of comfort and support,
a hug of acceptance and love,
and a shoulder they can cry on.

Our Father...

**Eighth Station:
Jesus Comforts the Women of Jerusalem**

Jesus, forgetting all his pain and suffering, comforts the weep-



ing women of Jerusalem. Jesus turns to them and says, "Do not cry because of me, but rather for yourselves and your children!"

Jesus,
there are days that I cry,
not so much for myself, for my family;
I cannot help but think and worry about them.
Because of the loneliness
our separation from each other brings,
our families and we weep.
Look upon us who left the Philippines to work abroad;
make our faith strong
that we may entrust our families to your care.
Wipe away our tears
that we may share your joy with others.
Console us in times of sorrow and bring us to that day
when we will all be united again as one family.

Our Father...

**Ninth Station:
Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments and Crucified**

Stripped naked, nailed to the cross, you have given your life for all of us.

Jesus,
in our poverty, we feel stripped naked
and nailed to the cross of misery and uncertainty,
but God, our loving Father, wants us
to live a life worthy of his children.
We thank you for the grace of work abroad
to alleviate our poverty and bring us to a better life.



But in the midst of a consumeristic society,
help us break the bonds of selfishness and materialism;
may we lose sight of the truth
that before God we are naked and poor.

With you on the cross,
open our hearts and hands
that we may share with others
the blessings we have received.

Our Father...

**Tenth Station:
The Repentant Thief**

There were two criminals at Jesus' either side, the one on the right has accepted his guilt and its terrible punishment. He did not ask for a miracle, but for forgiveness from Jesus.

Jesus,
you are always ready to welcome and accept
those who come to you and ask for your help.
Being away from home and family,
I feel weak and helpless
and sometimes turn away from God.
But in your great love for me,
as you hang on the cross,
you bring me back to the Father;
help me to accept my faults and misgivings,
to be sorry for them and to begin again,
so that the day will come
when I will be with you in Paradise.

Our Father...





**Eleventh Station:
Mary and John at the Foot of the Cross of Jesus**

*Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister
Mary, Mary of Magdala and the disciple whom he loved.*

Jesus,
before returning to the Father,
you entrusted your mother
and your beloved disciple to each other.
I, too, felt the same concern
before leaving the Philippines,
thinking that my family will be without me.
To you, Lord, I entrust my family
together with all the Filipino children
who are without mothers or fathers,
all the Filipino spouses
who are left without wife or husband.
Send us your Spirit to bind us in your love
that with Mary, your mother and our mother,
we may be strengthened in our love for one another.

Our Father...

**Twelfth Station:
The Death of Jesus on the Cross**

*Jesus cried out: "Father into your hands I commend my spirit."
... He said, "It is accomplished." Then, he bowed his head and
gave up the spirit.*

Jesus,
your death on the cross brought us life.
We, too, experience death even in our daily life:





our separation from those we love
when we came to an unfamiliar and foreign place;
we had to die to ourselves
as we left the security of home and family
to live and earn a living as migrant workers
where people speak a different language
and follow their own customs.
But as we die with you, may we also rise with you
to discover the richness of life
in the diversity of cultures
and live the new life as sisters and brothers
with God as our Father.

Our Father...

**Thirteenth Station:
The New Sepulcher**

It was now evening...Joseph of Arimathea took the body of Jesus, wrapped it in a clean linen sheet and laid it in his own new tomb which was carved out of the rock. Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance of the tomb and left.

Jesus,
you died on the cross and just as you were born poor,
you were buried in another man's tomb.
I come from a rich country,
where so many people suffer,
as if entombed in misery and poverty.
You know that this is one reason why I am here—
far from family and country—
earning a living in a foreign land.



Others may think of us as better off than many Filipinos,
but we, too, suffer in our life as migrant workers.

Grant us, Lord, that in our poverty,
we may discover the true riches
your Gospel brings to us;
turn our weakness into strength
that we may always hope and trust in you,
who bring us to a better life.

Our Father...

**Fourteenth Station:
The Resurrection of Jesus**

Jesus has risen from the dead, he has overcome the powers of death. We firmly believe that just as Christ is truly risen from the dead and lives forever, we will also be lifted up on the last day and experience the everlasting life with the risen Christ.

Jesus,
you rose from death and triumphed over sin.

We embrace our crosses
and accept the little deaths we face
in our daily life as migrants.

May we rise with you to a new life,
so that it is not we anymore who live,
but you living in us.

Make us joyful and courageous witnesses
to your resurrection—
the triumph of life over sin and death;
help us to proclaim this Good News in word in deed.

Our Father...





Novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help

Opening Hymn: Immaculate Mother

Immaculate Mother,	We pray for our country,
To you do we plead,	The land of our birth;
To ask God, our Father	We pray for all nations
For help in our need.	That peace be on earth.
Ave, Ave, Ave Maria!	Ave, Ave, Ave Maria!
Ave, Ave, Ave Maria!	Ave, Ave, Ave Maria!

Opening Prayers

Priest/Leader: In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Priest/Leader: Brothers and sisters, as children of our Blessed Mother, we are gathered before her miraculous picture to honor her and to pray for all our needs. Unworthy children that we are, let us first of all ask God's mercy and pardon.

All: Merciful Father * you sent your Divine Son * to redeem us by his death and resurrection * and to give us new life. By this you make us your children * to love one another in Christ. How many times in the past * we have forgotten this sublime dignity. We have sinned against our brothers and sisters; * we have offended you. Merciful Father, forgive us. Repenting sincerely of our sins we ask your mercy; * may we always live as your truly devoted children.





Song: Mary Immaculate Star of the Morning

Mary Immaculate, star of the morning,
Chosen before the creation began,
Destined to bring, through the light of your dawning,
Conquest of Satan and rescue to man.

Refrain:

Bend from your throne at the voice of our crying.
Look to this earth where your footsteps have trod
Stretch out your arms to us, living and dying,
Mary Immaculate, Mother of God.

We sinners honor your sinless perfection;
Fallen and weak, for God's mercy we plead.
Grant us the shield of your mighty protection
Measure your aid by the depth of our need.

Novena Prayer

Dear Mother of Perpetual help * from the cross Jesus gave you to us for our Mother. You are the kindest the most loving * of all mothers. Look tenderly on us your children * as we now ask you to help us in all our needs * especially this one ... (Pause to recall your petition). While you were on earth, dear Mother * you willingly shared in the sufferings of your Son. Strengthened by your faith and confidence * in the fatherly love of God * you accepted the mysterious designs of His will.

We too, have our crosses and trials. Sometimes they almost crush us to the ground. Dearest Mother * share with us your abundant faith and confidence in God. Make us aware that God never ceases to love us; * that





he answers all our prayers * in the way that is best for us. Strengthen our hearts to carry the cross * in the footsteps of your Divine Son. Help us to realize * that he who shares the cross of Christ * will certainly share His resurrection.

Dearest Mother, as we worry about our own problems * let us not forget the needs of others. You always loved others so much; * help us to do the same. While praying for our intentions * and for the intentions of all here present at this Novena * we earnestly ask you, our Mother * to help us comfort the sick and the dying * give hope to the poor and the unemployed * heal the broken-hearted * lighten the burden of the oppressed * teach justice to their oppressors and bring back to God all those who have offended Him.

Dearest Mother, help us to avoid sin which separates us from our heavenly Father * and from one another. Full of trust in you * we place ourselves under the mantle of your maternal protection * and confidently hope for your powerful help. Amen.

Prayer for the Home

Mother of Perpetual help * we choose you as Queen of our homes. We ask you to bless all our families * with your tender motherly love. May the Sacrament of Marriage * bind husbands and wives so closely together * that they will always be faithful to each other * and love one another as Christ loves his Church.

We ask you to bless all parents. May they love and cherish the children * whom God has entrusted to them.



May they always give them the example * of a truly Christian life. Help them to bring up their children * in the love and fear of God. Bless all children * that they may love, honor and obey * their fathers and mothers. To your loving care * we especially entrust the youth of today.

Give us all a sense of responsibility * that we may do our part * in making our home a haven of peace * like your own home at Nazareth. We take you as our model. Help us to grow daily in genuine love of God and neighbor * so that justice and peace may happily reign * in the entire family of humankind. Amen.

Petitions to our Mother of Perpetual help

Holy Mary, *pray for us.*

Holy Virgin, conceived without sin, *pray for us.*

Our Mother of Perpetual help, *pray for us.*

We sinners call to you, *loving Mother, help us.*

Advent

That we may prepare like you for the coming of Christ,

Christmas

That we may give out hearts completely to Christ, this
Christmas,

Lent

That we may be faithful to the promises we made at
Baptism,

Easter

That we may rejoice with you at Christ's victory over death,

All other weeks



That we may be filled with the Holy Spirit and become
courageous witnesses of Christ's love for people,
That we may be more and more like our Divine Lord, as
you were,
That we may be meek and humble of heart like your Son,
Jesus,
That we may fear losing God's friendship forever by un-
repented sin,
That we may seek Christ's mercy and forgiveness con-
stantly in the sacrament of Penance
That we may be aware of God speaking to us in the events
of daily life
That we may pray daily with love and trust, especially in
moments of temptation
That we may realize the value of worshiping God togeth-
er in the Eucharist
That we may grow in the love of Christ and neighbor by
frequent Communion,
That we may reverence our bodies as temples of the Holy
Spirit,
That we may reverence our bodies as temples of the Holy
Spirit,
That we may strive to be true Christians by our loving
concern for others,
That we may proclaim the dignity of work by doing our
own work conscientiously,
That we may forgive from our heart those who have
wronged us,





That we may see the evil of seeking our own interest at
the expense of others,
That we may work for the just distribution of this world's
goods,
That we may share our talents with others for the good of
the community,
That we may accept our responsibility in the community
in a spirit of genuine service,
To pray that the Holy Spirit may guide and strengthen
Pope Francis, the bishops and the clergy,
That we may be blessed with an increase in priestly and
religious vocations,
That we may bring the knowledge and love of Christ to
those who do not know him,
That we may be aware of our dependence in God in the
midst of human achievements,
That we may be ready at death to enter the home of our
heavenly Father,
That we may die at peace with Christ and our fellowmen
and women,
That we may be comforted at the death of our dear ones
by our hope in the risen Lord,
To pray that our departed brothers and sisters quickly
share in your son's resurrection,
Let us pray in silence for our own intentions.

All: Holy Mary help us in our needs * pray for all the peo-
ple of God; * may all experience your perpetual help.





Priest: Lord, you gave us Mary to be our Mother ever ready to help us; grant us the grace to have recourse to her in all our needs.

All: Amen.

Consecration

1st Wednesday of the month

Immaculate Virgin Mary * Mother of God and Mother of the Church * you are also our Mother of Perpetual help. With hearts full of love for you * we consecrate ourselves to your Immaculate heart * so that we may be your devoted children. Obtain for us true sorrow for our sins * and fidelity to the promises of our Baptism.

We consecrate our minds and hearts to you * that we may always do the will of our heavenly Father. We consecrate our lives to you * that we may love God better * and live not for ourselves but for Christ your Son * and that we may see him and serve him in others.

By this humble act of consecration * dear Mother of Perpetual help * we pledge to model our lives on you * the perfect Christian * so that consecrated to you in life and in death * we may belong to your Divine Son for all eternity. Amen.

Song: Mother of Christ

Mother of Christ, Mother of Christ
What shall I ask of thee?
I do not sigh for the wealth of earth
For the joys that fade and flee





But, Mother of Christ, Mother of Christ,
This do I long to see
The bliss untold which your arms enfold
The treasure upon your knee.

Mother of Christ, Mother of Christ
I toss on a stormy sea,
Oh, lift your Child as a beacon light
To the port where I fain would be
And, Mother of Christ, Mother of Christ,
This do I ask of thee,
When the voyage is o'er,
O stand on the shore
And show him at last to me.

Thanksgiving Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ * truly present in the Most Blessed Eucharist * we adore you. It has pleased the Father * that in you all his fullness should dwell * and that through you * he should reconcile all things to himself. Grant us the grace to be truly grateful * for all that our Father has done for us. Grant that we may be truly sorry for our sins * and do penance for them.

Through you, we thank the Eternal Father for the gift of life. He has created all the wonderful things of this world for us. May we learn to use them well * so that through them * we may grow in love for Him.

Above all, we thank our Father * for sending you to us * as the greatest expression of his love * to save us and all creation * by your death and resurrection.





We thank you Lord * for giving us your own Mother to be our Mother of Perpetual help. May the countless favors we have received through her intercession, * and especially through the Novena * inspire us to greater confidence in God's loving mercy * and her perpetual help. Grant that we may always do the holy Will of God * and persevere in his love.

