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You can pray

You can pray. Maybe you have not prayed since you were a child. Maybe praying is still something completely unfamiliar to you. Or someone told you that it is difficult to pray or that it would do no good anyway. Perhaps you are afraid that God would not hear your prayer. Or you have heard about great feelings that can be experienced during prayer and you are afraid of being disappointed. But all that must not prevent you from praying.

Take a small step!

You can pray. We can tell you that, although we do not know you personally at all. But the One to whom you can pray and who wants to speak to you knows you. He is quite close to you. He knows you better than you know yourself and is closer to you than you are to yourself. Jesus is God, who has become man. And already when he came into the world he decided to dwell in your heart too. He is waiting there for you. He wants to be sought and found there. He wants to speak to you there and to be heard by you. He knows you and loves you as no one else does. You can entrust your whole life to him, with all that is beautiful and difficult in it, with your joys and your sorrows, with what makes you happy, and with what is unsightly and makes you ashamed.

Praying means entrusting yourself to God with everything. Praying means being silent and listening. And it means letting him into your daily life, into your flesh and your memory, into everything that you say, think, and do. God has already taken the big step toward you. The path into prayer begins for you with only a small step. We invite you to take it.

The two-week prayer book and the life themes

This book is supposed to help you on this prayer path of friendship with God. It is a collection of old and new prayers for good and bad days and nights. You will find in it prayers from Sacred Scripture and prayers of experienced people of prayer from history and of people living today.

The book consists of two parts. The first part is a prayer cycle with morning and evening prayers for two weeks. The days of the first week are dedicated to themes from our life with God and those of the second week to themes from God's life with us. The second part is a collection of prayers about various topics and concerns. They can be combined with the regular rhythm of the first part and be fit into it – depending on the occasion, the various liturgical seasons of the Church, or your concerns.

The prayers of others are a way into your prayer

The preformulated prayers can lead you into praying in your own words and into the interior prayer of silence. The preformulated prayers, after all, are not there just to "recite". When you make the prayer of another person your own, then you pray together with him and he prays with you. The authors of the prayers in this book want to pray with you and for you. They can become companions on the way of faith who help you to find more and more your own words and also the silence of prayer. So you increasingly become a praying person who is united with God.

It may be that an individual prayer, sentence, or word strikes deep into your heart. Then linger there. Take your time. Let the word sink into the depths of your heart and into your soul. You might like to learn it by heart and to take it with you into the projects and concerns of your day. You may find it helpful to pray some prayers aloud. You do not always have to say all of the prayers either. Be selective, and stay with it when a text speaks to you in a special way.

While we were seeking, finding, and also praying these prayers again and again, we followed the same path that you can take with this book. And we keep following it with you. And with us countless other praying people are walking: people from all times since the creation of the world, those who are already with God, and those who are still living with us today. Many are praying with you and for you – and we are, too. You can pray. And if you want, you can begin today.

Ehreshoven, August 2011

Father Georg Lengerke and Dörte Schrömgies

Little school of prayer

Make the decision.



God willed and created us to be free human persons. Many times a day we deliberate, set priorities, make decisions. Without decisions nothing gets done. If you want to, make the decision to become a praying person and to shape your relationship to God. Decide deliberately ahead of time: I will pray at such and such a time. In the evening make the decision to pray the morning prayer and in the morning to pray the evening prayer.

Be faithful in little things.



Many begin to pray with great resolutions. After a while they fail and think that they could not pray at all. Begin with definite short prayer times. And keep doing it faithfully. Then your longing and your prayer, too, can grow, as it is appropriate for you, your time, and the circumstances.

” The most important part of praying correctly is doing it regularly. That means not only when your heart impels you. The soul lives on prayer. But all life requires regularity and repetition, a rhythm.

ROMANO GUARDINI

Take time to pray.



Praying means being alert to the fact that God is interested in you. With him you do not have to schedule appointments. There are three criteria for the time of your prayer that can be helpful. Choose set times (habit helps), quiet times (this is often early morning and in the evening), and valuable time that you like but are willing to give away as a gift (no “spare moments”).

” “We can pray at any time.” I know that we can, but I fear that generally those who do not pray at set times seldom pray.

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

Prepare a place.



The place where you pray has its effect on your praying. Therefore look for a place where you can pray well. For many people this will be at the bedside or the desk. Others find it helpful when they have a specially prepared place that reminds and invites them: a stool or a chair with a kneeler, a carpet, an icon or picture, a candle, the Bible, a prayer book.



But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret.

MATTHEW 6:6

Rituals give structure to your prayer life.



