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Part I

Prayers for Today's Teenagers

Chapter 1

Prayers for Living

Study It! Core Activity (30–40 minutes)

What Is Prayer?

Supplies Needed

- copies of *The Catholic Youth Prayer Book*, enough for each pair of students
- paper, enough for each student
- pens or pencils, enough for each student
- a chalkboard
- chalk
- masking tape

Preparation

- Prepare a large sheet of newsprint with the following quotation from Saint Thérèse of Lisieux:

For me, prayer is an aspiration of the heart, it is a simple glance directed to heaven, it is a cry of gratitude and love in the midst of trial as well as joy; finally, it is something great, supernatural, which expands my soul and unites me to Jesus. (*Story of a Soul*, p. 242)

1. Have your students select a partner for the activity. Distribute a copy of *The Catholic Youth Prayer Book* to each pair.

2. Distribute a sheet of paper and a pen or pencil to each student. Have the students interview their partners, asking the following questions and noting the responses:

- What is prayer? How would you define it?
- Why do people pray?
- When do people pray?
- How do people pray?
- Where do people pray?

3. When all the pairs have completed the interviews, have the partners share each other's responses with the class. On a chalkboard, keep a running list of the responses.

4. Post the prepared quotation by Saint Thérèse of Lisieux in a visible place in the classroom. Invite your class to discuss Thérèse's definition of prayer. The following questions can serve as a starting point:

- How is this a different definition of prayer than revealed in your interviews?
- How is it similar to the definitions of prayer in the interviews?
- What does this definition reveal about what is important about prayer to Saint Thérèse of Lisieux?

5. Ask your students to read through the introduction to *The Catholic Youth Prayer Book*, finding statements that match their own definitions of prayer from the interviews and the definition from Saint Thérèse of Lisieux.

6. Conclude by having your students read the prayers in chapter 1 of the *CYPB* and choose one that speaks most directly to their life situation. Have them share with their partner why they chose the prayers they did. Encourage the students to pray the prayers often during the coming week.

Study It! Additional Activities (5–15 minutes each)

Scripture Mix and Match

Supplies Needed

- pens or pencils, enough for each student
- paper, enough for each student

Preparation

- Make enough copies of resource 1–A, “Scripture Mix and Match,” so each student will have a complete set of Scripture passages. Cut apart the passages as scored, and then cut apart each passage at the break so the first part of each passage is on one slip of paper, and the second part is on another. Make separate piles of each complete set of Scripture passages.

1. Mix up the individual piles of Scripture passages and distribute one complete set to each student. Have the students try to match the correct ending with its beginning.

2. When the students are finished, have them discuss each verse and what it teaches us about the following:

- what prayer is
- how to pray
- why to pray

Prayer in Song

1. Choose five secular (nonreligious) songs with the word *pray* or *prayer* in the lyrics or title; for example, “I Say a Little Prayer for You,” by Diana King; “Livin’ on a Prayer,” by Bon Jovi; or “Unanswered Prayers,” by Garth Brooks. Ask your students to help find songs to use. Preview the lyrics of any song before you use it.

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2. Have the class listen to the various songs and reflect on the image of prayer presented.

3. Distribute a pen or pencil and a sheet of paper to each student. Invite the class to spend a few minutes journaling about how music can be an invitation to prayer or how it can present an incomplete image of what prayer truly is.

Pray It! Prayer Experiences

Prize Litany

Supplies Needed

- a recording of "Glory and Praise to Our God," by Daniel Schutte (OCP; from the Saint Louis Jesuits' collection *A Dwelling Place*, 1976), or a similar song
- a tape or CD player
- The Catholic Youth Bible*® or another Bible, marked at Romans 3:12–14
- The Catholic Youth Prayer Book*
- paper, enough for each student
- pens or pencils, enough for each student
- a recording of "Lord, I Lift Your Name on High," by Rick Founds (Maranatha Praise, 1989), or a similar song of praise

1. Play the opening song, "Glory and Praise to our God."

2. Invite a student to proclaim Romans 3:12–14.

3. Read aloud, or have a second student read, the Pray It! sidebar "Joyful Hearts, Give Praise!" from chapter 1 of *The Catholic Youth Prayer Book*.

4. Distribute a sheet of paper and a pen or pencil to each student and ask the students to list five things they prize about God.