To the Most Holy Trinity * Father, Son and Holy Spirit * be honor, glory and thanksgiving forever and ever. Amen.

Prayer for the Sick

Lord Jesus Christ * you bore our sufferings and carried our sorrows * in order to show us clearly * the value of human weakness and patience; * graciously hear our prayers for the sick. Grant that those who are weighed down * with pain and other afflictions of illness * may realize that they are among the chosen ones * whom you call blessed. Help them to understand * that they are united with you in your sufferings * for the salvation of the world. Amen.

Prayer for Private Devotions

Prayer for Financial Aid

Realizing, dear Mother, that you are our perpetual help, not only in spiritual but also in temporal necessities, we ask you to help us in our present financial worry. Because of unavoidable circumstances which have arisen in our lives, we are in great want and financial embarrassment, since we are unable to meet our honest debts. We are not





asking, dearest Mother of Perpetual help, for wealth, if the possession of it is not in accordance with the will of God; we merely ask you for that assistance which will help us to settle our present obligations. We believe, dear Mother of God, that you are extremely kind and generous to all your loving and devoted children. We plead with you, therefore, dear Mother, to obtain for us the help we so urgently need. We are trying so earnestly to solve our problem but we believe in your powerful intercession with Our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son and our Redeemer. Amen.

Temptation

St. Alphonsus Ligouri

Mary, my Mother, your love for us could not be greater or more powerful. You are rich in love and your power brings us relief. You want everyone to be saved. I beg you therefore, protect me in temptation and strengthen me when I weaken. I struggle daily to be faithful to Jesus your son. Help me my Mother at every moment. But above all take me by the hand when you see that I am weakening and about to fall. I will have to battle with temptation till the day I die. My Lady, you are my hope, my refuge, my strength; never let me lose the grace of God. In every temptation I resolve to turn to you at once and pray: Mary help me.





Advent Wreath Prayers

<http://www.scborromeo.org/prayers/adventwreath.htm>

The Beginning of Advent

On the Saturday before the First Sunday of Advent, the family or household gathers around the wreath decorated with greens. One candle should be lit.

Leader. We gather around our wreath to begin the celebration of Advent, with our families and loved ones in the Philippines. Let us ask our Father in heaven to fill our hearts with grace.

Silent pause for prayer

Heavenly Father, we look forward to the celebration of Christmas and to the coming of the Lord in glory. Bless this Advent wreath and all of us. As we pray daily around it, fill us with your life and strengthen us for our daily tasks. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

All. Amen.

The First Week of Advent

One candle is lit.

Leader. Heavenly Father, as we begin this Advent, give light to our eyes and peace to our hearts. May the Lord find us watching and waiting in joy when He comes. We pray in Jesus' name.

All. Amen.





The Second Week of Advent

Two candles are lit.

Leader. Father in heaven, set our hearts ablaze to follow in the steps of John the Baptist. May we bring light and love to all we meet, that the darkness of sin and fear may be overcome. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

All. Amen.

The Third Week of Advent

Three candles are lit.

Leader. As we draw near to you, Lord God, keep us aware of your presence in all we do. Come with power to enlighten us by your grace, that we may live in praise and peace all our days. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

All. Amen.

Special Days of Preparation

Traditionally, the days from December 17 to the day before Christmas have as their focus the titles of Jesus. On these days, a special Scripture passage may be read to recall these titles. Three candles are used until the Fourth Sunday of Advent, when all four candles are lit.

December 17: Jesus, the Wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:26-31)

Leader. Come, O Wisdom of God Most High, and fill our hearts with your word of truth.

All. Come Lord Jesus!

December 18: Jesus, the new Lawgiver (Mt 17:1-8)

Leader. Come, O Giver of the Law, that we may be strengthened by your mighty power.

All. Come Lord Jesus!





December 19: Jesus, the Flower of Jesse (Rom 15:7-13)

Leader. Come, O Flower of Jesse's Root, that we may be made fruitful witnesses of your love.

All. Come Lord Jesus!

December 20: Jesus, the Key of David (Rev 3:7-8)

Leader. Come, O Key of David, to unlock the darkness of sin and free us by your grace.

All. Come Lord Jesus!

December 21: Jesus, the Radiant Dawn (Is 9:1-6)

Leader. Come, O Radiant Dawn, sun of justice, and fill us with Your saving light.

All. Come Lord Jesus!

December 22: Jesus, the King of the Nations (Rev 19:11-16)

Leader. Come, O King of the Nations, and bind us all together in the unity and peace we seek.

All. Come Lord Jesus!

December 23: Jesus, Emmanuel (Mt 1:18-23)

Leader. Come, O Emmanuel, presence of God among us, and fill our hearts with every good gift.


All. Come Lord Jesus!

December 24

On Christmas Eve, the wreath can be renewed with new greenery and the candles replaced with new white tapers for use during the Christmas season.

Leader. Lord Jesus, we approach that holy moment when your coming as human is renewed in our hearts. Give us peace and though we live far from our loved ones in the Philippines, allow us to celebrate your presence with





joy, that we may some day share your glory. We ask this of you, who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever.

All. Amen.

The Christmas Season

From Christmas Day until the Baptism of the Lord, the following prayer can be used with the wreath.

Leader. Father in heaven, you so loved us that you sent your Son, among us as Savior and Lord. Fill us and our families with your blessing, that we may grow in love and continue to live our Christian faith. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

All. Amen.






Some Methods of Prayer

Five-finger Prayer


<http://www.scborromeo.org/prayers/5finger.htm>

Your thumb is the nearest to you. So begin your prayer by praying for those closest to you. They are the easiest to remember. To pray for our loved ones is, as C. S. Lewis once said, a “sweet duty.”

The next finger is the pointing finger. Pray for those who teach, instruct, and heal. This includes teachers, doctors, and ministers. They need support and wisdom in pointing others in the right direction. Keep them in your prayers.



The next finger is the tallest finger. It reminds us of our leaders. Pray for the president, leaders in industry and business, and administrators. These people shape our nation and guide public opinion. They need God’s guidance.



The fourth finger is our ring finger. Surprising to many is the fact that this is our weakest finger; as any piano teacher will testify. It should remind us to pray for those who are weak, in trouble, or in pain. They need your prayers day and night. You cannot pray too much for them.

And lastly comes our little finger; the smallest finger of all. Which is where we should place ourselves in relation to God and others. As the Bible says, “The least shall be the greatest among you.” Your pinky should remind you to pray for yourself.



The White Light

Position yourself lying down, or sit in a chair, or in the lotus position. Make yourself comfortable; you can use a pillow, and a blanket if you wish.

Next, say the “Our Father,” or any prayer that you are comfortable saying. This brings you to a humble state of consciousness.

Now envision a ray of white light coming down from God into the top of your head, spiraling down through your head and neck. The white light continues across each shoulder, down to each arm and out of your fingertips. Then, it spirals down through your chest and abdomen, and it circles your gut (*sikmura*).

Option A:

Then, the white light continues down to each leg, and into your feet and out the bottom of your feet. Your whole body is now filled with that white light, which also envelops you. Feel that that white light is God’s presence. Let go and relax for as long as you want.

Option B:

Let go of all that is not from God as the white light continues down to each leg, and into your feet and out the bottom of your feet, sending all that is not from God into the earth.

Then, the white light loops back up to the top of your head. And it spirals down again to the bottom of your feet. Repeat this another time. Three times in all. Remain like this for at least 10 to 15 minutes.





Bring the white light down through you again to the bottom of your feet. Create a foundation of white light under your feet. Bring the white light back up around you, wrapping you all around up to about one foot above your head. Envision yourself being in a cocoon of white light. Again bring the white light down again expanding the foundation of the white light and wrap up to the top of your head, one foot above again. Do this another time, three times in all. Picture your self being wrapped as the white light.

To end:

Finally, say a prayer of thanksgiving, you are now finished with your meditation.

Benedictine Method to Pray the Scriptures: *Lectio Divina*

Preparation Pointers

Place. Find a quiet time and place. It helps when you can find a consistent time and place.

Posture. Be relaxed and comfortable, but not in a posture conducive to sleep.

Passage. Prepare your passage before you begin. Prayer. Begin with a prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Simple Steps for Lectio

Let these four steps weave in and out of your time of reading. They may not follow in direct sequence. Let the Spirit move you.



Lectio. Read the passage slowly. Pause when you feel your attention drawn to a word, phrase or thought. Dwell on it, as if it's your home. Or savor its taste as long as it lasts.

Meditatio. Ponder this passage and what it means for you.

Oratio. Talk with God about the passage and your reflection.

Contemplatio. When moved by God, rest in the quiet presence of God; surrender to grace. When ready, return to your reading.

Ignatian Method: The Word of God as a Movie Script

Think of the Ignatian Method, named after St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), as a sort of virtual experience of the Scripture where you read the Scripture and, then, create in your mind a short film about what you read. You use your imagination to enter into the reading, asking yourself:

- What do I see and hear? What do I smell, taste, or touch?
- Who are the characters and what's going on with them?
- If I were in this movie, what role would I play?
- If I were Jesus in this story, what would I be thinking, feeling, saying?

In the Ignatian Method, you enter into the story so that you can learn more about and participate more fully in the mind, the heart, and the work of Christ.





The Word of God as Mirror

Preparation

As a remote preparation, try to remain conscious of God as you go about your daily schedule. Frequently remind yourself of this truth: God is everywhere and is very interested in my welfare.

At the beginning of the meditation make a deliberate act of faith regarding God's presence. Ask him for pardon of any faults. Ask for help to make a good meditation. Add a prayer to our Blessed Mother and other favorite saints and angels.

Consideration

Read for a few minutes from the Bible—or other spiritual book. Ask yourself: What have I read? What does it teach me? How have I acted in regard to this till now? What shall I do about it in the future?

Since the advantage of meditation is not so much in the thinking as in the praying that it leads to, it is important to devote the greater part of meditation to affections (short prayers from the heart), petitions (requests for help from God), and resolutions (practical plans for changing your life for the better, with God's help).


Affections. "Lord, I am sorry for having offended you."

"Thank you for the blessings you have given me."

"I want to love you above all things."

"Your will be done."

Petitions. Ask for whatever you need: for example, for-



giveness of sins, greater confidence, help in a stressful situation, specific graces to forgive someone, to be more patient, for good physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health, for the grace to die a holy death.



Resolutions. Make them short and specific: for example, to stop gossiping with..., to be kind to..., not to lose patience with..., to have needed rest and/or recreation or vacation..., to be more faithful to times of prayer, etc.

Conclusion

Thank God for the insights and graces gained during this meditation, your resolutions.

Ask for help to keep your resolutions.

Choose some special thought or short prayer to carry with you during the day.



The Lumko “Seven Step” Method

Lumko Institute

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Introduction

It deals with a method of communal, prayerful approach to the Sacred Scripture which may help us to encounter God and one another and to help us open our eyes to the presence and to the working of God in our everyday life. The Bible contains, is and imparts the Word of God. It is a book which concerns us personally and likewise can make us concerned. This method provides the opportunity for allowing the Bible to speak to oneself first and, out of this perplexity, to share with one another (rather than just “talk about” the Bible).



On the other hand, the Bible is a book which renders the faith experiences and faith testimonies of peoples from different times and cultures. We are standing in the living tradition of the People of God who has heard the Word of God since Abraham and lived because of it. The Bible is therefore at times a strange and disturbing book. Hence, the meditative prayerful approach directed towards life is not the only one; rather it should be supplemented by biblical study.

Bible discussion and Bible meditation groups should not be too large. The ideal size is four to eight participants so that everyone may have the opportunity to talk. An atmosphere of quiet and calm is necessary. Just as important is an attitude of openness, of reciprocal listening in addition to the readiness to talk about oneself, that is, one's life and one's faith. The function of the facilitator consists only of this—that he announces the individual steps of the method.

The Seven Steps

Steps 1-4 help us to “persevere” with God, to “listen” to participate in the biblical action, “to surrender ourselves to God.”

Step 5 brings us together as brothers and sisters because we risk sharing our experience with God with one another. This is not the most important step, but it gives great joy to all those who want to build and experience a deeply human community in God.

In **step 6** we confront our life with the Word of God. It is often the case that in this atmosphere of prayer, indi-





viduals discuss problems which they wish to resolve as a neighborhood group.

In **step 7** all are invited to share in spontaneous prayer.

First Step: We invite the Lord

Once the group settles down, the facilitator asks someone to volunteer “to invite the Lord.” The belief in the living presence of the Risen Christ in our midst is the presupposition and basis of our meditation.

