



Diocese of Paisley

Ways Of Praying

A Practical Guide

A Resource for the Spiritual Formation
of Individuals and Groups in Preparation
for the Paisley Diocesan Synod



At every second of the day and night, everywhere in the world, someone is praying; in monasteries, kitchens, fields, churches, on buses and trains, at sea, on mountains, in troubled war torn countries, in hospitals, in prisons, at times of birth and death. People pray in fear, in agony, in sorrow, in joy, in thanksgiving, praise, hope and celebration. They pray to God for themselves and those they love and for those far away that they will never know.

As we look forward to our Diocesan Synod we have been invited to prepare through Catechesis, a process of consultation and, importantly, through prayer. This booklet, inspired by this forthcoming Synod, offers a number of different ways of praying all of which may be familiar to you as an aid to our prayerful preparation. In these forthcoming months we join our prayers with this world of suffering and rejoicing, knowing that God is listening and gazes on us with love and compassion.

This booklet was compiled by 'Oratio' Spirituality Group, a group of people in Paisley Diocese trained in spirituality and spiritual direction. *Oratio* regularly run Quiet days and Retreats in Daily Life as well as accompanying individuals wishing to deepen their relationship with God.

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So what do we need to know about prayer?

Why Pray?

Each person is called to holiness; to be a saint. Each person is called to a personal relationship with God. Prayer is our response to this call. It is in prayer that we spend time with God, developing and allowing our personal relationship with God to deepen and mature.

What is it?

Prayer can be summed up in three words: Listening, Talking and Responding.



How do I pray?

We can be vocal in our prayer or we can just be sitting in silence with God, and we can pray as part of a community e.g. at mass or we can pray on our own. There are many different and varied ways to pray.

Who do I pray to?

We can pray to God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and ask Mary, the mother of Jesus and the saints to intercede for us.

What does praying feel like?

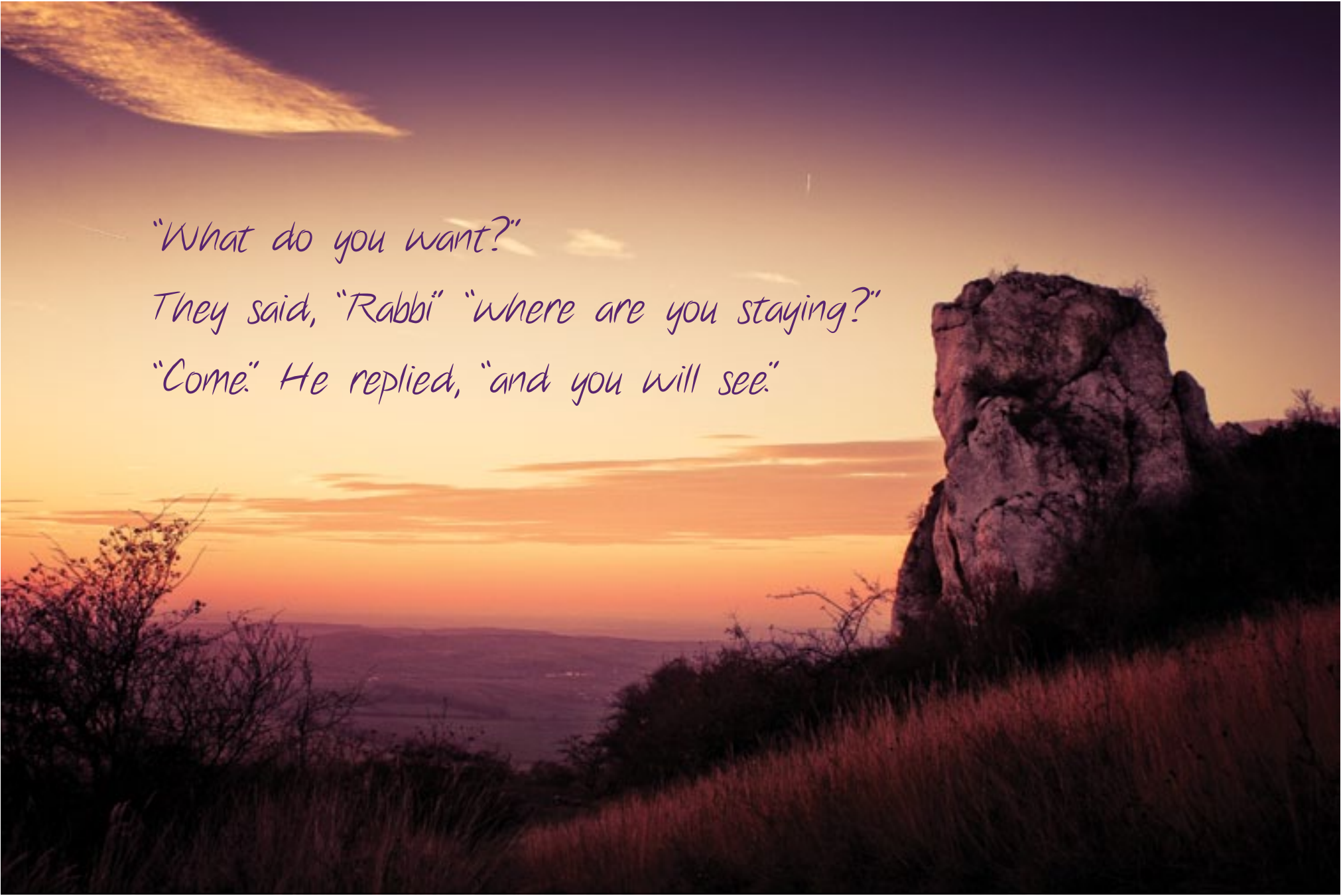
A struggle, frustration, brick wall, un- answered prayer, hope, joy, peace, makes you happy, contented, unconditional love.

What can help me?

There is also a variety of different aids to prayer e.g. Stilling, Scripture, nature, music, people, poetry art, anything else that opens you up to deepen your relationship with God

Where can I pray?

In church, at home, walking in the park, on the bus, in front of the Blessed Sacrament, in fact anywhere, the list is endless.



