

# What They're Saying About *Heads Bowed*

Lisa Mladinich brilliantly combines the Church's *Lectionary*, feast days, and liturgical seasons with the prayer tradition of dedicating the days and months to specific devotions. *Heads Bowed* is at once spiritual, liturgical, and doctrinal—an ideal aid for beginning your instruction, or your day, in prayer and union with God. It belongs in every Catholic parish, classroom, and home.

—**Marc Cardaronella**, director, Bishop Helmsing Institute for Faith Formation, Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph and former parish director of religious education

*Heads Bowed* is your go-to prayer resource for instilling the gift of daily prayer in the hearts and souls of children. Chock-full of beautiful, inspirational meditations, this book is perfectly designed to lead you and your children into daily conversation with God. I expect my copy will be dog-eared from daily use. I can't wait to pray with this beautiful book!

—**Lisa M. Hendey**, founder of CatholicMom.com and author of the *Chime Travelers* series

Many Catholics have shared with me that they don't know how to pray. The Our Father and the Hail Mary, yes. But what's missing for them is a way to enter more deeply into dialogue with Christ, his mother, the saints, and our Church community. *Heads Bowed* helps adults and children in their care to pray meaningfully together during the school year, whether at school or at home. With prayers for each day of class, this book is a wonderful companion for our spiritual walk. To that, I say, "Amen!"

—**Elizabeth Ficocelli**, speaker, radio host, and author of *Seven From Heaven: How Your Family Can Find Healing, Strength and Protection in the Sacraments*

One of the greatest gifts we can give our students is a love of prayer. Lisa Mladinich gives educators and students alike a wonderful gift in this book that inspires a new generation of believers to appreciate the richness of our Catholic faith. From the Holy Trinity to the communion of saints to the rosary and even to virtues like unity, gratitude, reverence, and mercy, a wide variety of topics and vocabulary are reinforced in these prayers and help teach children what they can offer to God.

—**Jared Dees**, creator of [TheReligionTeacher.com](http://TheReligionTeacher.com),  
author of *To Heal, Proclaim, and Teach*

This prayer book is perfect for Catholic students and teachers, but I admit to wanting a copy for my home, too! It's full of inspiration and practical wisdom and sure to be an invaluable resource for all who use it.

—**Sarah Reinhard**, author, blogger at [SnoringScholar.com](http://SnoringScholar.com)

Not just for Catholic school teachers, this wellspring of inspiration will be used regularly in our homeschool. Lisa Mladinich inspires through a deep, personal connection with both student and subject and teaches by loving. You will love this book.

—**Karen Edmisten**, author of *You Can Share the Faith: Reaching Out One Person at a Time*

# Heads Bowed

## Prayers for Catholic School Days

Lisa Mladinich



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# INTRODUCTION

## Teaching by Loving

*“For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.”*

—Thérèse of Lisieux,  
quoted in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2558

Leading children of various temperaments and backgrounds to a life of prayer is a long and challenging task. Prayer is that uniquely individual opportunity to be awestruck by the Father, to gaze adoringly at Jesus, to be docile to the Holy Spirit. But without the firm and grace-filled foundation formed by prayer, it is impossible to do anything else of worth. So we must begin by trusting that God completes what we leave unfinished and blesses our small efforts.

Few things are more compelling than a good example. To sense the tender devotion of a beloved adult is a powerful beacon of love that attracts the budding spiritual consciousness of a little boy or girl to a natural contemplation of their own mysterious relationship with God. Like a toddler in a spring garden reaching out to touch the brightly colored blossoms, a young soul can be attracted by the joyful beauty of reverence,



the peacefulness of a life of faith, the efficacy of prayerful petition, and the delicate aroma of sanctity. To teach a child to pray requires that the teacher or parent be a person of prayer, too.

One of my favorite series in literature is *Anne of Green Gables*, in part because of the character Anne Shirley's profound and poetic appreciation for beauty and the delightfully funny and very human growth we observe in her life of faith. But she is also a gifted and passionate teacher, and her methods are authentically Christian. Rather than ruling her little schoolhouse with an adversary's fearful authoritarianism, hers is a method that inspires through a deep, personal connection with both pupil and subject. In her own quirky imitation of Christ, she teaches by loving. While fictional, she is believably effective.