Getting over inertia every time so as to pray can be a great expense of energy. Give your prayer a fixed order (a ritual). This is not supposed to restrict you but rather to help you, so that you do not have to deliberate every day whether and how you want to pray. Before prayer place yourself consciously in the presence of God; after prayer take another moment to thank God for his blessings and to place yourself under his protection.

” The prayer that a person prays to the best of his ability has great power. It makes a bitter heart sweet, a sad heart glad, a poor heart rich, a foolish heart wise, a timid heart bold, a weak heart strong; it makes a blind heart see and a cold heart burn. It draws the great God into the little heart; it carries the hungry soul upward to God, the living source, and brings two lovers together: God and the soul.

SAINT GERTRUDE THE GREAT

Let the whole person pray.



Praying is accomplished not only in thoughts and words. In prayer your whole person can be united with God: your body, your internal and external perception, your memory, your will, your thoughts and feelings or the dream from last night. Even distractions often give you important information about what really concerns and motivates you and what you can intentionally bring into God's presence and leave with him. When things to be done that you do not want to forget occur to you while praying, you can just write them down and then go back to praying.

” When your mind wanders or gives way to distractions, gently recall it and place it once more close to its Divine Master. If you should do nothing else but repeat this during the whole time of prayer, your hour would be very well spent and you would perform a spiritual exercise most acceptable to God.

SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

Pray in a variety of ways.



Discover and practice the many ways of praying, which can vary depending on the time, one's frame of mind, and the situation at the moment: a prayer composed by someone else with which I join in; personal prayer about my own concerns; praying with a passage from Sacred Scripture (for example the readings for the day); the prayer of the heart (or "Jesus Prayer"), in which a short prayer formula or just the name "Jesus" is repeated with each breath; interior prayer, in which the whole person is silent and listens internally and externally.

Use the opportunities.



You can also make use of the opportunities that arise to pray at in-between times (for example, short fervent prayers, a petition, a prayer of thanksgiving or praise): while waiting; while riding on the bus, the train, or in the car (instead of turning the music on right away); during free time; while visiting a chapel or church along your daily walk. Let the opportunities that you have to pray become invitations to unite yourself again and again with God.

Let God speak.



Praying also means listening to God's voice. God speaks most explicitly in the words of Sacred Scripture, which the Church reads day after day. He speaks through the Tradition of the Church and the witness of the saints. But he also speaks – often in a hidden way – in the heart of every man, for instance, in the judgment of your conscience or through an interior joy. God's word in Scripture makes it possible to hear the word of God in the heart and lends a voice to it. Give God a chance to speak in your prayer. Become familiar with him, so that you can learn to tell his voice apart from the many other voices and come to know his will.

” We complain that [God] does not make Himself present to us for a few minutes we reserve for Him, but what about the twenty-three and half hours during which God may be knocking at our door and we answer “I am busy...”?

ANTHONY BLOOM

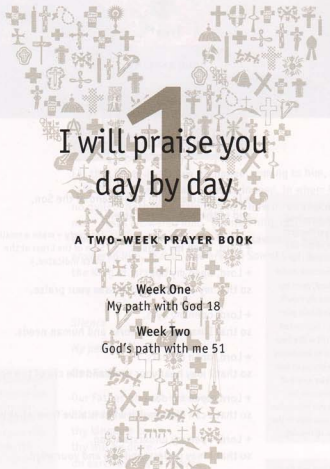
Pray with the Church on earth and in heaven.



Anyone who prays – whether alone or with others – enters into the great community of those who pray. It extends from earth to heaven and includes those who are alive today and also the angels, the saints, and the unknown multitude of those who live with God. Praying also means praying for each other. Therefore it is good to pray not just by yourself but also, when possible, with others: with your family, with friends, with your congregation – and with the saints. You can ask them for their prayers. For in God's sight the community of those who pray does not cease with death.

” Make space for prayer in your lives! To pray alone is good, although it is even more beautiful and fruitful to pray together, because the Lord assured us he would be present wherever two or three are gathered in his name (cf. Rom. 8:20).

POPE BENEDICT XVI, World Youth Day 2009



I will praise you day by day

A TWO-WEEK PRAYER BOOK

Week One

My path with God 18

Week Two

God's path with me 51

Week One – My path with God



YOU KNOW ME



! In many communities of prayer the first prayer of the day begins with the petition from Psalm 51: *"Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise."* Connected with this is the petition to be awakened to the praise of God and to be aware of the purposes for which you otherwise open your lips in the course of the day.

! * You can find a prayer to accompany the Sign of the Cross on page 105!