*"What do you want?"
They said, "Rabbi" "Where are you staying?"
"Come." He replied, "and you will see."*

Part 1: Introduction

“THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus.” This opening sentence from *Evangelii Gaudium* provides us with the context for our prayerful preparation for our forthcoming diocesan synod for the laity and evangelisation. Bishop John Keenan desires that the synod will be a means to empower the laity of our diocese to participate in this mission of evangelisation.

Pope Francis reminds us that, *“Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”* It is Christ that gives meaning to our lives, and although we encounter Christ in all the encounters and events of our lives, and we cannot place limits on his willingness and ability to communicate with us, it is essential that we make time to spend with him in prayer.

People have a deep desire to know how to pray. They want to know how to pray. They want to know what they must do to pray effectively. Such a thirst for knowing how to pray has created libraries of books on prayer. Yet the truth of course is that prayer is not difficult and the effectiveness of prayer does not depend on us but rather on God. Prayer is not about what we do, but, rather, it is about what God does. Ruth Burrows, the Carmelite writes:



Almost always when we talk about prayer we are thinking of something we do and, from that standpoint, questions, problems, confusion, discouragement, illusions multiply. For me, it is of fundamental importance to correct this view. Our Christian knowledge assures us that prayer is essentially what God does, how God addresses us, looks at us. It is not primarily something that we are doing to God, something we are giving to God but what God is doing for us. And what God is doing for us is giving the divine Self in love.¹

¹. Ruth Burrows, *Essence of Prayer* (London, New York: Burns and Oates, 2006)

In this booklet we will be looking at various methods and forms of prayer. It is our hope that it may be helpful in developing our prayer and in particular act as an aid to Spiritual formation in preparation for the forthcoming Diocesan Synod.

Spiritual Formation

This is an exciting time for our Church in the Diocese of Paisley as we prepare for the first Diocesan Synod since we were founded in 1947. Bishop John has asked that in preparation for our synod, as well as having a period of catechesis and consultation, we will have the opportunity for spiritual formation. Spiritual formation is concerned with our spiritual life, which is concerned with our relationship with God.

As a human being each person is a spiritual person who is in relationship with God. Within each person there is a yearning, a searching for the "Other". In the context of Christianity we recognise the "Other" as the God of Jesus Christ. We seek a relationship with God, creator: three persons, one God; the God who has sent his Son into the world as a redeemer.

There are as many forms of spirituality as there are people, because spirituality is how we relate to God and each of us relates in a unique and personal way with God.

As Christians we all have common elements within our spirituality: our belief and relationship with God, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit: our faith and relationship with Jesus, human and divine: our relationship with Mary the mother of Jesus; our relationship with the saints and our dead. These are elements that shape the way in which we relate to God, and therefore our spirituality.

As baptised Christians, at the heart of our spirituality is our primary call to holiness, that we are called to be "*holy and blameless before him...in love.*"

Furthermore, as Catholic Christians we seek our relationship with God in the context of the Church and all this entails; a Sacramental life: relationships with parish communities, clergy, bishops and the pope.

Within the spirituality of Catholic Christians there are Spirituality families; types of spirituality which have common elements; such as Benedictine, Carmelite, Ignatian, Franciscan, and Dominican.



Our particular vocation influences our spirituality. For example a person who is married, her married life, the vows she makes at her wedding and her family are central to her relationship with God and therefore her spirituality. For a diocesan priest his spirituality is further shaped by his priestly identity and his priestly ministry.

Our prayer, the way with which we communicate with God, will reflect what is happening in our lives at that particular time. As St. Francis de Sales would say, we would not expect the prayer of a monk to be the same as the prayer of a young mother. Our way of praying will develop and change as we develop and change, reflecting the different events and times of our lives. So, for example, when we have very busy lives our prayer may be more spontaneous and perhaps we may pray in a more formal and ritual way, such as praying the rosary or the Divine Mercy prayers. When we are a little less busy and our lives are less frenetic our prayer may be more reflective and contemplative. However, there is no one way of praying nor is there a right way to pray; what is important in developing our spiritual life and therefore our relationship with God, is that we pray.

In this short booklet we hope to share with you a number of different approaches to prayer.

Questions for Individual and Group Reflection

- How might I describe my Spirituality?
- How has my Spirituality differed at various stages of my life?
- What makes my spirituality unique?
- What does my spirituality have in common with other Catholics? With other Christians? With other people who believe in one God?

Part 2: Beginnings and Endings in Prayer

The way in which we begin and end any conversation is important, and this is no different when it comes to prayer. Prayer is after all a conversation with God, whether it is a conversation between an individual or a community with God. Mass is a prayer in which the community is in profound conversation with God. Every time we celebrate Mass we ritualise its beginning and its end. It provides a model for all prayer. Here we will offer ways of ritualising the beginning and endings of each period of prayer.



2.1 Beginnings

We would suggest that we acknowledge that it is before God that we come in prayer. So, rather than simply moving in to a time of prayer, take a moment to reflect on the God before whom you come and your particular image of God, and even which person of the Trinity whom you are addressing in your prayer.

Then think about the grace that you desire to receive from God during your time of prayer. It might be the grace to trust more deeply in God's love or it might be that you wish a deeper conversation and turning towards God. The possibilities are infinite and depend on what is happening in your life and in your relationship with God at that precise moment.

And then begin the prayer with a stilling exercise.