5. Divide the large group into small groups of four and ask them to create a litany prayer based on the individual lists within their groups.

6. Ask each group to proclaim its litany, starting each item with the phrase "Praise to you, God, for . . ." For example, "Praise to you, God, for families who love and care for us."

7. Conclude by having the class sing "Lord, I Lift Your Name on High."

Prayer Option

Ask your students to pick their favorite prayer from chapter 1 of the *CYPB* and illustrate their response to God through drawing, writing, or another creative medium. You might also have the students find a Scripture passage connected to the prayer. Invite them to share their responses with the group.

Live It! Take-Home Experiences

Looking at the World Around You

Ask your students to find a newspaper article about suffering in your community or worldwide. Encourage them to resolve to pray daily for the people or the situation.

Example of Saint Cecilia

Direct your students to think of someone they know who, like Saint Cecilia, has endured great suffering and yet has remained a peaceful, joyful, loving, and compassionate person. Encourage the students to let that person know, either by a personal conversation or by writing a note, that he or she has been an inspiration.

Scripture Mix and Match

Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said,

"Speak for your servant is listening." (1 Samuel 3:10)

Do not worry about anything, but in everything

by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (Philippians 4:6)

Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones:

I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. (Ezekiel 37:5)

"And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites;

for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others." (Matthew 6:5)

"But whenever you pray, go into your room and

shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret." (Matthew 6:6)

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing,

give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought,

but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. (Romans 8:26)

I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come?

My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. (Psalm 121:1-2)

When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken;

and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:31)

The prayer of the righteous

is powerful and effective. (James 5:16)

Chapter 2

Prayers Through the Day

STUDY IT! Core Activity (40–50 minutes)

Sanctifying the Day

Supplies Needed

- copies of *The Catholic Youth Prayer Book*
- the film *The Prince of Egypt* (1998, 90 minutes, rated PG)
- a VCR or a DVD player
- paper, enough for each group of three or four
- pens or pencils, enough for each group of three or four

Preparation

- Cue the film to the point where Moses is before the burning bush.
 1. As a class, read the sidebar in chapter 2 of the *CYPB* titled “Sanctifying the Day.”
 2. Show your class the clip from *The Prince of Egypt*. Play the clip to the point where the wind lifts Moses off the ground.
 3. Separate your class into groups of three or four.
 4. Distribute a piece of paper and a pen or pencil to each group. Ask the groups to brainstorm ways they are in the constant presence of God (a smile, good friends, caring teachers, an outstretched, helping hand, the beauty of nature, an offer of forgiveness, and so forth). Ask the groups to write down their ideas.
 5. Ask each group to cite Scripture passages that support the belief that those things do indeed reflect God’s presence in our lives.
 6. Direct the groups to develop reminders of God’s love they can take with them. For example, they could create a prayer card to carry in their book bag, write a prayer to be said at the change of each class period, or write a relevant Scripture verse on the front of their notebook for each class. Encourage them to be creative.
 7. Invite each group to share with the class its list of ways we are in the presence of God and its reminder.

Study It! Additional Activities (5–15 minutes each)

Psalm 23

Supplies Needed

- paper, enough for each student
- pens or pencils, enough for each student

1. Ask the students to brainstorm an image of God that is relevant to their life. Possible options are coach, parent, teacher, or friend.

2. Distribute a piece of paper and a pen or pencil to each student. Invite the students to rewrite Psalm 23, using the words and imagery they brainstormed that are relevant to the life of a student. For example, “The Lord is my coach . . .”

3. Ask for volunteers to share with the class their rewritten versions of Psalm 23.

Prayer for Holy Words

Supplies Needed

- copies of *The Catholic Youth Prayer Book*
- a chalkboard
- chalk

1. As a class, read “Prayer for Holy Words,” from chapter 2 of the *CYPB*.

2. Brainstorm words that bless others and words that hurt or offend others. Encourage the students to use words appropriate for the classroom.

3. Keep track of the words in two lists on the chalkboard, one list for the positive words, one for the negative words.

4. Ask your students to consider which words are most often found in their conversations and encourage them to resolve to use only words that bless. Explain that doing this will have a positive impact on both the speaker and those with whom the speaker interacts.