We want to meet the Word who became flesh and dwells among us. We remember Jesus’ promise: “Where two or three are gathered in my Name, I am there among them” (Mt 18:20).

Second Step: We read the text

The facilitator announces the chosen text. First the book, then the chapter. He/she waits until everyone has found the chapter and only then does he announce the verse. When everyone has found the passage, the facilitator invites someone to volunteer to read the text. A moment of silence follows.

Third Step: We dwell on the text

The facilitator continues: “We dwell on the text. Which words strike you in a special way?”

In doing so, almost the entire text is very listened to again. The participants spontaneously read aloud the word or words that have impressed them. Whole verses are not read, only short phrases or individual words.

The participants are encouraged to repeat those words silently to themselves three or four times. It is ex-



tremely important that a moment of silence be kept after each person has spoken, allowing the message to “soak in.” As a result of this step, “simple” words often take on new meaning.

Fourth Step: We are quiet

After spending time on the individual word, the entire passage is read again slowly. Then the facilitator announces a time of silence, giving the exact length of time, for example, three minutes.

We advise the people to spend this time in silence before God. “We are open to God.” “We allow ourselves to be loved by him.” “We let God look at us.”

A helpful practice during this silence is to repeat a specific word.

Meditation: Simply to be open to God, to wait for him, to be with him, “he is not far from any one of us” (Acts 17:27).

Fifth Step: We share what we have heard in our hearts

After the time of quiet, the facilitator announces the next step: “We share with each other what we have heard in our hearts.”

We do this to share with one another our faith experience and to help each other to grow in the faith. The entire Sacred Scripture is nothing less than a God experience which the People of Israel and Jesus “share” with us.

It is somewhat strange that we can talk to friends about almost every aspect of our life yet when it comes to sharing with others our experience with God, we become





shy. In this Bible meditation method, however, anyone can learn “to risk” this sharing in a very natural and unpressured way.

Sixth Step: We search together

The facilitator announces: “We search together.”

Now the time has come for the participants to examine their lives in the light of the Gospel. At this stage, a basic community might discuss everyday problems as: Someone needs help in the neighborhood...

Children need instruction in the faith...

Who will lead the Service of the Word next Sunday, since the priest will not be there?...

How can we settle a discord that has arisen?...

What can we do about getting the street lamp repaired?...

None of these problems need to have a direct connection to the Bible passage which had been read and shared. However, they emerge and can be resolved because of the mutual confidence that now exists in an atmosphere of the presence of God. Things look different when God is allowed to be present.

Seventh Step: We pray together

The facilitator now invites everyone to pray.

The words of Scripture, the various experiences of God’s Word, the daily problems—these all become fuel for prayer. Some find this form of sharing in prayer the easiest way to communicate with others.

The participants are encouraged to incorporate in





their personal prayer whatever has been of special importance to them during the meditation.

Only at the end is a formal prayer known to everyone recited.

The Vigan Method: A Simple Method of Bible Sharing

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Introduction

The Group. Four to six persons who in trust, openness and mutual respect listen in common to the Word of God, and try to find answers to it; persons who, on the basis of the Word of God, through mutual self-communication, try to find their way towards a deeper Christian community.

The Atmosphere. For Bible sharing, a quiet atmosphere is absolutely necessary: freedom from noise, thus a meeting-place where the group will not be disturbed, freedom from time pressure, thus sufficient time should be available, (according to experience, a group of five people needs about 45 to 60 minutes for this method).


The participants sit in an open circle (not around a table), so that each one can not only hear the others but also see them.

A burning candle in the midst reminds the participants that Christ, the Word of God, is the Light of the World (Jn 1:1.9; 8:12; 12:46) and that he is present in the midst of those gathered in His name (Mt 8:20).

All of these factors contribute towards creating the right atmosphere.

The Group Facilitator. He/she need not be an expert, be-







cause it is not his/her task to convey actual knowledge. The task rather is to lead the group in the Bible sharing by announcing the individual steps of the method. He/she may also lead the opening and closing prayer, or may ask for a volunteer. He/she may invite someone in the group only to read, but not to share.

The Bible and the Scripture Text. It is advisable, but not absolutely necessary, that all members have a copy of the Bible in the same translation. It is recommended to choose one of the three readings of the Sunday liturgy for this Bible sharing.

The Method. The group decides on the model they will use (prayer—response, action—response, or a combination of both) before beginning each session.



It is recommended to use the model “prayer—response” for the first few times, and then the group may choose to go on to “action—response.” After that, the two models may be used alternately.



Model A: “Prayer—Response”

Opening Prayer or Song

The participants are endeavored to become aware of God’s presence. Jesus said, “Where there are two or three gathered in my name, there I am in their midst” (Mt 18:20). Also a prayer of petition would be appropriate according to the words of Scripture, “Speak Lord, your servant is listening” (1 Sam 3:0) or “You have words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68) or a petition to the Holy Spirit, who can open our ears and free us from everything that would



hinder us from hearing God's Word, or a hymn to the Holy Spirit, "Come Holy Spirit," etc.

First Step

First contact with the text, with the "dead letter."

Reading of the text: One member of the group reads it aloud, the others participate by listening and/or reading it silently.

Silence: After the reading, all observe silence for about three minutes, during which time they may go over the text once more in their minds. Each chooses a word (words), a phrase (phrases), a verse (verses) which strikes them.

Sharing: After about three minutes, the facilitator invites the group members to share the word, phrase or verse which struck them. They are not to give any explanation, only the word, phrase or verse with the corresponding verse number, e.g. "I was struck by the word 'light' in verse 5" (in 1 Jn 1). No explanation is given, nor any reason why this particular word, phrase or verse was found striking for the respective individual.


Second Step

The "dead letter" of Scripture becomes the "living word" for each individual (and perhaps, through the individual, for others as well).

Reading of the same text: After all have shared upon the invitation of the facilitator, another member reads the same text aloud. The others participate silently again.



Silence: After the reading all observe deep silence





for about five minutes, during which time each member listens intently to God's personal message to him/her. Prompted by the text and/or the sharing of the other group members, something will emerge as most meaningful to each group member, and true to their own experience or applicable to their own lives. While listening, the participants ask themselves, "What do you, God, want to tell me personally for my very own life?"

Sharing of the Word for me with the others: After about five minutes the facilitator invites the group members to share what they have heard in the depths of their hearts. In order to keep the sharing on a personal level and to refrain from moralizing, they will try to use only the first person singular (I, me, my, mine). It is a matter of simple sharing, not of discussion or of preaching in the sense of moralizing. The word of Pope Paul VI may be recorded here "Is there any other way of handing on the Gospel, than by transmitting to another person one's personal experience of faith?" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*)



Third Step

The Word demands a response.

Reading of the same text: After all have shared, another member of the group reads the text aloud for a third time, while the others listen and/or read silently.

Silence and personal answer to the Word: After the reading the group observes deep silence once again, during which time each individual tries to find an answer to what has been perceived as the personal Word of God. There ought to be a real correspondence between the



Word and the answer, for instance, expressing one's trust if the Word was a promise; one's obedience if it was a command. The prayer could also be praise and thanks, repentance, petition, intercession, depending on the message received.

Sharing of the personal prayer response: Each person expresses aloud the personal answer of his/her heart to the Word received, so that it may be confirmed through the "Amen" (expressed aloud or in silence) of the other participants.

Concluding Prayer or Song

A prayer of praise or thanks, a song, or the Lord's Prayer recited in common by the group, are a very fitting conclusion to this Bible Sharing.

Model B: Action Response

Opening Prayer or Song

First Step

Same as in Model A: "Prayer—response"

Second Step

Same as in Model A: "Prayer—response"

Third Step

The Word demands an answer.

Reading of the text: as in model "prayer—response." Silence and personal answer to the Word (approx. 5 minutes): Here each individual asks him/herself or God: "How can I put into action in the concrete circumstances of my life the Word which I have received.

Sharing of the personal action response: Each participant shares with the others how he/she wishes to live the Word. Bible sharing groups which form a natural community (family, religious community, classmates, colleagues at work, etc.) could try to reach a conclusion on how they, as a community, could try to live their answer.

Concluding Prayer

Same as in Model A: “Prayer—response.”

**Model C: Combination of the Prayer
and Action—Response**

“Prayer and action response” could also be combined; this of course would require more time, since this combination usually consists of four steps, but it is not necessary to read the text a fourth time, followed by the period of silence; in sharing the “action response,” the “prayer—response” could be integrated as well.

A Simple Bible Sharing Method

Teka Muna Bible Sharing Community

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Opening Song

Opening Prayer

Scripture Reading

Silent Reflection

Sharing

Shared Intercessions

Our Father

Greeting of Peace

Concluding Prayer

End Song

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Lectio Divina Shared in Community

(A) Listening for the Gentle Touch of Christ the Word (The Literal Sense)

1. One person reads aloud (twice) the passage of scripture, as others are attentive to some segment that is especially meaningful to them.
2. Silence for 1-2 minutes. Each hears and silently repeats a word or phrase that attracts.
3. Sharing aloud: [A word or phrase that has attracted each person]. A simple statement of one or a few words. No elaboration.

(B) How Christ the Word speaks to ME (The Allegorical Sense)

4. Second reading of same passage by another person.
5. Silence for 2-3 minutes. Reflect on "Where does the content of this reading touch my life today?"
6. Sharing aloud: Briefly: "I hear, I see..."

(C) What Christ the Word Invites me to DO (The Moral Sense)

7. Third reading by still another person.
8. Silence for 2-3 minutes. Reflect on "I believe that God wants me to..... today / this week."
9. Sharing aloud: at somewhat greater length the results of each one's reflection. [Be especially aware of what is shared by the person to your right.]
10. After full sharing, place your hands on the head of the person to your right as you pray for him in a way that he hears you, so he can join you in prayer.

Note: Anyone may "pass" at any time. If instead of sharing with the group you prefer to pray silently, simply state this aloud and conclude your silent prayer with Amen.



Lectio on Life

Applying lectio divina to my personal salvation history.

Purpose: to apply a method of prayerful reflection to a life/work incident (instead of to a scripture passage).

(A) Listening for the Gentle Touch of Christ the Word (The Literal Sense)

1. Each person quiets the body and mind: relax, sit comfortably but alert, close eyes, attune to breathing...
2. Each person gently reviews events, situations, sights, encounters that have happened since the beginning of the retreat/or during the last month at work.

(B) Gently Ruminating, Reflecting (Meditatio—Meditation)

3. Each person allows the self to focus on one such offering.
 - a) Recollect the setting, sensory details, sequence of events, etc.
 - b) Notice where the greatest energy seemed to be evoked. Was there a turning point or shift?
 - c) In what ways did God seem to be present? To what extent was I aware then? Now?

(C) Prayerful Consecration, Blessing (Oratio—Prayer)

4. Use a word or phrase from the Scriptures to inwardly consecrate—to offer up to God in prayer—the incident and interior reflections. Allow God to accept and bless them as your gift.



The Bible

from Christian Community Bible

Where do we begin our reading of the Bible?

The simplest way is to start with the Gospels where we meet Christ, who is the Light, the Truth and the Word of God.

Obviously the Old Testament has many important lessons. Yet the person who reads them after having heard Christ understands them differently and discovers a deeper meaning in them.


Some are accustomed to opening the Bible at random, thinking that the first paragraph they find will give them the precise word they need at that moment. Certainly God can answer their concerns in this way, but he never committed himself to communicate with us in such a manner.

In any case, it is advantageous to have read each book of the New Testament in sequence at least once. It is good to begin with the Gospels.

How to avoid misunderstanding the Bible

1. Do not think that you are the first to understand God's message and that there were no true Christians before you. This would be the way to become a founder of another strange sect.

2. The word of God is life-giving, but that does not mean that every word is an instant problem-solver today.



Each word was given by God to people living under concrete circumstances. Let us ponder what their problem was and what God wanted them to understand. Then we may ask: What light does this message shed on the present time and circumstances?

3. God taught his people for more than fifteen centuries from Abraham to the apostles, but he did not teach everything from the beginning. Do not wonder, then, that Moses and even the Prophets ignored important matters as manifested by the witnesses of Jesus who is the Word of God.

4. From the very first message which God gave his people, he had in mind the coming of his Son and the mystery of his cross and resurrection. All is to be understood in this light.

5. In the Bible, what is most important is clearly taught. However, some pages that actually have little to teach us were written in a sophisticated way according to an old literary style. Do not cling to some strange sentences to the point of forsaking what is clear and fundamental.