Stilling

Stilling is a form of preparation for prayer. In our busy lives we often fail to “notice”. Stilling helps us to notice God’s presence in our lives. When we invite a friend to visit, we often spend time preparing our home and ourselves for their visit. So too, therefore, when we invite God into our hearts in prayer it is helpful to prepare ourselves for this encounter. There are many references to being still in scripture and in hymns:

- “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46)
- “Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him” (Psalm 37)
- “It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord” (Lamentations 3:26)
- “Be still for the presence of the Lord” (Hymn by David Evans)



Stilling is literally about being still, not moving. Always begin by sitting in a comfortable position. We all have different ways that help us to be still. Choose what works best for you. Here are some suggestions which you may find helpful:

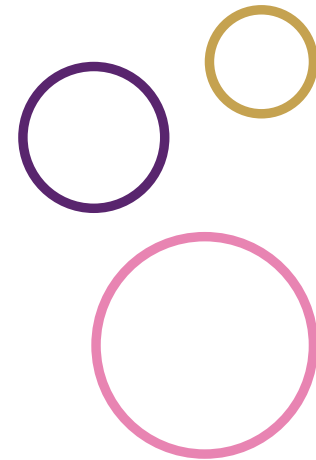
- Taking as many deep breaths as it takes to slow down your breathing.
- Tightening and relaxing your muscles beginning at your head and working down to your toes.
- Focusing on a candle or a favourite image - a piece of artwork or perhaps an image on a favourite prayer card, a cross or statue.
- A favourite piece of relaxing music - perhaps an instrumental or a calming hymn.

If thoughts or distractions disturb the stillness be gentle with them, let them go and be still once more. Stay in the stillness before moving on to a form of prayer suggested in this booklet, or simply sit and listen for a while in God’s loving presence.

You may find it helpful to try one of the following stilling exercises:

Stilling Exercise I

- How shall I call upon God? As you begin a period of prayer the first step is to reflect on the image of the God to whom you are praying. Is it Father, Son, Teacher, Spirit, Healer, Friend, Suffering Servant, and so on? Addressing God with an image of God in mind helps to focus our prayer, thoughts and feelings, and helps to establish a sense of God's presence.
- The next thing to do is to ask God for a particular grace which you desire to receive during the time of prayer. In other words to ask God for what it is that you want. This might be the grace to trust God more deeply.
- We begin by trying to allow ourselves to relax.
- Place your feet firmly on the ground, and close your eyes. Become aware of your body. Begin with the crown of your head. Feel any sensations. Any feelings of tension. Become aware of them. Next move to your eyes. How do they feel? Stay with them for a while. Move to your neck. Again are there any feelings of tension? Become aware of your shoulders, your arms and your fingertips. Move down to your back, become aware of yourself sitting on the chair pressing down and being supported. Feel your thighs, finally your feet pressing down against the floor. Allow yourself to be drawn by God.



Stilling Exercise I I

Recognising that God is already present wherever we are, waiting for us, stilling can help us to 'tune in' to that presence of God by slowing down our mind and body in ways that open us more fully to hear God's smallest whisper.

We can respond to various ways of stilling, for example, by becoming conscious of our breathing, by listening to reflective music, by relaxing the body methodically bit by bit, by gazing on a candle or picture or something in nature.

All these can help us to be more receptive to God's presence and alert to whatever this time of prayer might bring.

- Choose a favourite piece of quiet music:
- Sit comfortably but alert with your back straight, feet on the floor and neck and shoulders as relaxed as possible.
- Close your eyes or focus a candle or object
- Breathe normally conscious that God holds you in being with each and every breath you take.
- Stay in the present moment focused on the gentle rhythm of your breathing
- Breathe in God's love, light and grace; let it flood into every part of your body
- As you breathe out let go of anything that keeps God at a distance from you



2.2 Endings

The way we finish a conversation is as important as the way that we begin it. Just as we ritualise the end of Mass with a concluding prayer, blessing, and maybe a hymn, it is good to ritualise the ending of our prayer. It doesn't need to be elaborate as long as it brings the prayer period to a definitive end.

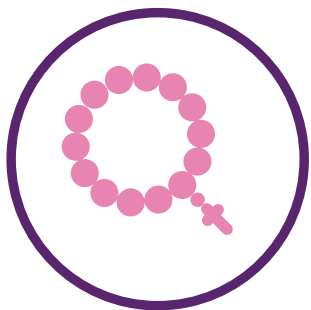
For example, we might conclude our prayer as follows:

- As you come to the end of the prayer, it is good to end it in a formal way. Perhaps by praying an *Our Father*, *Hail Mary* and a *Glory be to the Father*.
- Reflect back over the time of prayer and jot down in a notebook any reflections you may have on this experience of prayer. You may also choose to sketch or to draw something that reflects the experience of your prayer.
- Try to recall how you felt at the beginning of the prayer. Reflect on your feelings during the prayer and finally how you feel now. It is often through our feelings that we can experience God speaking to us.



Part 3: Formal Prayer: Devotions

Prayer comes in all forms, and the form which many people may find most familiar are vocal prayers, that is prayers we might pray out loud as well quietly to ourselves. It is important to recognise and highlight the value of these prayers in the prayer life of so many people both religious and lay. These prayers are often spoken about as being devotional.



There is any number of devotional prayers to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Lady and to very many Saints of the church. We each may have a favourite novena that is dear to our hearts and regularly used in our prayer life. Pope Francis brought the novena of Our Lady Untier of Knots to public notice in recent times and it has become very popular. The choice available to us is wide and every situation in life can be matched with a suitable prayer novena.

Let us look at three particularly powerful prayers; The Chaplet of Divine Mercy, the Holy Rosary, and the Angelus.

These can be found at:

ewtn.com/Devotionals/prayers/index.asp

or

www.catholicdoors/prayers/novena.htm

3.1 THE HOLY ROSARY ²

The Rosary probably began as practices by the laity to imitate the monastic Divine Office, when the monks prayed daily 150 psalms. As many could not read, Ave Marias were substituted for psalms and sometimes a cord with knots was used to keep count of the Aves.

The first historical reference to the Rosary was when St. Dominic preached a form of the Rosary in France. Tradition has it that the Blessed Mother herself asked for the practice as an antidote to sin and heresy. It is also known as the Psalter of Jesus and Mary because it has the same number of Hail Marys as there are psalms in the Book of Psalms of David.

The Rosary is the story of the New Testament. Through the beads we follow the life of Mary and Jesus. We follow Mary from the day the Archangel Gabriel came to ask her to become the Mother of Christ, to the day she was crowned Queen of Heaven.

We follow Jesus from the moment the Holy Spirit came down on Mary, through his childhood, his public life, his cruel death on the cross, the joy of Easter when he rose from the dead, to the day he ascended to Heaven in glory.