In the last few years, I have often contemplated the reality that God actually dwells within me. Many of the saints have prayed without ceasing by practicing an awareness of God's presence in the quiet of their souls. I am sometimes filled with awe, putting my hand over my heart and praying these words: "You are here within me. I love you. I praise you." Prayer can be that spontaneous and brilliantly simple.

Yet, we have at our fingertips a myriad of beautiful and powerful prayer traditions through our beloved Catholic Church, and they are also important to our understanding of the winsome mysteries of our faith. Each of us is linked together in the body of Christ through our sacramental lives, sacred Scripture, feast days, and the liturgical seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Ordinary Time. In fact, through longstanding tradition, each day is dedicated to a specific devotion:

**Monday:** The Holy Spirit and the Souls in Purgatory  
**Tuesday:** The Holy Angels  
**Wednesday:** St. Joseph  
**Thursday:** The Blessed Sacrament  
**Friday:** Christ's Passion and His Sacred Heart  
**Saturday:** The Blessed Virgin and Her Immaculate Heart  
**Sunday:** The Resurrection and the Holy Trinity

Even our months are dedicated:

**January:** The Holy Name and Childhood of Jesus  
**February:** The Holy Family  
**March:** St. Joseph  
**April:** The Blessed Sacrament  
**May:** Mary  
**June:** Sacred Heart of Jesus  
**July:** The Precious Blood  
**August:** Immaculate Heart of Mary  
**September:** Seven Dolours (Sorrows) of Mary  
**October:** The Holy Rosary, the Holy Angels,  
and Respect for Life  
**November:** Holy Souls in Purgatory  
**December:** The Immaculate Conception

Since each jewel in our liturgical year presents a clue to the heavenly treasures we seek—day by day, week by week, and month by month—they help us to reflect with fresh insight on the great love God has for us. With the aid of sacred Scripture, the holy and living word of God, we are able to discover a more immediate sense of God's individual call to every human heart.

It is also of great importance to note the efficacy of the holy rosary (October's dedication), a devotion of great power. Many converts, myself included, were drawn to Christ through the recitation of the rosary, and countless holy men and women have entrusted their spiritual, moral, and physical safety to the Blessed Mother's beautiful chaplet of love.

# SECTION TWO



## Welcoming the Children

# Week 3: Blessings for a New School Year

*Did you know that when you work hard and love everyone,  
you become more and more like God?*

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**Vocabulary:** wisdom, Eucharist, divine

*And this is my prayer; that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.*

Philippians 1:9-11

**Day 1:** Holy Spirit, when we come to you in prayer, your great power strengthens our hearts and minds with **wisdom** and love. We know that praying together is powerful, and we offer you all our love and the joy of this new school year. Give us joy in learning and love for one another. Help us to be grateful for the gift of our education, since many children in the world are not so fortunate. We ask you to bless and protect the poor children of the world, and we ask the holy souls in purgatory to pray for them and for us every single day. Thank you, Lord, for bringing us all together. Amen.

**Day 2:** Lord, you have given each of us a guardian angel, and we are so happy to have this powerful, heavenly friend at our side throughout our lives. Our guardian angel prays for us until the very moment we enter heaven. We can always turn to this spiritual friend for help with schoolwork, with friendships, and with any problems. Thank you, God, for giving us such a powerful and holy companion. Amen.

**Day 3:** Dear, humble St. Joseph, you raised the Child Jesus with great love and patience. You taught him to be a carpenter and protected him from harm. You are like a father to us, too. You watch over the whole Catholic Church and cover us in your powerful prayers. As we pray and learn together, please help us to be more like you: to have pure thoughts, generous hearts, and deep trust in the powerful love of God. Thank you for your example of patience, courage, and love. Amen.

**Day 4:** Jesus in the holy **Eucharist**, adored by countless angels, you are present to us at **Mass** in four ways: through the host at Communion, through the priest who stands at the altar, through the words of the Bible, and in all of us gathered together in your name. We are all members of the body of Christ, the Church. Remind us each day that we are carriers of your **divine** love and that we should always try to see your face in every other human face—no matter who we are with and what is happening in our lives. Amen.

**Day 5:** Dear Jesus, your heart is full of goodness and love. Your death on the cross showed us that pain offered out of love for others can change the world. Help us treat each other with kindness. If we are in a bad mood, help us offer that suffering for those who may have disappointed us or hurt us. We love you. We adore you. And we ask you to fill our hearts with your divine love so that we may share that love with others every day. Amen.