6. Read your Bible continually not to learn what you do not yet know, but as a proof of your love and faithfulness to God. If you persevere, he will give you all the understanding you need.

The Old Testament

Eighteen centuries before Jesus Christ many nomadic tribes leave Chaldea along with their flocks to go and



to live in Egypt. Among these tribes and nomadic clans there are a certain number of families whose chief is Abraham. For Abraham quite insignificant for the historians -, this forced migration was accompanied by a great hope: God had called him and had promised him an extraordinary recompense: "Abraham, all generations will be blest in you."

When God revealed himself to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, they were still nomads; they shared a simple religion with other nomads, an attachment to the "God of their forebears" and the veneration of a number of family idols. Their meeting with the Living God led them to a new awareness: God watches over those whom he chooses. Many trials seemed to contradict God's promise to them; but each time God intervenes in favor of his faithful people. This led to the establishment of a privileged relationship between God and the patriarchs, marked by God's fidelity to his word and by the unshakable confidence of his faithful people. Through them, Israel was incited to contemplate both the marvels of God for those he has chosen and the unflinching faith of their ancestors.

Six centuries later, descendants of the patriarchs were in the desert being guided by Moses towards the Promised Land. The sojourn at Horeb was decisive: it was here that the nomadic clans were to live a spiritual experience, such that the biblical text would never cease referring to it. God solemnly committed himself to his people at the same time that he gave them a Law: the rule of a covenant with God and a code of personal and communal behav-





ior for Israel. The word spoken to Abraham was echoed by the message of Sinai. The Promise, the Alliance and Salvation will be the three pillars of Israel's faith, and the strong point of the first five books of the Old Testament.

With the entry to the Promised Land, Israel was confronted by other people much more culturally advanced. For more than two thousand years these people had an urban civilization, developed agriculture, established commercial relations within the region of the Near East, and beyond. This civilization, brilliant but pagan, would be a constant stumbling block for the faith of Israel. God sent prophets to his people; they were his representatives. David took hold of a small Canaan town and made it his capital: Jerusalem. To it he brought the Ark of the Covenant, the visible sign of the presence of God in the midst of his people. From this date, not only did the Holy City enter into the history of God's people but its vocation surpassed time and history as it appears in the last pages of Revelation as a figure of humanity definitively reconciled with God. Solomon, in building the Temple of Jerusalem, which in time would be recognized as the only legitimate sanctuary, gave his people a rallying center: "God's dwelling place."

Condemnation for Israel's numberless infidelities, remembrance of God's tireless mercy towards Jerusalem, the demand for truth and sincerity in the cult of the Temple, proclamation of a coming salvation: all these are at the heart of the prophets' message.

With the approach of the end of time the meditation






of Israel became more intense. Many trials refined hopes which were too human. With the prayer of the psalms, with edifying narratives or maxims, with the development of humankind and society, sages undertook to guide Israel in the last stages of its journey towards the One who would fulfill all things. The Wisdom Scripture which constitutes the last and third part of the Old Testament may appear less coherent than the Law or the Prophets; they are in fact the reflection of a people distraught and often divided. This was the time when God formed “a small remnant” for himself in the midst of a nation attracted and carried away by temptations to power, and the confusion between the kingdom of this world and the Kingdom of God.

But after so many accumulated experiences by the people of Israel, a period of crisis takes place: where God lead them to overcome the greatest challenges of faith and of history. It is then that Jesus comes.

The 46 books of Old Testament make up the first and most voluminous of the two parts of the Bible. It concerns the gradual preparation of Israel for the definitive and eternal Covenant that God would seal with humankind in the person of Jesus Christ.


Just as items in a library might be classified differently by one or another librarian, so the 46 books of the Old Testament were classified in different ways from the first centuries of the Christian era. Modern editors of the Bible have had to choose between the two most frequent classifications adopted by the ancient manuscripts: the order of






the Hebrew bible or the order of the Greek bible.

In classifying among “the prophets” the books recording that span of history, the Hebrew Bible highlights the originality of these texts. For the Old Testament as well as for the New, every event carried the word of God: history is not told for the pleasure of knowing the past, but rather to witness God’s fidelity towards his people, to know his will, and so prepare us to welcome the grace of salvation. In this way every biblical text is “prophetic.”



It is generally the order of the Hebrew bible that we have adopted for the present edition. So to begin we find the five books of the Old Testament, called the Law, the **Torah** for Hebrew-speaking Jews, the **Pentateuch** for the Greek-speaking Jews. We see in them God in action in human history to liberate a people he wants to make his own. We see God instructing his people and making sense of their history.



Then come the **Prophetic Books**: God intervenes in history by the intercession of the prophets to whom he communicates his Word and his Spirit “to destroy and to build, to uproot and to plant.” These inspired prophets are going to play a decisive role in the education of Israel’s faith.

Finally we have the **Wisdom Books**, that is to say a group of many writings under the most varied forms which make us enter into communion with the prayer, the wisdom and morality of the old covenant people. They teach the art of serving God in everyday life and of becoming responsible persons in our life of faith.



The New Testament

The New Testament is a collection of 27 books of the Bible written in the seventy years following the resurrection of Jesus. The Church of the apostles saw in them an authentic expression of their faith. The Church has officially recognized these books as inspired by God, as the Word of God. Just as in the Old Testament these books did not simply fall from heaven, rather we owe them to the apostles and the evangelists of the early Church. They make no pretense to answer all our questions concerning the faith, but are a collection of testimonies where we discover the person of Jesus, the way in which the early Church saw itself animated and impelled by the power of his resurrection. It was God's will that Christians of every age would know Jesus and his work of redemption through these powerful testimonies.

But why a New Testament after the Old?

Simply because each forms a part of salvation history and the revelation of God within history. The cross of Jesus separates these two phases.

In the Old Testament a people is being formed. They grow through their experience, and after having hoped for the thousand and one things that all people look for, they understand that what really matters is to hope for and to seek a Kingdom of Justice where people will be made new. When we read Sacred History, we see the direction it takes and discern different stages and key people. Israel discovers the great value of existence and of





social life. We understand why it took them many centuries to discover something of the beyond. We grasp why the prosperity of the ancient kingdom of Israel could not last and why it was necessary for the people of God to gain insight and interiority into what they were losing in earthly power and glory. We see why, after many saviors, the unique Savior came for them while experiencing the final crisis under Roman oppression and the radicalization of political forces.

Thus, the message of Jesus was a call to overcome the narrow-mindedness of their nationalism and fanaticism in order to find here and now the kingdom and the justice of God. The history of Israel had to flow into a new era with a universal people of God, who would be rich in the knowledge of the Father and the Son. Such a people would practice non-violence that can overcome divisions and oppression. We know that the Jewish nation collapsed after a few years: it was the end of one world and the rupture of destiny.

The New Testament does not replace the Old. Jesus' preaching does not make the warnings of the prophets irrelevant. Love does not replace justice. The salvation promised to the Jewish people is not replaced by a "salvation of souls," but rather the Gospel is presented as the liberating truth which redirects history and moves all civilizations toward the goal of reunion and reconciliation in Christ of all human powers and creative energy in the universe.

When attempts to evangelize the Jews in Palestine





failed, the first Jewish Christians turned with added incentive to other peoples and announced the Gospel to them. Within a few years, the Church began to spread throughout the known world then, that is to say, the nations of the Greco-Roman empire. At first, it was a common belief among Christians that the message would shortly reach the ends of the world, and Jesus would return in glory for judgment. In the seventies this illusion disappeared: history would last longer than they had expected.

The Christian communities began to gather what had been written down to preserve the preaching of the apostles. They also spent time recalling significant experiences of the first Christians. Of the books thus produced, the Church approved those which expressed the faith as it was received from the apostles and rejected others which, although very commendable, did not seem to transmit the most fundamental and universal message of the faith.

The Bible and World Religions

These few reminders are enough to show that history and biblical traditions only cover a small, though one of the most important, area of human history at the crossroads of three continents. Perhaps no other area of the planet has seen so many geological and human upheavals. But most of humanity bypassed this history and experienced life and God in its own way. We should never forget that.

Biblical people came late on the “chessboard” of nations and for a long time they did not raise any questions about those who had not received God’s Word of which





they were the bearers. And for that reason, God said nothing to them about it because when God speaks to us, he speaks in a human language and within our own culture and, to some degree, God respects our limitations and our ignorance. However, God had already communicated his word and his spirit in a thousand ways. At various times, Israelites or Christians thought that everything coming from abroad was bad, that all wisdom born outside of Jewish or Christian lands was to be rejected. But there were also inquisitive times during which faith became enriched through its contact with other cultures, other prophets and other thinkers.

We should not therefore seek too many answers from the Bible about the way God spoke in other cultures, the way his Spirit was at work in their midst, about the way in which they are touched today by the energy radiating from the risen Christ, and how they are saved by the one and only Savior. The Bible only asserts that God's call to Abraham was the start of a great and unique adventure, one which leads straight to the Son of God, to his Word or Wisdom made flesh.





A Prayer Service for Bible Enthronement

Reverently place the open Bible on a book stand or the altar. You may add other sacramentals to this display such as a candle, crucifix, icon, flowers or plants. The enthroned Bible will serve as a powerful symbol of God's living word and as a reminder to make scriptural reflection and prayer a regular part of your life.

Opening Song

Introduction

Leader: We gather together to honor the Book of the Church, the sacred Scriptures. We believe that through these inspired writings, God speaks to us. We believe that through the word of God we are taught, encouraged, and challenged. We pray that this enthroned Bible may be for us a constant reminder to seek God's word, to learn from its saving truth, and to apply it to our lives each day. So we begin our celebration in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader: Our Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Word of the Father.

All: Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Leader: You became one with us to tell of the Father's love.

All: Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Leader: You are the light that shines in the darkness.

All: Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Leader: You save us from fear and break the bonds of sin and death.





All: Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Leader: You come to guide our steps and lead us to God.

All: Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Leader: You are the Word of eternal life.

All: Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Leader: You fill us with the Holy Spirit.

All: Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Leader: Let us pray...

All: Ever-living God,
we long for your presence
and we thirst for your word.
Send your Holy Spirit
so that the Bible can be for us
a source of spiritual growth and strength.
Give us a deep love for the sacred Scriptures
so that we may know your truth,
grow in love for you,
and follow your way more faithfully.
Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Proclamation of the Word

Leader: Let us listen to the prophet Isaiah as he speaks about God's word as a penetrating rain, watering the earth so that it may bear fruit.

Reader 1: (*Reverently takes the Bible from its place and says the following:*) **A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.** (*Reads Isaiah 55:10-11 slowly, then says the following after the reading.*) **The Word of the Lord.** (*Returns the Bible to its place, and all pause for silent reflection.*)



All: Thanks be to God.

Leader: The word of God is a life-giving rain for our dry land. (Is 55:10)

All: Come and refresh us so that we can grow in Christ and bear fruit for others.

Leader: The word of God is a lamp for my feet, a light to my path. (Ps 119:105)

All: Come and guide us through the dark valleys of life with your shining light.

Leader: The word of God is a fertile seed that depends on rich soil. (Mk 4:20)

All: Come and take root within us so that your word may flourish and bear a rich harvest.

Leader: The word of God is a flaming fire and a hammer shattering rocks. (Jer 23:29)

All: Come and inflame our lives and break the hardness of our hearts so that our words may be faithful and true.

Leader: The word of God is living and effective, sharper than a two-edged sword. (Heb 4:12)

All: Come and penetrate our spirits, stirring our passion for goodness and justice.

Leader: The word of God motivates us to action, so that we can be doers of the word and not hearers only. (James 1:22)

All: Come and energize us so that your presence may inspire our daily decisions and actions.

Leader: The word of God will stand forever as all else passes away. (Is 40:8)





All: Come and live with us always as our source of unchanging truth and love.

Alleluia Song

Leader: Let us listen to the words of the risen Lord, as he speaks to us through the Gospel according to Luke.

Reader 2: (*Reverently takes the Bible from its place, and says the following:*) **A reading from the Gospel according to Luke.** (*Reads Luke 4:14-21 slowly, then says the following after the reading.*) **The Gospel of the Lord.** (*Returns the Bible to its place, and all pause for silent reflection.*)

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Leader: We have heard your words, Jesus.

All: They give us joy
and bring light and truth into our lives.
Your presence gives us peace
in our troubled and divided world.

Leader: Let your Word create in our hearts a deep desire for you.

All: Be with us in our hearts and our community.
Give us your Holy Spirit
to help us to understand your Word.

Leader: We enthrone now this Holy Bible in our midst.