When you pray the Rosary, begin by telling Mary what you would like her to use your prayers for and then think about the stories that are hidden in the beads.

There are many other Marian devotions as well as devotions to Saints, who can intercede for us.

More information on the Holy Rosary can be found at:

ewtn.theholynosary.com



² About the Rosary: Aid to the Church in Need, produced by Crown of thorns

Say on: Mondays and Saturdays



The Joyful Mysteries

1. The Annunciation

Mary learns that she has been chosen to be the mother of Jesus.

2. The Visitation

Mary visits Elizabeth, who tells her that she will always be remembered.

3. The Nativity

Jesus is born in a stable in Bethlehem.

4. The Presentation

Mary and Joseph take the infant Jesus to the Temple to present him to God.

5. The Finding of Jesus in the Temple

Jesus is found in the Temple discussing his faith with the teachers.

Say on: Tuesdays and Fridays



The Sorrowful Mysteries

1. The Agony in the Garden

Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night before he dies.

2. The Scourging at the Pillar

Jesus is lashed with whips.

3. The Crowning with Thorns

Jesus is mocked and crowned with thorns.

4. The Carrying of the Cross

Jesus carries the cross that will be used to crucify him.

5. The Crucifixion

Jesus is nailed to the cross and dies.

Say on: Wednesdays and Sundays



The Glorious Mysteries

- 1. The Resurrection**
God the Father raises Jesus from the dead.
- 2. The Ascension**
Jesus returns to his Father in heaven.
- 3. The Coming of the Holy Spirit**
The Holy Spirit comes to bring new life to the disciples.
- 4. The Assumption of Mary**
At the end of her life on earth, Mary is taken body and soul into heaven.
- 5. The Coronation of Mary**
Mary is crowned as Queen of Heaven and Earth.

Say on: Thursdays



The Mysteries of Light

- 1. The Baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan**
God proclaims that Jesus is his beloved Son.
- 2. The Wedding Feast at Cana**
At Mary's request, Jesus performs his first miracle.
- 3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God**
Jesus calls all to conversion and service to the Kingdom.
- 4. The Transfiguration of Jesus**
Jesus is revealed in glory to Peter, James, and John.
- 5. The Institution of the Eucharist**
Jesus offers his Body and Blood at the Last Supper.

3.2 The Angelus

The Angelus as a prayer began around the 12th century, as a simple recitation of the Hail Mary, evolving to its present form, in which it is prayed three times daily, at 6 am, noon and 6 pm, in the 16th century. However, we can pray it at any time of the day. It reflects on the mystery of the Annunciation when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and announced that she among all women had been chosen by God to be the mother of his son. It then speaks of the mystery of the Incarnation with the words from John's Gospel, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

1. The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.

R. And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

*Hail Mary, full of grace,
The Lord is with Thee;
Blessed art thou among women,
And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Pray for us sinners,
Now and at the hour of our death. Amen*

2. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

R. Be it done unto me according to thy word.

Hail Mary...

3. And the Word was made Flesh.

R. And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary...

4. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us Pray

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



3.3 The Divine Mercy Devotion

Sister Faustina Kowalska (1905 - 1938), a Polish sister of the Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy, received the image and prayer of Divine Mercy through a vision and conversations with Jesus, who made specific promises regarding the recitation of the prayer. The chaplet's prayers are threefold: to obtain mercy, to trust in Christ's mercy and to show mercy to others.

Sr. Faustina, who was canonised in 2000 by Pope John Paul II, wrote that Jesus said "When they say this Chaplet in the presence of the dying, I will stand between my Father and the dying not as the just judge but as the Merciful Saviour". Jesus also promised that anything can be obtained with this prayer if it is compatible with His will.

The prayer, using rosary beads, can be said anytime but especially on Divine Mercy Sunday, the Sunday after Easter and at 3.00p.m., the Hour of Mercy. There is also a nine day novena which begins on Good Friday.

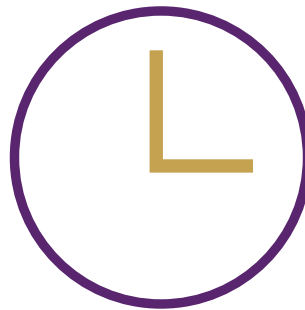
Other elements of the spirituality of Divine Mercy are:

- Love for the Church
- Love for the Eucharist
- Devotion to Our Lady Mother of Mercy

The "Three O'clock Prayer"

You expired Jesus but the source of life gushed forth for souls and an ocean of mercy opened up for the whole world. O Fount of life, unfathomable divine mercy, envelop the whole world and empty yourself out upon us.

O Blood and Water which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of mercy for us, I trust in you (Say three times).



The Chaplet

To recite the Divine Mercy Chaplet using Rosary beads, begin with the Our Father, Hail Mary and Apostles Creed.

On the large beads say:

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

On the smaller beads say:

For the sake of His sorrowful Passion have mercy on us and on the whole world.

After the five decades are complete say three times:

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

More information about the Divine Mercy devotion can be found at:

ewtn.divinemercydevotion.com

3.4 Praying With Our Lady Of Paisley

Formal prayer is dynamic and new forms of prayer are continually being formed. An example of this is the introduction of the Mysteries of Light in our praying of the rosary by St. Pope John Paul II. Another form of formal prayer, introduced this year to our diocese, is the devotion to Our Lady of Paisley centred on the Icon and the “Weekday Reflections” that have been composed around it. A copy of these reflections accompanies this booklet. In our preparation for our diocesan synod we have been asked to give time to praying with Our Lady of Paisley.

*Our Lady of Paisley;
pray for us*



Part 4: Formal Prayer: Lectio Divina

Have you ever found yourself stopping in your tracks, maybe during mass, or hearing a piece of scripture or prayer when something for no apparent reason jumps out at you? You stop, you ponder on what it could mean, you may even think to talk to God about it and then you may just rest with it. If you recognise this then what you were experiencing, even if you didn't know it is prayer by the process of Lectio Divina.

Lectio Divina or for those who prefer English – Divine reading, Spiritual reading, Reading in God's presence.