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

(At every + make a small Sign of the Cross at the place indicated.)

+ **Lord, open my senses**

+ Lord, open my lips,
so that my mouth may proclaim your praise.

+ Lord, open my eyes,
so that I may see your works and human needs.

+ Lord, open my ears,
so that I may hear your word and the cry of the poor.

+ Lord, open my nose,
so that I can distinguish what is alive from what is dead.

+ Lord, open my understanding,
so that I may understand you and your word.

+ Lord, open my heart,
so that I may make room for you and seek and find you in all things.

+ Lord, open my hands,
so that I may receive from you and cheerfully give to people.
Amen.



I saw you

[At that time] Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

JOHN 1:47-49

Silence

My petition for the day...

Our Father

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.

[For the kingdom and the power
and the glory are yours for ever and ever.
Amen.]

MATTHEW 6:9-13

Try sometime
to pray the Our
Father with your
breath. Pray one
sentence each time
you exhale. It is,
after all, the Holy
Spirit himself who is
praying in you. And
your breath is an im-
age for him, and for
the spirit that God
gave you when he
gave life to you
(cf. GENESIS 2:7).

Saint Patrick's Breastplate

I bind unto myself today
the strong name of the Trinity:
by invocation of the same
the Three in One and One in Three.

I bind unto myself today
the power of God to hold and lead:
his eye to watch, his might to stay,
his ear to hearken to my need;
the wisdom of my God to teach,
his hand to guide, his shield to ward;
the Word of God to give me speech,
his heavenly host to be my guard!

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

I bind unto myself the name,
the strong name of the Trinity:
by invocation of the same,
the Three in One and One in Three;
of whom all nature hath creation,
eternal Father, Spirit, Word:
praise to the Lord of my salvation –
salvation is of Christ the Lord.

Amen.

SAINT PATRICK OF IRELAND

May the Lord bless me, protect me from all evil,
and bring me to everlasting life.
+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the
Holy Spirit. Amen.





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

Praying the Psalms

The Psalms are the prayer book of the Bible. When you pray them, you do so together with millions of Christians and Jews throughout the world – those of today and those who have prayed them over the past three thousand years – since for God every prayer that was ever spoken remains now and forever present. The Psalms can help us to bring before God every experience and every movement of the human heart – joy and thanksgiving, desperation and anger, even hatred of evil things and the anguished question: Does God sleep, while we suffer?

“The glory of God is man fully alive.

SAINT IRENAEUS
OF LYONS

Quietly, I look back over this day. I call to mind the things and the people I have encountered in the course of this day and what I have thought, said, and done.

Loving Father, I thank you for this day and for all the good things I have experienced. Forgive me, wherever I have sinned against you, against others, or against myself, and let my heart rest in peace with you. Amen.

I receive myself from your hands

Unceasingly, I receive myself from your hands.

This is my truth and my joy.

Unceasingly, your eye rests upon me,

and I live by your gaze,

O my Creator and my Salvation.

Teach me,

in the silence of your presence,

to understand the mystery that I am.

And the fact that I am

through you

and before you

and for you.

Amen.

ROMANO GUARDINI

You search me and you know me

O LORD, you have searched me and known me!

You know when I sit down and when I rise up;

you discern my thoughts from afar.

You search out my path and my lying down,

and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether...
For you formed my inward parts,
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am wondrously made.
Wonderful are your works! ...
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance;
in your book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them.
How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
[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.]

PSALM 139:1-4, 13, 14, 16, 17

I adore you

Lord, you have made us for yourself,
and our hearts are restless
until they find rest in you.
Yours is the light of day,
yours is the darkness of night.
I too am yours and I adore you.
Let me rest in peace,
bless the coming day,
and let me awake
to praise your Name. Amen.

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, adapted

Grant me, Lord, a quiet night
and a perfect end in you.

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



YOU HAVE MADE MY FOOTSTEPS FIRM



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

I am yours

I am not afraid, my LORD,
for you have created me.
You call me by my name.

I am yours!

When I pass through the waters, you are with me,
and through rivers – they shall not overwhelm me.

When I walk through fire I shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume me.

For you are the LORD my God,
The Holy One, my Savior!

I am precious in your sight,
and you love me.

For your glory you have created,
formed and fashioned each one by your name.

You alone are God,
now and for evermore.

Since you are by me, I do not fear.

Based on ISAIAH 43:1-7

” What matters
above all is to make
a determined begin-
ning. A person who
begins with determi-
nation already has
a good part of the
journey behind him.