All: Make your Word the center of our lives.
May your Word inspire all
that we think and say and do.
May your Word bind us together in unity
with each other and with you,
today and always.





Meditation Song

Meditation on the Church Documents

Leader: Let us listen to the teachings of our Church concerning sacred Scripture from the Second Vatican Council and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Reader 3: "Access to sacred Scripture ought to be open wide to the Christian faithful." (DV 21-22, CCC 131) The Church forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful... to learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ, by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. 'Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.'" (DV 25, CCC 133)

Commitment to the Word of God

Leader: Do you believe that the Creator of the world spoke the Word to the people of ancient Israel for the salvation of all the nations?

All: I do.

Leader: Do you believe that the Word of God was made flesh and continues to live among us as the Good News for all?

All: I do.

Leader: Do you believe that God sent the Holy Spirit among us to lead us to truth and to guide our understanding of God's word?

All: I do.

Leader: I invite you to approach the Bible individually and place your hands upon it. This is a sign of our personal commitment to seek the word of life in the Scriptures.



All approach the Bible, place their hands on its open pages, and pray a silent prayer of personal commitment. Then, all repeat after the leader:

We promise to respect the Word of God in our midst.

We shall read and reflect on it
as a community of disciples.

May we draw from it inspiration for our decisions,
strength for our work, and comfort in suffering.

Jesus, help us to be faithful to our promise,
you who live forever and ever.

Amen.

Our Father

Leader: Let us now pray in the words our Savior taught us.

All: Our Father who art in heaven...

Concluding Prayer

Leader: Let us pray.

All: Loving God,

help us to open our eyes, our ears,
our minds, and our hearts.

May we always welcome your word of life,
as you come to us with your wisdom,
your truth, and your love.

Amen.

Leader: Let us offer one another a sign of the peace of Christ.

End Song




Guide for Catholic Living

The Ten Commandments

For their part of the Covenant, the Israelites were called to keep the “Ten Words” given to Moses at Mount Sinai (cf. Ex 20; Dt 5:6-21). These commandments were to liberate them, as their preface declares: “I, the Lord, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery” (Ex 20:2). But they also demanded of the people a fateful decision: a persevering commitment to the liberating Covenant God (Catechism for Filipino Catholics 426).


The Ten Commandments provide credible and durable moral norms for daily life, since they constitute the basic moral imperatives flowing from our common “Human Rights”; the pattern for living according to Yahweh’s “covenant” and Christ’s double love Commandment; and an accepted basis for discussing moral matters with non-Christians. The Ten Commandments are “signposts toward authentic freedom” (CFC 926).

1. Honor the Lord, your God, above all. You shall not have other gods.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord’s Day.
4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against neighbor.


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9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
10. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

The Great Commandment

When asked "which commandment in the Law is the greatest," Jesus replied: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole Law and the Prophets depend on these two commandment" (CFC 812).



Now we are empowered to love both God and neighbor since God's own love "has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Rom 5:5). In the strength of this divine Spirit of love, Christ gave his own command: "This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12).



The Beatitudes

*In the Beatitudes, Christ describes those who are truly "happy" in the Kingdom of God. Most people, according to St. Thomas, relate happiness to: 1) sensible pleasures and satisfaction of desires, or 2) success in undertakings and interpersonal relations, or finally 3) deep reflection and contemplation. Christ claims that instead of sensible satisfaction and many possessions (1) **detachment** (poverty or spirit), **meekness** and **compassion** bring us true happiness. Instead of completely self-centered activity, (2) **thirsting for justice** for all and **merciful forgiveness** offer authentic human interpersonal relationships. Instead*



of withdrawing from the problems and concerns in the world to seek contemplation, those who are single-minded/clean of heart, and work for peace among all will find God. Such a life will undoubtedly bring trials and persecutions because of our sinful selves and the world; but it is the life of faith, hope and love of the disciples of Christ (CFC 823).

Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst
for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.


Blessed are they who are persecuted
for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The Sacraments

Sacraments are signs of God's love in our life. The sacraments include actions, words and symbols that make us experience Jesus Christ's loving and life-giving presence.

1. **Baptism** welcomes us into the Christian communi-







ty. It gives us a membership for life in the Church. It is a sign of acceptance by God and others of who we truly are.

2. **Confirmation** means “strengthening”; it is the sacrament of Christian maturity. It initiates us more fully into the Church by conferring the full gifts and life of the Holy Spirit to help us live a courageous, mature Christian faith, to choose for ourselves to follow Jesus.

3. **Eucharist** means “thanksgiving.” Eucharist is bread and wine blessed, broken and shared. This bread and wine is the Body and Blood of Christ. When we celebrate the Eucharist we thank God for the love he has shown us through his Son Jesus. This sacrament gathers Christians around the table of the Lord, thus celebrating and creating the Christian community.



4. **Penance** or **Reconciliation** offers us a chance to be free from the sins we have committed. It is a source of forgiveness and emotional healing, a way to make peace with God, others and ourselves.



5. **Matrimony** is a sacrament where a man and a woman accept each other and commit themselves before the Church that they will love and be faithful to each other until death and that they will take care of their children.

6. **Holy Orders**. The Church ordains deacons, priests, and bishops to teach, lead, celebrate and care for and serve their sisters and brothers.

7. **Anointing of the Sick** helps people who are sick find pardon, comfort and healing. “It brings Christ’s compassionate loving healing to bear on those suffering serious sickness” (CFC 1822).



Examination of Conscience

The examination of conscience helps us realize how we have lived according to our Christian calling and the values of the Gospel. We can use either the ten commandments or Jesus' commandments of love as guide to examine ourselves.

Dear Holy Spirit, help me to know and be true to myself.
Help me to be faithful to my Christian calling
and to the Gospel.

Journaling

<http://www.spirithome.com/spirjour.html>, 11 March 2005

Devotional journals have been everything from a child writing down her daily thoughts about God in a notebook, to complex systematic projects with structured Bible passages and discipline exercises and such. It is “a written record of personal reactions to spiritual matters.” The key thing about a journal is that it’s a place to spiritually share yourself with God and with yourself. You’re pouring your thoughts out to God, but you’re also part of the audience, because you go back to it to see how you’ve spiritually grown—or perhaps shrank.

What kind of things go into it?

- things you sense around you (observations),
- places you’ve been and what you draw from them (pilgrimage and travel),
- insights you’ve had along the way,
- prayers you’ve prayed (formally-written, poetic, or said/screamed/sobbed toward God),
- special things that others have written or said,





- ways you've surprised yourself,
- things you've discovered while looking back in the journal,
- that which comes to you while meditating on something.

As with most spiritual practices, there are important guidelines that help to make the journal effective. The most important is that you must be honest with yourself and God when writing. You probably won't get that right from the start. Few of us have any idea of what it really means to be honest to God, and so we have to learn as we go along. Another good guideline is that the date and time should be marked with each entry. You can refer to that when you're looking back, or trying to remember. And, it is most helpful if the entries are tied into a rhythm of regular Bible reading (such as in a lectionary cycle) and private prayer. This is a spiritual journal, not a diary. Its focus is on the relationship between you and God, not you and your husband or you and your employer or you and your friend.

Get yourself a good, sturdy book for it because you'll be taking it with you when you move, travel, go on a retreat, or make pilgrimage, or have your vacation. It's too important a task to be left to a flimsy notebook. Leave the book you're currently using where you can easily see it, so that it can invite you to come and write. Think without analyzing. Leave yourself open so the Spirit can get you to share honestly as you're writing.

A journal is like a muscle : when you use it regularly, it can carry more spiritual weight in your life.





On Prayer

Marcelli Fonts CMF

Importance and Meaning of Relaxation

Relaxation as the way to loosen up muscular tensions

We become tired because when we do something we have to tense our muscles. Physical tiredness is an accumulation of muscular tension. The fundamental way to become rested is to loosen up all these tensions. This is what we do naturally when we sleep.

Relaxation as the way to restore energy

In every action we discharge energy and in every muscular contraction, be it conscious or unconscious, we are using energy.

As the modern psycho-physiology makes clear, every emotional tension or mental defensive attitude generates a muscular contraction, although usually this contraction is unconscious. In the same way every muscular contraction involves some psychic or mental aspect and therefore it is a discharge of psychic energy as well.

Relaxation is the natural way to restore our energy. To relax is to liberate energy, not only because we are using energy in order to keep our contractions but also because of the restoration of the flow of energy that is obstructed by the muscular tensions.

When we relax some contraction the psyche is also liberated, resulting in an increase of psychic energy. Through a relaxed body and mind energy can flow freely without resistance and therefore awareness is greatly enhanced.



Deepening levels of relaxation

As explained above, we cannot attain complete relaxation only through the loosening up of muscular contractions, but we must reach all the levels of our psyche. All nervous and emotional tensions, mental conflicts and defensive attitudes, conscious and unconscious, must be loosened up in order to become totally relaxed. A deep relaxation is the one that reaches the muscular, emotional and mental, conscious and unconscious, levels of the body and the psyche. This deep relaxation cannot be achieved without awareness, but at the same time without a deep relaxation the flow of awareness cannot be totally liberated. The deepening of relaxation and the deepening of awareness are closely interrelated.

The role of breathing in deepening relaxation

Breathing has not only a physiological function (the oxygenation of the blood), but also a psycho-physiological one (the control of our emotional life through the hypothalamus). Because of this function, breathing helps to control also our mental activities, like dispersed thoughts, etc., and so plays a very important role in order to deepen relaxation through emotional and mental tranquilization. Through breathing, then, we can enhance our attention, concentration and awareness.

The breathing that helps to deepen relaxation is the abdominal breathing which is naturally slow and regular. Usually our breathing is chest breathing, fast and irregular, because it is influenced by tensions and emotions.

To make the breathing slow, one simply lengthens the exhalation, giving out long, slow gentle breaths, always



breathing through the nose. One should never strain or do violence to oneself and, indeed, if one simply observes or “follows” the breath, it will naturally become slower with little or no effort. The ordinary person breathes from sixteen to eighteen times a minute but if one “follows” the breath it will quickly slow down to ten and even five or six times a minute.

The same can be said about regular breathing. Ordinarily our breathing is irregular, dominated by our emotional life and our changes of mood, but one can, again, regulate the breathing by being aware of it, or following it, in an effortless way. If we want to control our breathing it is sufficient to watch it.

But in order to become naturally slow and regular, our breathing must also become abdominal breathing. Abdominal breathing does not mean that air enters into the abdomen but rather that the abdominal muscles and the sides and back of the lower torso expand outward to induce the lowering of the diaphragm, thus creating the appearance of an inflated abdomen. The diaphragm is the main muscle used in breathing; when it lowers, air is drawn into the lungs. There is an image that when applied to breathing encourages abdominal breathing very naturally. Imagine yourself to be an upside-down eyedropper. Imagine that the opening tip of the glass tube ends where the back of the nose and the throat meet.

Stand erects but relaxed, being careful not to tilt or lower your head. Squeeze the bulb, and air is squeezed out. Release the bulb, letting it expand, and air is drawn into the body. Let air flow in and out through the central opening of the eyedropper, not simply through the





mouth or nose alone. Practice applying this image as you breathes and your breathing will become naturally abdominal breathing.

The changing role of attention in deepening relaxation

Also attention plays an indispensable role in relaxation. In order to relax a muscular tension we must become aware of it. Directing our attention to the different parts of the body we can relax our body more fully. The same process must take place also in relation to emotional, mental and unconscious tensions and contractions, conflicts and defensive attitudes. But the role of attention must change along this deepening process from an active attention, that directs actively the flow of our awareness from one point to another, to a centralized and passive attention that becomes deeply aware of the global condition of our body and psyche.

The fundamental elements for the practice of attentive relaxation

We can summarize them in the following:

- ❑ The correct body position: preferably the sitting position with the backbone straight.
- ❑ The breathing: the natural movement of exhalation helps us to relax spontaneously.
- ❑ The interior gesture of letting go, loosen up, with the desire to relax. This is fundamentally an attitude of detachment.
- ❑ A clear mental image of our body or the part of it we want to relax.
- ❑ The changing role of attention in directing the whole process.





The importance of relaxation in the process of interiorization

Without deep relaxation it will be very difficult to loosen up our inner tensions and solve our inner conflicts, and therefore create a deep silence and become interiorly unified. Relaxation leads naturally to inner peace and harmony, and helps us to become deeply detached. It also helps us to become de-identified of everything that is not our true self and consequently to discover our true identity.

Deep relaxation

It is a state of total inner peace and harmony, in which we become unified and in which our true identity is revealed to us. Deep relaxation is attained only in deep awareness, and vice versa.