According to the dictionary of Christian Spirituality, Lectio Divina can be described as an *'ancient Christian term referring to the prayerful reading of the bible.'* Again in the hand book of Spirituality for Ministers, *'Lectio Divina is a very ancient art , a slow, contemplative praying of the Scriptures, which enables the Bible, the Word of God, to become a means of union with God'.*

Although the beginning of the art of '*Lectio Divina*' is usually traced back to the Monks of the 4th and 5th Centuries, it seems to be accepted that it is rooted in the Judaic traditions, as described in Luke's Gospel (Luke 4:16 – 21). The monastic practice of Lectio Divina was first established in the 6th century by Saint Benedict. It was then formalized as a four step process by the Carthusian monk, Guigo II in the 12th century. In the 20th century, the constitution Dei Verbum of Pope Paul VI recommended Lectio Divina for the general public. Pope Benedict XVI emphasized the importance of Lectio Divina in the 21st century.

The **four steps** or parts of Lectio Divina are LECTIO, MEDITATIO, ORATIO and CONTEMPLATIO (Read/Listen, Meditate, Respond in Prayer and Contemplate.)



The process starts with reading the scripture (Lectio)

LECTIO *(Reading the Word)*

There are different ways to read. In Lectio we read slowly, attentively, gently, listening to hear a word or phrase that strikes us. Once you have chosen a passage of scripture read it slowly, from the beginning to the end. Read it again noticing which word or phrase you are most drawn to and then stay with it, ponder it, letting the words sink into you. You may want or need to read the passage several times. What you are struck by may be encouraging, or challenging or inviting. But it is here that you stay.

MEDITATIO *(Meditating on the Word)*

As we ponder the word or phrase which we are most drawn to or when we read the passage again, we allow it to speak to us reflecting on what it is that God may be saying to us. Try not to assign any meaning to this but just to ponder, and allow the word to speak to you.

ORATIO *(Praying)*

We read through the passage again and as we pray with God's word we allow ourselves to become aware of our own response to God. What is it that we may desire to say to God or to offer to God or to give thanks to God for? And finally we rest

CONTEMPLATIO *(Contemplating)*

And now we rest in God

We read the passage again and allow ourselves simply to remain in God's presence.

This is indeed, contemplation- a quiet being with God without controlling or imposing anything. It is being in God's loving presence. We cannot attain this, only God can give it, a sense of God's presence and love.

The Magnificat is a wonderful passage of scripture which lends itself to Lectio Divina. Remember to ritualise the beginning and the ending of your prayer as described earlier and following the four steps above, pray a Lectio Divina.

Luke 1:46-55

My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on his servant in her lowliness;
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.
The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy his name!
His mercy is from age to age, on those who fear him.
He puts forth his arm in strength
and scatters the proud-hearted.
He casts the mighty from their thrones
and raises the lowly.
He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.
He protects Israel, his servant,
remembering his mercy, the mercy promised
to our fathers, to Abraham and his
sons for ever.

A Summary of Lectio Divina

Lectio: Reading God's Word

Meditatio: Hearing what God is saying

Oratio: Responding to God's Word: thanksgiving,

Contemplatio: Being with God

Scriptural passages that you may find helpful for Lectio Divina.

Isaiah 55: 1-11

Psalm 8

Psalm 23

Matthew 6:25-34

Psalm 139

John 1 1-18

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;
he makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul. PS 23*



Part 5: Imaginative Contemplation

This form of prayer helps us to develop our unique relationship with the living, breathing person of Jesus by using that great God given gift of our imagination.

It is a gift which we have all used since we were very small. We use the gift of imagination which God has given us to find out who we are and to explore the meaning of the world around us — e.g. did you have an imaginary friend when you were wee? Lose yourself in fairy stories? Or make up your own stories? Or play imaginary games?



St Ignatius had an incredibly rich and fertile imagination; while recovering from battle injuries he lost himself in stories of heroic deeds, imagining himself as always the hero of course. But after reading stories of the saints which someone gave him, he began to imagine how he could instead do great deeds for God – and found deep consolation when he used his imagination in this way, rather than the momentary pleasure from imagining his heroic deeds of rescuing fair maidens!

When he came to write his Spiritual Exercises, he used this insight to encourage his followers, first, to use their imagination to ‘enter into the vision of God’, imagining how God might look down on our turbulent world, sending his son into the middle of that turbulence to show us God’s compassion and love. Then he encouraged his followers to use their imagination to place themselves right in the middle of the Gospel stories, right where Jesus is: in praying imaginative contemplation we are invited to do the same; to become an

onlooker, part of the crowd, to become a participant, to experience the story, to meet Jesus there face to face as the shepherds did, as the disciples did, as those seeking healing did, as the women who were changed by encountering Jesus did.

In entering into where Jesus is, by being there, experiencing him in our hearts, he becomes more real for us. We **see** Jesus the person, how he **looks**, how he **sounds**, how he **moves**, how he **looks** at us and at the disciples: we **sense** the mood of the crowd, we **notice** the people Jesus focused on and interacted with, the people he **healed** and **challenged**. We **become aware** of our feelings, what **touches** or **moves** us, how our feelings **change** as events move on.

Feeling the heat, cold, dust, dirt, discomfort, hunger, thirst, the **touch** and jostling of the crowd, **smelling** the scent of flowers, herbs – sweat, unwashed bodies, rancid food – and worse, being aware of the **physical** surroundings, the landscape, the houses, the lakeshore, the clothes people are wearing.

As you enter as fully as you can into the gospel scene you have chosen, ask God for your deepest desire. As the story unfolds, who are you in the story? Notice your feelings and how you respond to them. What is Jesus' message here for you today and how will you let it change you?

Some good gospel passages for praying imaginative contemplation include:

Jesus calls his first disciples: Matthew 4: 18-22

Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at the well: John 4: 1-42

Jesus calms the storm: Mark 4: 35-41

Jesus heals the blind man Mark 10: 46-52

Jesus heals the bent woman: Luke 13: 10-17

Jesus meets the disciples on the road to Emmaus: Luke 24: 13-35





The following Guided Meditations may also help you to experience praying with your imagination.