Top Ten Reasons to Pray

Supplies Needed

- paper, enough for each group of four or five
- pens or pencils, enough for each group of four or five

1. Divide the large group into smaller groups of four or five students.

2. Distribute a piece of paper and a pen or pencil to each group and instruct the groups to brainstorm their top ten reasons to pray throughout the course of the day. Ask the groups to record these reasons. Encourage them to be creative and positive.

3. Ask a spokesperson from each group to read the group's list to the rest of the class. Collect the lists and post them on a classroom bulletin board.

(This activity is adapted from Maryann Hakowski, *Teaching Manual for "PrayerWays,"* p. 18.)

Pray It! Prayer Experiences

Ignatian Examination of Conscience

Supplies Needed

- THE CATHOLIC YOUTH BIBLE* or another Bible, marked at Psalm 19:15
- copies of *The Catholic Youth Prayer Book*

1. Begin by having a student proclaim Psalm 19:15 as your opening prayer.
2. Explain that you will lead the class through an Ignatian examination of conscience like the one found in the Pray It! sidebar of chapter 2 of the *CYPB*.
3. Invite your students to sit comfortably, with their hands folded and their eyes closed. Begin reading the following points, providing ample reflection time after each point.
 - Begin by thanking God for the day.
 - Then, ask the Holy Spirit to help you see the day through his eyes.
 - Think through your day, hour by hour. Getting out of bed and ready for school . . . arriving at school and seeing your friends . . . going through your morning classes . . . lunch . . . afternoon classes . . . after-school activities . . . coming home . . .
 - What are you grateful for? When did you see God working? For those moments, pray, "Thank you, God, for . . ."
 - What are you sorry for? Everyone sins. The greatest damage, however, isn't in the moment of the act itself but is in the effects the act has on others, ourselves, and our relationship with God. We can feel shameful, or we may think we are bad people. How much better it is simply to acknowledge our sins and shortcomings and to ask God and others to forgive us.
 - After you have contemplated your day, ask God to help you grow closer to him.
 - Last, ask God to guard you while you sleep, to keep your heart and mind fixed on him, and to help you wake up ready to serve throughout another day.
4. If appropriate, allow your class the time to either journal about the experience or offer up personal prayers of intention and gratitude.
5. Conclude by praying, as a class, the prayer titled "A True Friend to Jesus," from chapter 2 of the *CYPB*.

Prayer Through the Day

Supplies Needed

- copies of *The Catholic Youth Prayer Book*
- a sheet of newsprint
- markers

1. Begin by inviting your students to take a prayerful attitude. Start with the sign of the cross.

2. Invite the students to pray together the morning prayers from chapter 2 of the *CYPB*, "Psalm 33:20–22" and "Take This Day."

3. Following the prayers, ask your students to recall moments in their morning when it would have been possible for them to offer these prayers. Record their responses on the sheet of newsprint.

4. Invite the students to offer a silent prayer to remember to give thanks and praise and offer the day to God each morning.

5. Next, ask your students to pray together the midday prayers from chapter 2 of the *CYPB*, "Psalm 19:14" and "You Are Near."

6. Following the prayers, ask your students to recall moments today or yesterday when it would have been possible for them to offer these prayers. Record their responses.

7. Invite the students to offer a silent prayer to remember to stop in the hectic pace of the day to invite God into their lives, joys, and struggles.

8. Next, ask your students to pray together the night prayers from chapter 2 of the *CYPB*, "Night Prayer Antiphon" and "While I Sleep."

9. Following the prayers, ask your students to think of moments they will encounter this evening when it will be possible for them to offer these prayers. Record their responses on the sheet of newsprint.

10. Invite the students to offer a silent prayer to remember to pause at the end of the day to give thanks for the day and ask for guidance in the morning.

11. Conclude this prayer experience by asking your class to look at the list of prayer opportunities on the sheet of newsprint and commit themselves to offering prayers at a few of these moments tonight and tomorrow.

Live It! Take-Home Experiences

Meal Prayer

Encourage your students to invite their family and others they share a meal with to pray before and after meals. Students can choose to copy the “Prayers at Meals” section of chapter 2 of the *CYPB* and keep them on the dining table or another spot where the family eats together.

Daily Log

Invite your students to begin a log lasting a week, with each daily entry beginning “God, I saw you today when . . .” You can choose to incorporate this log into your class by beginning or ending each class with an opportunity for your students to write in the daily log.