Practice of Attentive Relaxation

Progressive steps of this practice

1. Take a correct position, preferably the sitting position with the backbone straight. This practice can be done in any comfortable position in which it may be easier for us to relax, like lying down on the floor or a bed. Because to relax is to loosen up all muscular contractions and let the body fall down by its own weight, the correct position for relaxation can be any position in which we can remain quiet for a sufficiently long period of time without becoming tired and in which the physiological functions of the body are not hindered. But the best position for this practice of attentive relaxation is the sitting position with the backbone straight because it enhances awareness. In



this position not only the nerves that go in and out of the backbone become naturally distended but also the whole body can maintain its natural balance and functioning without neither effort nor hindrance. In order not to become distracted it is also recommended to do this exercise with the eyes closed.

2. Breathe in and out three times through the nose (with the mouth closed), deeply and slowly.

3. Think that you are going to relax all your body because this is what you desire. (In this way we involve from the beginning our awareness into the practice).

4. Then loosen up in one token all the muscles of your body which you are conscious of, with an inner gesture of letting it go, loosening up, giving away.

5. Afterwards make five breaths (normal but slow ones) and while exhaling through the nose repeat interiorly the some gesture of loosening up. It is very important to have a clear intention and a clear mental image of your body loosening up and becoming relaxed.

6. While doing this, concentrate progressively your attention to the following parts of your body, trying to deepen (during five breaths each time) the relaxation of each part:

- feet and legs
- arms and hands
- the pit of the stomach and the abdomen
- the chest and the shoulders
- the nape of the neck and the whole neck
- the head and the face (front, eyes, jaws, tongue)





7. Along this process, from time to time rest for a while mentally, directing your attention to the global sensation of your body, trying to become receptively aware of any tension that you may still feel in any part of it. If you feel any tension, loosen it up gently. You can rest also mentally directing your attention to the movement of your breathing and observing its internal sensation but without trying to modify it.

8. When you want to finish this practice, first of all think that you are going to come back to your ordinary state of consciousness.

9. Breathe in and out three times, increasing each time the volume of the air you inhale.

10. After these breaths move first the fingers of your hands and the toes of your feet and then the arms and legs, before opening your eyes and moving all your body.

(Do not forget to do these last three steps every time when you finish this practice of relaxation.)

The Practice of Concentration

There are many possible ways of practicing concentration. The practice I recommend here as an effective way to improve the capacity of concentration and to make concentration deeper is the one used in Zen meditation that consists of the counting of the breathing from 1 to 10 while exhaling slowly through the nose or the half-open mouth. The inhaling movement of the breathing must be done spontaneously through the nose.

This practice, as any other practice of concentration, must be done in a relaxed way. Relaxation is a “sine qua





non" condition in order to be able to concentrate deeply.

Very often when we try to concentrate, we become tense because our attention is usually very dispersed and fluctuating. For that reason when we want to fix our attention in one object for a while, we have to do it by forcing our will and tensing our body. In fact, we have not educated our capacity of concentration very much, besides our hardly knowing how to concentrate.

Our capacity of concentration is based on our capacity of directing voluntarily our attention and fixing it in one object or in one point. Although our attention is basically directed by our will, our will works at the same time according to the flow of our attention. But only when we are in a relaxed condition can our will and our attention work together smoothly. Instead of being a help, tension hinders the flow of our awareness, as well as the smooth working of our attention and our will.

This practice of concentration based on counting our breathing can be considered a continuation of the practice of attentive relaxation I explained before.

In order to relax better and to deepen our concentration, the counting of the breathing from 1 to 10 must be done slowly accompanied with the exhaling movement of the breathing. The correct sitting position and the inner attitude needed for the practice of attentive relaxation are also necessary in order to deepen at the same time the relaxation and the concentration of our body and mind.

If we realize during the practice of concentration that we are becoming tense and tired, we must stop concentrat-





ing for a while and try to become relaxed before continuing with the practice. For this reason the concentration practice must not be too long at the beginning. About 10 minutes of practice each time will be enough at this stage. But it must be regularly done. Regularity is the main factor for a practice to be effective. Later on, the practice will have to last longer and be more intensive if we want to progress farther.

One of the advantages of counting the breathing is found in the fact that in the beginning our attention is much dispersed and it is not yet used to being fixed and quiet down. Therefore, we give our attention some space in which it can move a little, that is, the counting from 1 to 10. Also when we get distracted, the fact itself of counting helps us to realize what is happening to us, so we can go back with ease to the point on which we are trying to concentrate. This must be repeated again and again in order to improve our capacity of concentration.

Counting is not an end in itself but only a means. If we, then, become deeply concentrated and counting becomes an obstacle more than a help, we must stop counting and remain in the still point we have attained as long as we can. But when we become distracted, we must begin counting again.

In case, you find this practice too difficult for you, try some other kinds of concentration based on visualization and attraction. Usually, when our attention is directed to some object to which we feel attracted, it becomes easier for us to concentrate. An attractive object can be very helpful for attracting and fixing our attention.



Prayer and the Body

The role of the body in prayer

Although we have insisted that we must pray with the heart and we have considered prayer itself as a process of transformation of the heart, nonetheless, we cannot forget the important role that the body plays in prayer. For instance, many times my body, by its gestures and posture, can say what my heart cannot, especially when I find prayer more difficult because of my inner disposition.


In order to understand the role of the body in prayer let us point out two important aspects:

The interaction between body and mind

In fact, although the body is moved by the mind, the mind is influenced as well by the body. Zen Buddhism affirms that we cannot transform the mind with the mind because it would result in confusion; we have to transform the mind with the body. The close interrelation between the mind and the body is expressed also in the following old sayings: "A healthy mind in a healthy body" and "Grace does not act as a substitute for nature."

The need to unify body and mind



Body and mind form an inseparable unity though very often they are in conflict or become disintegrated because of some inner conflict. Sometimes we reject or deny our body because we do not like its appearance or cannot accept its weaknesses. The lack of harmony between mind and body appears very clearly at the sphere of sexuality. Although our body should be a transparent



expression of our mind, many times their relationship becomes disturbed by a lack of harmony.

Awareness plays a very important role in restoring the harmonious interaction between mind and body. Through awareness not only does the mind energize and direct the body, but we also become aware of the condition of our body and the way it influences our mind. Usually, we are not very much aware of our body and we are carried away unconsciously by its needs, urges, reactions, etc. Awareness is a decisive factor in the unification of mind and body.

Prayer and the condition of the body



To become aware of our body is very important also for prayer because the body tells us many things, especially about its own condition. To know the condition of our body is so important because it conditions our prayer, too. When we are sick or tired, it is difficult for us to concentrate. On these occasions, we may have to pray in a different way according to the condition of our body. Sometimes the condition of our body doesn't depend on us, as when we are sick, but it is also true that the rhythm of our life has a strong influence in creating the good condition of our body. The main aspects to be considered about the rhythm of our life in relation to the condition of the body are the balance between vigil and sleep, work and rest, eating and fasting.

Creating the right situation of prayer

We must create the right situation for prayer in the context of the rhythm of our daily life and the possibilities



it offers to us. The following are the main points to be considered in order to build the most appropriate external setting for one's daily prayer:

- ❑ determine the most convenient time in your daily schedule, the time when you are more fully awake and can relax better, and during which you will not be disturbed;
- ❑ look for the most appropriate place (a quiet place);
- ❑ take the posture of the body that helps you most (it is important that this posture be a correct one for the body to relax and be attentive);
- ❑ choose the method that suits you best to pray at that moment.

The method of prayer according to the use of the body

A method of prayer consists basically of the concrete way of how we use the body and our inner capacities in prayer. Posture, breathing, rhythm and word can be considered the fundamental elements from the perspective of the use of the body in prayer. There are many kinds of method according to the combination of these elements.

The main characteristics of a good method of prayer can be summed up in the following points:

- ❑ one that suits me better (my temperament, mental faculties, actual condition);
- ❑ one that helps me relax better and quiet down;
- ❑ one that makes me more attentive, concentrated and receptive;
- ❑ one that responds better to my actual stage of prayer.

The method must never become the central element



of our prayer. It is only an instrument to prepare ourselves to become receptive to the grace of God. Any encounter with the Lord takes place by faith, hope and love, not by any kind of technique, and God's initiative is the fundamental factor of this encounter.

Along the journey of prayer there is an evolution of the forms of prayer towards simplification. The method, too, becomes less and less important until the moment in which any kind of method must be put aside. To become attached to any method can, then, be an obstacle in order to progress in prayer.

It can be helpful to use different methods of prayer according to the changing circumstances. Also the complementary use of various methods can help us deepen the different aspects of the process of prayer. For instance, the simple method of the "Jesus prayer" (the prayer of the heart) can be used during our daily occupations and can help us to awaken the spiritual heart and to center it in Jesus in the midst of our life.

Prayer of the Heart

To understand the prayer of the heart according to the Orthodox Tradition will help us to understand better the process of awakening of the spirit.

The three constitutive elements of the human being and the heart

The Orthodox Tradition recognizes three constitutive elements in the human being:

- the body that knows through the senses;
- the soul that knows by reasoning of the intellect;
- the spirit that knows through conscience or by





mystical perception which transcends the ordinary proceedings of the reason.

Aside from this division there is another element which has a great importance in the Orthodox Tradition: the heart. The heart expresses the interiority of the human person and in the heart are included all the inner activities of a person, i.e., emotions, feelings, thoughts, desires, etc. The heart is considered to have an inscrutable depth. Besides this general meaning of the word "heart," there is also a more particular reference to the "human spirit" as it is often used in the Orthodox Tradition. According to this specific meaning, the heart expresses what St. Paul calls the "inner being" and St. Peter refers to as the "hidden self." Therefore in the Orthodox Tradition the word heart very often means the deepest part of the human being, i.e., its spiritual constitutive element. In the mystical tradition of the Latin Church this is expressed as the "*cor profundum*" or the "bottom of the soul (heart)," where the human person meets God face to face.

But although the word "heart" is used to refer to the human spirit, the heart must not be identified with only one of the constitutive elements of the human being. As has been explained before, the heart constitutes an essential aspect of the whole human person, i.e., its interiority with its boundless vastness and bottomless depth.

Three fundamental kinds of prayer

The three fundamental kinds of prayer are based in the three constitutive elements of the human person:

- prayer of the body or vocal prayer,
- prayer of the intellect or mental prayer,





– prayer of the heart or spiritual prayer.

Vocal prayer does not consist only in the correct recitation of the words, but in order to become a true prayer, the intellect must be present in the words, paying attention to their meaning. As much as prayer becomes interiorized, the external recitation becomes less important, and this recitation can be made interiorly by the intellect with no movement at all of the lips.

Mental prayer is a more interior prayer than vocal prayer, but inasmuch as it remains in the head, it is still an imperfect prayer. With our intellect we can know something about God, but we cannot know God, i.e., we cannot encounter him in a personal way. A personal and direct encounter with God is something that involves the whole being of a person. Without a deep love there cannot be a true knowledge of God or a direct encounter with him.

The Orthodox Tradition insists that in order to pray in a true way we must get out of our head and come down to our heart. This does not mean that we have to renounce our intellectual faculties because reason is also a gift of God, but that we must find the place of the heart if we want to pray in a true way. In order to do this, the intellect must come down into the heart, and must confine itself in it. Only then does mental prayer become the prayer of the heart.

The prayer of the heart is the prayer of the whole person: the spirit, the body and the soul. In the prayer of the heart the body and the intellect have a role to play, but it is the spirit that plays the fundamental one. It is by the power of the spirit that one can enter into a direct contact with God.





The prayer of the heart is fundamentally the prayer of the spirit and, therefore, it is also called spiritual or interior prayer, but in it the whole person is present because it is unified and transformed from within by the spirit. We will see later the specific role of the intellect and the importance of the feelings in the prayer of the heart.

According to the way in which we attain it or it is given to us by God's Spirit, we can distinguish two different forms of the prayer of the heart.

The first is based in our conscious human effort although it obviously presupposes the help of God's grace. This prayer is hard to attain and difficult to maintain.

The second is a gratuitous gift of the Spirit, with which the one who prays is no more that person, but the Spirit of Christ in him or her. This is a spontaneous and unceasing prayer coming from the bottom of the heart like the spring of water that Jesus promised to those who believe in him. This prayer can be given to somebody either momentarily from time to time or it may become a state when prayer does not depend on any given activities but goes on unceasingly in the heart at any moment. This prayer is already a mystical prayer in the specific meaning of this word. It is what Theophan the Recluse calls a prayer that transcends the limits of consciousness.