Begin the guided meditation with a Stilling Exercise and begin by reading through the Gospel text.

The first guided meditation reflects on St. Joseph's response to God's call to be a father to Jesus and to be a husband to Mary.

Guided Meditation: 1. Matthew 1:18-24

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

Try to imagine yourself with Joseph. Where do you meet him? Is he in his home or maybe in his workshop? Look around: what do you see? Try to imagine what he might look like. What kind of person is he?

How does he receive the news that Mary with whom he is engaged is with child? How does he react? Shocked; angry; betrayed; sad; disappointed? Gaze upon his face.

Her husband Joseph, being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally.

What does this statement tell us about Joseph? Was it a considered decision? Was it motivated by compassion and love? Spend a moment with Joseph as he comes to his decision.

He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him on a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

The Virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'.

When Joseph went to bed he had made up his mind to divorce Mary informally. When he woke up all had changed. Imagine being in the presence of Joseph as he recalls that night. Perhaps you are with him the following morning. Allow yourself to observe him; his face his body? What is he like? Listen to his voice, his tone! And listen to his words. Observe your own reaction, your feelings and emotions as you hear him speak.

When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord told him to do: he took his wife to his home and, though he had not had intercourse with her, she gave birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

Now be with Joseph as he goes to the house of Mary. Again observe their interaction. Where do you see yourself? What do you hear as Joseph invites Mary come to his home as his wife. What does she say in response? Spend a little time with them.

And then Jesus is born. Be with them in the moments after the birth, before the angels arrive. Where are they? Is Jesus born in a stable? You are invited to be with them. Using your senses, imagine the scene, the smells, the feeling of the straw on the floor. You are privileged to share this moment. Reflect on your feelings, thoughts and emotions?

Remain for a few moments with Joseph and Mary and their new born child. And then conclude your prayer with the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be to the Father.





The second guided mediation reflects on the Gospel story of the feeding of the five thousand. Jesus points us in the direction of the Father, who sustains him in proclamation of the Gospel and who sustains us in our proclaiming of the Good News.

Guided Meditation: 2. Mark 6: 30-44

The disciples re-joined Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, 'Come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while;' for there were so many coming and going that there was no time even to eat. So they went off in a boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves.

Begin by trying to imagine the disciples coming back to Jesus. These were the Apostles, the twelve that he had sent off in pairs to preach and to heal. And they had been successful. So try to imagine their mood as they milled around the Lord. Imagine yourself within the scene. Where are you? Watch the disciples as Jesus leads them off to the lonely place. Do you sense their tiredness?

But the people saw them going, and many recognised them; and from every town they hurried to the place on foot and reached it before them. So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length.

Imagine what it must be like for the disciples as they reach the shore on the boat along with Jesus. As you sit among them try to sense their reactions: Compassion, disappointment, anger, love, or frustration? How do they react as Jesus steps ashore and begins to teach? Be with them.

Look at the people, the crowd of thousands of people. Observe them as they listen to Jesus. Get a sense of their mood. Imagine the scene, the weather, be present.

By now it was getting very late and his disciples came up to him and said, 'This is a lonely place and it is getting very late, so send them away, and they can go to the farms and villages around about, and buy themselves something to eat.' He replied, 'Give them something to eat yourselves.'

Imagine the sun beginning to set, perhaps a change in temperature. Be with the disciples as they approach Jesus. Has he finished teaching or do they interrupt his flow? Observe their reaction as he tells them to feed the people themselves.

They answered, 'Are we to go and spend two hundred denarii on bread for them to eat?' He asked, 'How many loaves have you? Go and see.' And when they found out they said, 'Five, and two fish.'

Listen in to the dialogue between Jesus and the disciples. Is he playing them along, are they confident or puzzled? Again be with them. And what about the crowds of people, what's happening among them. Listen. Try to get a sense of the mood.

Then he ordered the people to sit down in groups on the green grass, and they sat down on the ground in squares of hundreds and fifties. Then he took the loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing; then he broke the loaves and began handing them to his disciples to distribute among the people. He also shared out the two fish among them all. They all ate as much as they wanted. They collected twelve baskets of scraps of bread and pieces of fish. Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.

Firstly just observe the scene: The people sitting; Jesus praying and blessing the bread and fish. Watch the reaction of the people and the disciples. Look to see where you might be in the scene.

And go back a little, listen in to the reactions of the disciples, what are they saying among themselves? Are you being fed? If so what does it feel like? Taste the bread and the fish.

And finally watch as the people begin to disperse, again where are you in the scene. Do you stay with the disciples, perhaps helping to gather the scrap? Do you leave with the people? And as the people leave what are they saying about the event that has unfolded before their eyes?

And now in a formal way bring your prayer to an end.



Part 6: Christian Meditation

Meditation is a fairly well known practice. People join transcendental meditation groups to relax. A friend of mine in England swears by it. It helps her to chill out after a stressful day. She is not a Christian and claims to be indifferent to the existence of God. But after her meditation she feels at peace with herself and the world in which she lives.

There is nothing in itself wrong with this form of meditation, nor with other forms of meditation, except that by their nature they are limited. They are different from Christian meditation because their focus is on the person meditating, achieving a feel-good feeling. Christian meditation has a different focus: God. Christian meditation has the goal of enabling us to become more aware of the source of peace within us, that is, of God. As Psalm 46: 10 says, *“Be still and know that I am God.”*

A well-known writer and Benedictine, John Main, points to the aim of Christian meditation being, *“to allow God’s mysterious and silent presence within us to become more and more not only a reality, but the reality in our lives; to let it become that reality which gives meaning, shape and purpose to everything we do, to everything we are.”* He points out that meditation is a learning process. As he says, *“It is a process of learning to pay attention, to concentrate, to attend.”*

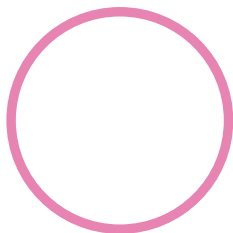
One of the most outstanding proponents of Christian Meditation today is the Benedictine Monk of Turvey Abbey and the director of the World Community for Christian Meditation, Laurence Freeman.