SAINT TERESA OF
AVILA

He will establish and strengthen you

Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you... knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, and strengthen you.

1 PETER 5:7, 9-10

Silence

My petition for the day...

Our Father...

My longing for truth

For the longing for truth
that you have planted deep within me.
It is not going to be fobbed off
with empty promises,
simplistic solutions,
or hollow phrases.

I ask you, my Father,
to help me look at the truth of my own life,
at all that is genuine and all that is false,
at all that is true and all the lies,
at all the fullness and all the emptiness.

I trust in you, my Father,
to come into my life
and brighten my darkness with your light,
and be for me the Truth
that will fill all my longing.
Amen.

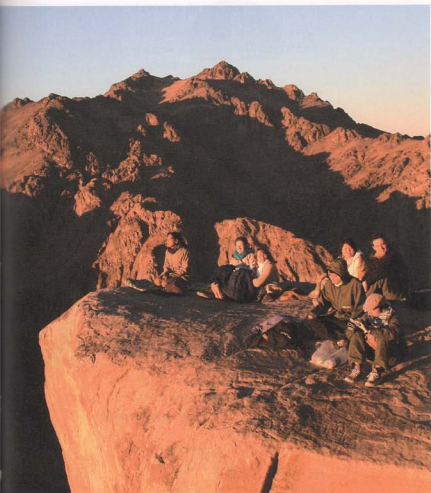
DÖRTE SCHRÖMGES

May the Lord bless me, protect me from all evil,
and bring me to everlasting life.

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

99 Whoever wants to start a good life should do so like someone setting out a circle. If he has fixed the center of the circle accurately, and it remains firm, then the line of the circle will be a good one. In other words, a person should first learn to set his heart firmly in God, and then he will be constant in all his works.

MEISTER ECKHART





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

Quietly, I look back over this day. I call to mind the things and the people I have encountered in the course of this day and what I have thought, said, and done.

Loving Father, I thank you for this day and for all the good things I have experienced. Forgive me, wherever I have sinned against you, against others, or against myself and let my heart rest in peace with you. Amen.

” What is the worst thing a person can do to himself? – to forget that he is the son of a King.

MARTIN BUBER

Lord, my God, I rejoice

Lord, my God,
just as the fish cannot live without water,
so I cannot live without you.
You have created me;
you uphold my life.

Today I come to thank you
for the life that you give me, each day anew.
I come to thank you,
and to tell you how much I love life.

Yes, I love to be alive,
even if I am often not quite myself,
when I seem to be going nowhere
and don't know where my life is taking me.

Above all, I rejoice to be your child,
to breathe the life of God within me,
your Holy Spirit.

You want to live in me,
to be a guest within me.
With all my heart I thank you
for this honor, for this joy.
Amen.

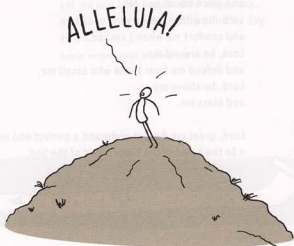
Based on a prayer from Upper Volta

! God does not
● desire *sacrifice*
and offering; that is,
he does not want you
to give something
that belongs to you.
He is not asking for
your achievements
and successes,
however laudable
they may be; nor
does he want your
good grades or the
things that make
you important in the
eyes of others. What
he longs for is *you*
yourself, your very
heart, just as it is
today. He also wants
you to hand over to
him all your hurt and
your guilt. Then he
will be your Savior
and heal what is
broken in you.

I come to do your will

He inclined to me and heard my cry.
He drew me up from the desolate pit,
out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure.
He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God....
You have multiplied, O LORD my God,
your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us;
none can compare with you!
Were I to proclaim and tell of them,
they would be more than can be numbered.
Sacrifice and offering you do not desire;
but you have given me an open ear.
Burnt offering and sin offering
you have not required.
Then I said, "Behold, I come;...
I delight to do your will, O my God;
your law is within my heart."
[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.]

PSALM 40:1-3, 5-8





” God no more
takes his eyes off us
than does a mother
take them off her
child who is just
starting to walk.

SAINT JEAN-MARIE
VIANNEY, Curé of Ars

Prayer of blessing

Lord, be before me
and show me the right path.

Lord, be beside me
and protect me.

Lord, be behind me
and preserve me from the malice of evil men.

Lord, be beneath me,
save me from the snare
and catch me when I fall.

Lord, be within me
and comfort me when I am sad.

Lord, be around me
and defend me from those who assail me.

Lord, be above me
and bless me.

Lord, grant me a quiet night and a perfect end in you.

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