How to attain the prayer of the heart

First of all, we must enter into ourselves and there, in the secret room of our heart, pray to the Father as Jesus taught us.

In order to do this the intellect must become silent, taking refuge in the heart and remain there, deaf and





dumb to any kind of thoughts, i.e., it must come down into the heart and lock itself up in it, as the Orthodox Fathers repeat frequently.

Because the flow of thoughts carry us away from God, we must stop all dispersed thoughts and remain quiet with our intellect concentrated on God.

In order to attain this goal the Orthodox Fathers made use of short prayers, reciting them unceasingly. This constant repetition of a short prayer centers our intellect on God, making it simple and unified and awakening feelings of love towards God and engrafting this love in the heart. But for this purpose, vocal prayer must be recited always with attention, comprehension and the proper feelings from the bottom of the heart.

As much as prayer becomes deep, the intellect remains in constant communion with God, but without images, without reasoning and without moving at all. This interior prayer that dispenses with words and thoughts is attained only when we remain silent in the presence of God, opening to him our heart in love and worship.

As much as our heart becomes pure, our prayer will be the prayer of the intellect in the heart, and when our heart will be totally purified, our prayer will become spontaneous and unceasing. But although prayer in itself is a gift of grace based in the interior attraction we feel towards God, there is an indispensable element in prayer, i.e., our attention. Without attention there is no true prayer. Although true attention is also a fruit of God's grace, we must put the proper means in order for our attention to come down into the heart. While our





intellect remains in the head, our thoughts remain dispersed, but when our attention descends into the heart, all our senses and mental faculties become concentrated in one place and awaken our heart. The first consequence of this awakening is a sensation of warmth in the heart that attracts our attention to it inasmuch as this warmth becomes stronger and deeper. Thanks to this sensation the attention can be kept in the heart without effort. This sensation of warmth and the attention go together and they either strengthen themselves mutually or weaken each other respectively. If the attention becomes weak, the heart becomes cool, and vice versa.

This sensation is not in itself a spiritual one. It is a natural physical reaction to the concentration of the attention in one place of the body, but it can help to develop the spiritual motions of the heart in prayer provided that it does not become a sensual pleasure that is sought for itself. The warmth that comes from the grace is of a special nature. It is a very subtle feeling of sweetness and it is truly spiritual. It is easy to recognize it. It is like a spiritual flame that enkindles our heart in the love of God.

When God touches our heart, it enkindles it immediately in love. At first, this love is like a small spark, but if we do not allow it to become extinguished, it will become a fire in our heart and this fire will make prayer steady and permanent in us. But in order to attain this spontaneous and unceasing prayer we must commit ourselves to pray at any moment and to become totally involved in our prayer. In the beginning our prayer usually demands from us a great effort, but when prayer becomes estab-





lished in our heart it will be like the murmur of a spring in the bottom of our heart. It will not be difficult then to keep it there.

Nonetheless, this unceasing prayer is only possible when we pray with the intellect locked up in our heart. The union of the intellect with the heart is the union between the spiritual thoughts of the intellect and the spiritual feelings of the heart. But this union in itself is a gratuitous gift from God.

What is the role of feelings in the prayer of the heart?

Theophan the Recluse explains the role that feelings play in the prayer of the heart:

“The first thing you must do is to attract the intellect towards the heart, reciting your prayers with the feelings corresponding to their meaning, because the intellect usually is guided by the feelings of the heart.”

“When we pray, it is essential for our intellect to be united to our spirit in order that both of them can recite the words together. In this way while the intellect works on the words, pronounced mentally or aloud, the spirit acts either through a feeling of warm tenderness or through tears. The union of both is regulated in due time by the divine grace, but it is enough for the beginner to let the spirit sympathize and act together with the intellect.”

According to the Orthodox Tradition feelings play a very important role in making the intellect descend into the heart. Talking about feelings, the Orthodox spiritual writers distinguish carefully between natural feelings and spiritual feelings. The former are not in themselves an obstacle in prayer, but cannot be considered a fruit





of grace. The feelings which are really important in the prayer of the heart are the spiritual ones. Inasmuch as we are moved and unified by our spirit, our spiritual heart is awakened and our feelings become spiritual feelings. They are the fruit of the transformation of the spirit.

Prayer, either vocal or mental, becomes the prayer of the heart under the influence of our spiritual feelings. In the prayer of the heart affectivity is not suppressed, but purified and transformed by the spirit.

The Orthodox Tradition stresses in the process of spiritual transformation of the prayer of the heart three fundamental spiritual feelings:

– feelings of compunction: a deep but sweet pain, which is a kind of sadness for our sins, but at the same time awakens in the heart gratitude and love towards God;

– feelings of warm tenderness: the heart is deeply moved by a loving and sensible joy, but feelings of compunction are also always present here;

– feelings of fire of love or “the fire of the Spirit” enkindled in the heart. Together with this experience of the “fire of love,” we find in many saints of the Orthodox Tradition the experience of the divine light as an expression of the experience of the mystery of Transfiguration. Although these references to fire and light are not simple metaphors, neither should they be taken in a material sense. The light that the saint sees and the fire that he or she experiences in his or her heart are real, but can only be perceived by the senses when these have been transformed and made spiritual by grace.





Obstacles to overcome: the passions and the imagination

The passions are the main obstacle that must be overcome in order to attain the prayer of the heart. The heart must be purified of all its passions. In the Orthodox Tradition the fundamental passions are: gluttony, lust, greed, sadness which includes envy, rage, indolence or spiritual laziness, vainglory and pride. The root of all these passions is selfish love, preferring oneself more to God and others. These passions are not only emotions or affections, but also thoughts, desires, etc., i.e., all those tendencies which pull us towards evil. The prayer of the heart is attained when the heart becomes purified of all its passions. But in the beginning prayer itself helps purify the heart. When someone is besieged by any of these passions, he or she must take refuge in the name of Jesus because the passions, like the demons, withdraw when someone invokes his name.

The imagination is considered an obstacle for the prayer of the heart because it leads to dispersion and creates illusions in us. According to the Orthodox Tradition the imagination, which is our capacity to create inner images in us, plays a very small role or no role at all in the prayer of the heart.

In order to make the intellect descend into the heart and to remain locked up there, the intellect must not only be “purified” of all evil thoughts and desires, but it also must become simple and silent, i.e., “purified” of any thought and any kind of mental images. The images, as sacred as they may be, disperse our attention, which must be concentrated in the heart during prayer, if prayer is to



become a direct encounter with God who is invisible and incomprehensible.

The Four Stages of Prayer According to St. Teresa of Avila

God's work in prayer


Until now we have reflected mainly about what we need to do in order to become receptive to God's grace and how we must cooperate with his transforming work in us. But let us now consider the way in which God's grace transforms us along the process of prayer, from the perspective of the different stages of prayer.

If we want to know how God transforms us in prayer, we have to look at the mystics because they are the ones who had the deepest experience of God's transforming grace. In the writings of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila we find a very beautiful and detailed explanation of how God transforms the soul in prayer. We have seen already the two comparisons of St. John of the Cross: the work of the fire on the wood and the light in a crystal. But now in order to better understand the main stages of this transformation in prayer, let us read the comparison of St. Teresa of Avila about the different ways of watering a garden in which she explains how God's grace works along the transforming process of prayer.


The comparison of the four degrees of prayer

This is how she explains the four degrees of prayer:

The beginner must realize that in order to give delight to the Lord he is starting to cultivate a garden on



very barren soil, full of abominable weeds. His Majesty pulls up the weeds and plants good seed. Now let us keep in mind that all of this is already done by the time a soul is determined to practice prayer and has begun to make use of it. And with the help of God we must strive like good gardeners to get these plants grow and take pains to water them so that they don't wither but come to bud and flower and give forth a most pleasant fragrance to provide refreshment for this Lord of ours. Then he will often come to take delight in this garden and find his joy among these virtues. But let us see now how it must be watered so that we may understand what we have to do, the labor this will cost us, whether the labor is greater than the gain, and for how long it must last. It seems to me the garden can be watered in four ways. You may draw water from a well (which is for us a lot of work). Or may get it by means of a water wheel and aqueducts in such a way that it is obtained by turning the crank of the water wheel (the method involves less work than the other, and you get more water). Or it may flow from a river or stream (the garden is watered much better by this means because the ground is more fully soaked, and there is no need to water so frequently—and much less work for the gardener). Or the water may be provided by a great deal of rain (for the Lord waters the garden without any work on our part, and this is incomparably better than all others mentioned). Now, then, these four ways of drawing water in order to maintain this garden—because without water it will die—are what are important to me and have seemed applicable in explaining the four degrees of prayer in which the Lord in his goodness has sometimes placed my soul.... Beginners in prayer, we can say, are those who draw water from the well. This involves a lot of work on





their part, as I have said. They must tire themselves in trying to recollect their senses. Since they are accustomed to being distracted, this recollection requires much effort. They need to get accustomed to caring nothing at all about seeing or hearing, to practicing the hours of prayer, and thus solitude and withdrawal—and to think in their past life. They must strive to consider the life of Christ—and the intellect grows weary in doing this. These are the things we can do ourselves, with the understanding that we do so by the help of God, for without this help as is already known we cannot have so much as a good thought. At least we are doing our part, for we are already drawing it out and doing what we can to water these flowers. God is so good that when for reasons His Majesty knows—perhaps for our greater benefit—the well is dry and we, like good gardeners, do what lies in our power, he sustains the garden without water and makes the virtues grow. Here by “water” I am referring to tears and when there are no tears to interior tenderness and feelings of devotion. (*Autobiography, Chap. 11:6-9*)

The meaning of “water” and the way in which God’s grace works in each stage of prayer

Let us point out again what St. Teresa says about the “water” (the grace of God).

In the first way of drawing water, she explains: “here by ‘water’ I am referring to tears and when there are no tears interior tenderness and feelings of devotion.” The drawing of this water involves a lot of work, above all the effort of recollection and the use of the mental faculties. And there are times when the well is dry.

In the second way of drawing water, St. Teresa is al-





ready referring to the Prayer of Quiet in which the will alone is occupied in such a way that without knowing how, it becomes captive. The “water” is the joy of the will in being still in the presence of the Lord.

In the third way of drawing water, the water of God’s love flows in us without any labor of ours, but we must still cooperate directing this water to the flowers and in making this water a source of life for the virtues in the garden of the Lord.

In the fourth way of drawing water, the water is the “rain” of God. In this way we do nothing, not even we direct the rain to the flowers.

From these explanations we can draw some conclusions that can help us to understand better the process of God’s work in prayer. First of all, we can state the following basic principle: At each succeeding stage of prayer, God does more and more of the work and we do less and less.

St. Teresa points out repeatedly that the water is for the “flowers” (the virtues), that is, for the transformation of the person. Therefore according to her explanation we can state clearly that this transformation takes place at deeper levels along the four stages of prayer.

In the first stage, God’s grace works at the level of affectivity.

In the second stage, God’s grace works at the level of the will.

In the third stage, God’s grace works at the subconscious level (the transformation that takes place at the subconscious level is manifested in the transformation of our behavior).





In the fourth stage, God's grace works at the unconscious level with a deep transformation of the whole person.

The four stages of prayer and the deepening process of transformation

The deepening levels of God's transformation according to the four stages of prayer can be summarized in the following way:

At the level of the affectivity: through interior tenderness and feelings of devotion, affectivity is integrated and purified by the experience of God's love. But affectivity must be also transcended in order to reach a deeper level. Dryness is the way with which God helps us to transcend affectivity.

At the level of the mental faculties: through the joy of the will being still in the presence of the Lord, all our mental faculties become still and centered in God. At this stage the will is the leading force. It must be therefore purified of all its attachments in order to be totally directed to God. But the level of our mental faculties must be transcended too in order to let God do more and more his transforming work in us. For this we must give up the control of our mental faculties in prayer and surrender ourselves totally to God. Darkness is an indispensable experience in order to give up this control and let God take over completely. Prayer becomes more and more the time we give to the Lord in order to be transformed by him. This may sound easy but usually we try very much to keep the control of our destinies in our own hands.

At the level of the subconscious mind: the work of





our subconscious mind is closely bound to our external behavior. Only through the deep purification of the subconscious mind will our external behavior be completely transformed. It is already the work of God that takes place in passive contemplation. The “night of the senses” would be the experience that makes us reach a deeper level.

At the level of the unconscious: only the work of God in passive contemplation can purify and totally transform our being. The “night of the spirit” is the painful experience of this deepest purification and transformation in prayer that leads to joyful union with God.