Christian meditation has a different focus: God.

6.1 Silence

At the heart of all meditation is silence. Yet to remain silent can be surprisingly difficult. It doesn't just happen, at least for many of us, but rather it takes persistence and practice. As John Main says, *"It is not just a matter of keeping our tongues still but much more of achieving a state of alert stillness in our mind and heart."*³

The silence that we are talking about isn't a passive form of silence, but rather it requires a state of alertness, a state of full openness, full wakefulness to the wonder of our own being, full openness to the wonder of God and a full awareness that we are one with God.



³. Ibid., 8.

6.2 Mantra

A mantra is a word or phrase that we repeat throughout our prayer. Each of us may chose a different word, but one which is significant for us. John Main uses the word Maranatha, which is the Aramaic for **Come Lord Jesus**. Other people may prefer to simply use Come Lord Jesus. There is no right or wrong word or phrase. Whichever word or phrase works for you in your prayer is the right one.

As we begin to pray with a mantra, there are three basic aims:

- Firstly to pray for the full time allocated whether it be ten, twenty or thirty minutes. When beginning to use this form of prayer, less might be better than more. Although this sounds simple it usually takes time and persistence to reach the point of praying consistently, for say, thirty minutes. It demands patience on our behalf.
- The second aim is to pray the mantra throughout the meditation without interruption, while remaining calm in face of all distractions.

- The third aim is to say the mantra for the entire time of meditation, quite free from all distractions. In this state we have passed beyond thought, imagination, and beyond all images. "We simply rest with the Reality, the realized presence of God Himself dwelling within our hearts."⁴

Christian meditation is simple and yet it can be difficult and demands perseverance. The more we pray the easier it becomes. The centre of our prayer becomes 'Christ' rather than 'me'. We become less concerned about our issues and more about being with God. St. Theresa of Avila said such experience comes after a relatively short time maybe six months or a year.

- Decide on the Length of Time for your Meditation
- Choose a Mantra
- Begin to Pray with a Stilling Exercise

⁴. Ibid., 16

Part 7: Examen of Consciousness

This simple prayer was developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), founder of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). He suggested his brothers prayed this way **examining** their lives so as they could better serve God. If practiced once or twice daily it will move you closer to the heart of Christ in all your thoughts and deeds.

In our lives it may be helpful to look for a point in the day, for example after watching the news when we are able to spend a few minutes reviewing our day.



To begin ask god for the gift of light

Recall that you are in the presence of God in this prayerful disposition and ask the Holy Spirit to help you to look with love over the day past.

Begin with the start of the day. Allow yourself to be shown the various encounters that you may have had, the exchange of words and the different events of the day: Allow the Holy Spirit to let you reflect on your attitudes, reactions and motivations.



Ask god to allow you with the guidance of the holy spirit to recognise the moments throughout the day when you were open to his presence

Reflecting on the day, ask the Holy Spirit to let you see those moments when in a word spoken, when in prayer, when in an act of kindness, when in a moment of thoughtfulness and gentleness, and in many other moments and experiences God's presence was experienced. And give thanks to God.

3

Ask god to allow you with the guidance of the holy spirit to recognise the moments throughout the day when you were closed to his presence

Reflecting on the day, ask the Holy Spirit to let you see those moments when in a word spoken, when in avoidance of prayer, for whatever reason; when an opportunity for an act of kindness was missed; when in a moment of thoughtlessness or abruptness hurt was caused; and in many other moments and experiences in which God's presence was missed. And express your sorrow and regret.

4

Hope For The Future

Finally, looking ahead, offer the day to come to God trusting in his infinite Goodness and unconditional love to be ever present in our lives. Ask for the grace to be open to his presence and to the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit.

(Some people like to conclude the time of prayer formally e.g. reciting the *Our Father* or a *Glory Be*.)



Part 8: A Reflection on The Hail Mary

Within the traditional prayers we say every day there are often unexpected riches. There are, for example, many beautiful reflections and meditations on the Our Father and Hail Mary. Here is one on the Hail Mary produced for this booklet.

Hail Mary, Full of Grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Up until the end of the 14th century these words alone constituted the prayer. It was different in many ways from other prayers, for it is not a prayer of petition, or indeed of praise, but rather it is a recalling of words from the Gospel. It was only in the 15th Century that the Hail Mary was completed with the addition of the petition: *Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.*

Hail Mary Full Of Grace, The Lord Is With You

These words recall the annunciation by the Angel Gabriel to Mary that she among all women has been chosen to be the Mother of the Son of God

Hail Mary: These are words of greeting: As the angel comes to Mary, he greets her informally: The Dominican Paul Murray O.P. points out, *There is a simple informality; it is like saying, "What a delight, what a great pleasure it is to meet you."*⁵ Imagine the scene. Ponder these words and the interaction between Mary and the Angel Gabriel.

Full of Grace: These words as we ponder them conjure up a number of possible images: They offer an image of the gracefulness of Mary or her internal and external beauty and charm or the image of a young woman who is so pure that the God who dwells within her is present to Gabriel.

The Lord is with You: Frequently in our liturgical celebrations we begin with these words of greeting: "The Lord be with you." It is a statement of our faith that God dwells within each of us and that the Lord is truly with us. It is also an invitation to surrender ourselves to God and to surrender our will to his, so that his will for us becomes our own will. It is an invitation to imitate Mary, who in accepting God's will, surrenders her own will to God. In accepting new life within her, her child, the Son of God, she surrenders her own life to God. Spend a moment reflecting on Mary's total self-giving to God, and on our own.

⁵ Paul Murray, *The Hail Mary: On the Threshold of Grace* (Liguori Publications, Missouri: 2010)

Blessed Are You Among Women And Blessed Is The Fruit Of Your Womb Jesus

These words recall the visit of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth and Elizabeth's greeting on Mary's arrival.

Blessed are you among women: As we listen to these words we are invited to experience with Elizabeth her joy in the unexpected visit of Mary. Her greeting, "Blessed are you among women" expresses Elizabeth's joy at the visit of Mary. Her joy mirrors Mary's own joy which came from her unexpected visit from the Angel Gabriel; her joy which comes from being chosen to be the Mother of Jesus. In our prayer we might spend time with Elizabeth and Mary reflecting on their time together, listening into their conversations in our imagination and sharing in their excitement and joy.

We might also in our prayer reflect on the source or sources of joy in our own lives, and then in imitating Mary give thanks to God.

Blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus:

At the heart of the Hail Mary, to which our minds and hearts are drawn, lies Jesus, the fruit of Mary's womb. Although the Hail Mary is directed towards Mary it is to Jesus that our attention is ultimately turned. He is the source of her joy. He is ultimately the source of our joy. It is through Jesus that Mary comes to completely experience God's unconditional love. It is through him that we come to know God's unconditional love for us.

As we ponder Jesus as the fruit of the womb of Mary, we reflect that not only is he the Son of the Father, but also the Son of his Mother Mary. In the mystery of the incarnation, Mary who is made in the image of God, carries her Son, the Son of God, who is made in her image. We are made also in the image and likeness of God. As we pray, we may reflect, that God, in whose image we are made, dwells within us.



Holy Mary Mother Of God, Pray For Us Sinners Now And At The Hour Of Our Death

The second part of the Hail Mary is completely different to the first part. It is first and foremost a prayer of petition, and the words come not from Scripture but from tradition. The version of the Hail Mary which we now pray first appeared in a short reflection written in 1495 by the Dominican Girolamo Savonarola.

Holy Mary Mother of God: Mary is no longer addressed simply as Mary, but as Holy Mary and as Mother of God. Mary, as the mother of God, has and continues to be greatly honoured and loved. Mary's role as the Mother of God first and foremost points us to Jesus, who through his incarnation, his death and his resurrection is the means of our redemption. As we pray with these words, we can reflect on the relationship that she has with Jesus, as her son and the Son of the Father, in which she is exalted above all mothers, and the relationship that we have with her as our mother, with all the human emotion, love and tenderness it brings.

Pray for us sinners: St. Bernadette's last words before her death were those of the Hail Mary. She wanted it is said to thank the Holy Virgin right up to the end and with her last breath she was heard to say twice, "Holy Mary Mother of God, pray for me a sinner." This is above all a prayer of petition, a prayer of asking, and this way reflects all Christian prayer.

These words "Pray for us sinners", remind us that Mary is a merciful mother, who will never abandon us nor will she ever fail to intercede on our behalf before the Father.

Now and at the hour of our death: In our prayer let us never be too afraid or proud to acknowledge our need for God who loves us as we are and who will never refuse to forgive us whatever our sin may be. It is never too late to seek forgiveness, even up to the moment of our death. Perhaps it also reminds us that it is never too late to forgive. However, there may be moments when even to seek God's forgiveness or to forgive a hurt is impossible alone. But we are never alone, for Mary is constantly by our side to help us, to intercede for us, right up to the moment of our death.



Part 9: Resources



Digital resources for prayer

Websites

www.ignatianspirituality.com
www.beunos.com/prayer.htm
www.goodnews.ie
www.ccr.org.uk
www.opusdei.org.uk
www.legionofmary.ie
www.deepeningfriendship.loyolapress.com

Daily Prayer Sites

www.pray-as-you-go.org
www.sacredspace.ie
<http://www.universalis.com>

Apps

The Pope App
PAYG
Laudate

Organisations, Spirituality Centres and Retreat Houses in Scotland

Ignatian Spirituality Centre Glasgow | www.iscglasgow.co.uk
Epiphany Group | www.epiphanygroup.org.uk
Craig Lodge, Dalmally | www.craiglodge.org
St Mary's, Kinnoull | www.kinnoullmonastery.org.uk
Iona House of prayer www.catholic-iona.com
The Orchard, Kilgraston | www.gardencottagespirituality.org.uk
The Bield, near Perth | www.bield@blackruthven.org.uk
The Coachhouse, near Inverness | www.coachhousekilmuir.org
Sacred Spaces, East Lothian | www.sacredspace.scotland.webs.com
Whitchester Christian Guest house, Hawick | www.whitchester.org.uk
Aig Fios, Kirkcudbright | www.aigfios.co.uk
Christian Mediation | www.wccm.org | World Community for Christian Mediation

Books

This is a selection of popular books on prayer: you may want to try a couple of them.

Burrows, Ruth. *The Essence of Prayer*. London: Burns and Oates, 2010.

Brother Lawrence. *The Practice of the Presence of God*. (Eremetical Press) 2009

Dalrymple, John. *Simple Prayer*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984/2010.

De Mello, Anthony. *Sadhana*. New York: Bantam, Doubleday, Dell 1984.

Duffy, Eamon, Ed. *The Heart in Pilgrimage*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

Green, Thomas H. *Opening to God: a Guide to Prayer*. Notre Dame: Ave Maria, 1976/2006.

Hughes, Gerard W. *God of Surprises*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985/2008.

Main, John. *Word into Silence: a Manual for Christian Meditation*. Canterbury: Canterbury Press, 2006.

Murray, Paul. *The Hail Mary: On The Threshold of Grace*. Liguori, U.S.A.: Liguori Publications, 2010.

O'Rourke, Benigus. *Finding Your Hidden Treasure: The Way of Silent Prayer*. Liguori, U.S.A.: Liguori Publications, 2010.

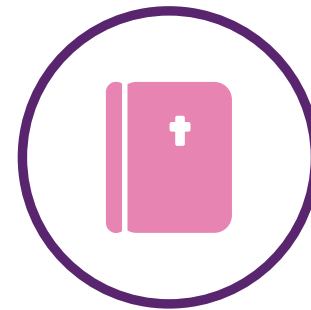
Laird, Martin. *Into The Silent Land: The Practice of Contemplation*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2006, 2011.

Rupp, Joyce. *The Cup of Our Life*. Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1997.

Pennington, Basil. *Centering Prayer*. New York: Image Books, 1982.

Pennington, Basil. *Lectio Divina*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998.

Silf, Margaret. *Landmarks: An Ignatian Journey*. London: (Darton Longman and Todd, 1998.





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