Prayer and Life

Prayer and commitment

Prayer is a process of growing commitment. Not only do we need a strong commitment in order to advance in prayer, but our commitment in prayer must also lead us to a growing commitment in our life. In order to understand more clearly the relationship between prayer and commitment, let us consider separately this two following aspects: to be committed in prayer and to become committed in life.

To be committed in prayer

Although a true and deep commitment is the fruit of inner transformation in prayer, nevertheless we need an inner attitude of commitment from the beginning of our journey of prayer. St. Teresa of Avila says that the one who starts the journey of prayer must have a firm resolution





not to give up in the search of the living water though he may die on the way. But to be committed in prayer is not only to have this firm resolution to overcome all the difficulties along the journey of prayer. The one who prays also has to become totally committed to a faithful cooperation with God's grace. Prayer is a process of grace, and our personal cooperation is not only to receive God's grace but also to respond faithfully to it.

In the New Testament we are taught clearly that we are free either to accept or refuse God's invitation and his gifts, but we are also responsible for it (Mt 22:1-13; Mt 25:14-30; Lk 12:48). We have to use and develop the talents we have received. These talents have been given to us not only for ourselves, but also for the good of others. We have to share them, putting them at the service of others. All our gifts are for the building of the Body of Christ (1 Cor 2:4-13). When we do not use them in an attitude of service and commitment towards others, they will be taken away from us and be given to somebody else who will make them bear fruit (Lk 19:12-26).

In the context of Christian prayer our fundamental commitment is the following of Christ. Without being committed to the following of Christ, it is not possible to deepen in his experiential knowledge and to be transformed in him.

To become committed in life

The grace we receive in prayer must become deeds and works. We can apply rightly to prayer what the apostle James says about the relation between faith and works (James 2:14-18). Prayer that does not show in works is dead.





Other passages from the New Testament that can be applied to prayer from this same perspective: Mt 7:21; Lk 6:46-49; 1 Jn 4:20; Mt 25:31-45.

Let us not forget that our commitment and good works are not the result of our own effort, but the fruit of the grace we receive in prayer. Only if we remain in Christ can we bear fruit (Jn 15:6). We can love others because Christ and the Father have loved us first (Jn 15:9-12, 16).

Unification of prayer and life

Prayer is a process of inner transformation that leads to the transformation of the whole life of the person who prays. Without destroying the wholeness and unity of the human person, we cannot separate interiority and exteriority, inner attitudes and external behavior. Not only does the inner transformation of our heart lead naturally to the external transformation of our life, but also without the transformation of our life, our heart cannot be deeply transformed. In order to develop our inner capacities we need to express them, to live them out.

We have seen already that the process of inner transformation is also a process of inner unification. But this inner unification is also the unification of the whole person, that is, of all the dimensions of the human person: interiority and exteriority, heart and body, prayer and life, contemplation and action. This is an on-going, all-including personal unification that unfolds also towards an ever-expanding union with all reality.

Let us now consider several important areas in which this unification must expand.





Unification of our inner attitudes and our external behavior

The increasing unification of prayer and life appears clearly in the growing coherence and veracity of our life. When we do everything with a deep and true heart, there is an increasing coherence and veracity between our inner attitudes and our external behavior, between thoughts and words, words and deeds. Everything becomes deep, transparent and coherent.

Unification of our love for God and our love for others

As much as we become unified, we are able to love God and others with a non-divided heart. The same can be said of all our relationships, with God and with others. Although total unification is possible only when we become unified in God, we cannot grow in the love of God if at the same time we do not grow in the love for others. The growth in our relationship with God is somehow correlative to the growth of our relationships with other men and women.

Accordingly, we can say that without growth in our relationships with others, it will be very difficult to progress in prayer. St. Teresa states clearly that the works of charity are indispensable in order to advance in prayer. We cannot love God who we do not see if we do not love our brothers and sisters who we see (1 Jn 4:20). Nevertheless, it is the deep experience of God's love in prayer that makes us able to love everybody with a deep, universal and personal love. Our childhood experience of love (or the lack of it) conditions our relationships with others and also our relationship with God. But a deepening relationship with God in prayer helps us to overcome these past





influences and establish a true loving relationship with everyone.

A deep experience of God's love in prayer is indispensable for a celibate person in order for him or her to grow in his or her human relationships and be able to love everyone with a true universal love that at the same time is really deep and personal. Only when we have a deep experience of God's love can we love others as God loves us.

Unification of our commitment to God and our commitment to others

Fr. Segundo Galilea explains beautifully the unification of these two commitments in his book, "Following Jesus," with the following explanation:

Christian spirituality is a spirituality of commitment, based in the following of Christ. Christian prayer too leads us to commitment. The "experiential encounter" with God—who reveals himself to us in Christ—presupposes the two contemplative encounters given us in the Gospel. The first is that of the very person of Jesus. The New Testament presents this encounter to us as the root of every conversion of faith and of the contemplative life.

The second encounter is inseparable from and complementary to the encounter with the person of Christ. It is the experience, again contemplative, of the presence of Christ in our brothers and sisters, above all in the "little ones" (Mt 25:33-46). Both encounters are inseparable. The first reminds us of the first commandment, to love God above all things, and of the absolute value of the person of Jesus. The second recalls the commandment that is like the first, to love our neighbor as ourselves and the presence of Christ in this love. Both encounters are contemplative because they are based on faith and love. The first





gives rise to contemplative prayer and the various ways of relating to God; the second to a temporal commitment as a contemplative experience. The second encounter “incarnates” the first and gives a historical dimension to the encounter with God and to our life of prayer. The Christ encountered and contemplated in prayer “continues” in the encounter with our brothers and sisters, specially the “little ones.” The contemplation of Christ in the poor, the suffering and the oppressed is a call to commitment (cf. pp. 58-60).

Authentic Christian contemplation transforms contemplatives into prophets and men or women of commitment.

Unification of contemplation and action, prayer and ministry

The opposition between contemplation and action is a false one. If there is any opposition, it is between “contemplation in idleness” and “action without contemplation.” True contemplation can bloom in activity as well as in restful solitude. The opposition between contemplation and action is a problem of superficiality. Inasmuch as prayer becomes deep, these two dimensions become spontaneously unified.

We can say the same in relation to prayer and ministry. The unification of prayer and ministry is indispensable because in our ministry as evangelizers, what is really important is not our own activity but the action of God through us (EN 75).

Only when our prayer and life are unified can we become faithful ministers of Christ and effective instruments of the transforming work of the Spirit in the world.





We can irradiate Christ, only if we become like him. We can liberate others, only if we ourselves are free. We can awaken others, only if we are awakened.

There are people who say that everything we do in our ministry is already prayer. But what we do for God and others is really prayer only if we do it in communion with God. In fact, if we do not spend time exclusively for prayer, it will be very difficult to attain this unification of prayer and ministry.

Unification of personal, liturgical and communitarian prayer

In Christian life the liturgy must be the center of our prayer life. Our personal prayer is nourished by the sacraments and the Word of God. Besides, personal prayer must be oriented towards the liturgical and communitarian prayer of the Church. Without this communitarian and ecclesial dimension, our personal prayer will not be totally true Christian prayer. But also without personal prayer we will not be able to participate fully in the liturgy of the Church and participate effectively in any communitarian prayer.

To pray at all time and in everything

We cannot finish this explanation about the unification of prayer and life without recalling the exhortation of the New Testament to pray constantly at all times and in everything (Lk 21:36; Eph 6:18; 1 Thes 5:16-19).

According to the New Testament, we must do everything with a praying and loving heart (Col 3:12-17).

But how can we pray constantly in our life? Only when our prayer becomes a deep communion with God





with a deep awareness of his presence in everything, and we do everything with a deep and loving awareness of God, we can pray at all time and in everything. In order to attain this constant prayer we need to become centered and stilled in God with a deep inner silence of communion.

Contemplatives in mission

As Christians, we are called to become evangelizers, that is, to proclaim the Good News to the people. We cannot carry out our mission as ministers of the Word of God in the Church and in the world without a deep attitude of contemplation.

Although I have explained already the need to unify contemplation and action, prayer and ministry, in order to become effective instruments of God's work and faithful ministers of Christ, here I want to point out again in a new way the need to become contemplatives in mission. In order to become ministers of the Word, we need to become listeners of the Word first. It is important that we have an attitude of listening in the whole process of sharing and announcing the Word of God.





Workplace Spirituality

Adapted from <http://www.spirithome.com/workspir.html> 15 April 2005

At Work

Many people pray about work and their colleagues. This goes hand-in-hand with the growing part of the workforce that views their job as part of their vocation, They are finding meaning in their work. This is becoming more true of Europe as well (though still a small trend), and some Asian traditions have tended to think this way. Many of us find it hard to find meaning in our work, and never really get to feeling like they belong there. That may be just our usual complaining and griping; it may also be due to being kept down by those of another ethnic group or social class. (In that case, the first thing to do is to do what you're doing as well as you can, and that can become the vehicle for other things thereafter.) Most often, though, the dissatisfaction comes from the fact that they really are not where they belong and are not doing what they're best at or are called to be doing. (In that case, find out what your calling is or at least where your passions are.)

Caution: God's Work Ahead

God worked to create the universe. It took skill, knowledge, wisdom, creativity, and diligence to do it. Then, God didn't stop and say, "Now, go off and operate on your own." God continues to give the created universe power and direction. In Genesis, God created human beings in the divine image—trusting us with some of the same





kind of “stuff” that it took to create the world and keep it going. Since God gave us that “stuff,” we are responsible for its use. Whether it’s cooking or digging or cleaning or thinking or processing paperwork or entertaining or caretaking, when we work, we’re using the abilities God gave us for shaping and protecting the world we live in. (This is one of the many reasons it’s a sacrilege to sit still for discrimination and mass unemployment—peoples’ abilities are not put to use.) See work as a way to serve God and humanity by making your part of it better in any way you can. In that way, God’s purposes for you are not hindered, but fulfilled.

Also, if God has tasks for you to do here as a part of God’s work on earth, then what can be said for someone who does not take physical care of themselves? Or doesn’t bother to do anything or learn anything? Or keeps trying to change what they aren’t able to change or influence? Or lets work overwhelm the time they spend with family? We are to build ourselves up spiritually, physically, educationally and emotionally, so we can live our lives and do our tasks to the fullest.

Witness to Christ at work has a lot to do with doing your work itself right :

- try to provide the best service or goods that you can;
- be an important part of making the team or workplace succeed at what it does;
- keep learning, using academic education, self-study, and projects that stretch you and give you accomplishment;
- refuse to do illegal activities;





- create ways for things to operate better;
- create an atmosphere of caring;
- being a person of genuine integrity.

A lot of the spirituality of work comes from just living the way the Lord and the apostles taught us to live all of life. This is drawn from Scriptures that were not directly about work, but teach us the right character. For instance, in Titus 2:9-10, the character of a Christian shows in:

- obeying authority: following duly-given orders, complying with laws and industry standards, paying taxes;

- being well-pleasing: holding to responsibilities when it's right to do but not required, doing one's best, not being sour or angry as one's usual behavior, appreciating and sharing the funny things in life;

- not answering back: no backstabbing, no gossip, no undermining, no argumentativeness, no sowing divisiveness;

- not cheating: no stealing supplies from the office or house, no grabbing off something from things seemingly not needed, no using company time to conduct a side business, no using business trips as thinly-disguised vacations, no using working time to watch TV or telephone a friend or relative;

- showing all good fidelity: being true to one's word, following through on a task even when not being watched, holding to contracts and fully paying what is due, meeting deadlines, trusting fellow employees, keeping promises, being reliable in support of other employees;





- sound speech that cannot be condemned: being conscientious and deliberate with words, not swearing, and not demeaning others;
- talking in a way that builds up others and unifies people.

I've heard many people (including myself) express their bitterness at politics in the workplace. So much can happen that really hurts people. But there is a way to help you get another perspective on them: pray for each of them. God loves them, too, even if you find them hard to love. Try it at home before you go to work, or on the bus or train. Also, think of the people you work with who are not part of your workplace: try praying before scheduled appointments or meeting, or before picking up the phone, that the meeting or call will actually accomplish something good. (I know—meetings almost never accomplish anything. But with God all things are possible....)

In today's world, we've all seen or heard about enough examples of professional misbehavior that most of us have learned to assume that we should distrust. By being men and women of Christlike character, Christian professionals and workers have the chance to bear a unique witness by being worthy of other peoples' trust. It's part of following Christ in the everyday world. When we do right by other people, we give them a little bit of Christ's love.

