

# Meditation Practices and Mandated Prayers for Prep to Year 12



As Required by the BCE  
Religion Curriculum



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## Some Notes of Clarification

In this text, those practices to assist Meditation and the Mandated Prayers for each year level are placed together from Prep to Year 10.

HOWEVER, It has never been the intention of the RE curriculum to require that **ONLY** those Meditation practices and prayers be taught and used at any one year level.

Teachers and students are to feel free to use **ANY** of the prayers and practices herein at **ANY** year level, along with those that are proscribed for each year level.

Also, it is quite possible that at least some students in the class have not encountered some practices and prayers required to be taught in previous years.

Finally, you will note that apart from a variety of prayers and meditative practices to be taught at each year level, the expectation is that students will continue to grow in the capacity for meditating in stillness and silence, without the need for any other aids other than centred breathing and a mantra. The length of time of stillness and silence desirable for each year level corresponds with the age of the students. As adults, some 20-30 minutes is desirable.

# Prayer and Meditation in Prep

## Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding

Jesus prayed regularly and taught others how to pray. Prayer involves both talking and listening to God, either alone or with others. Believers pray with the help of word, music, action, silence, images, symbols and nature.

Meditative prayer uses silence and stillness to assist believers to listen and talk to God.

There is a range of practices (including being silent and still, and lighting a candle) that helps believers prepare the body and the mind for meditative prayer and engage in the 'work of meditation'.

## Skills

Participate with respect in a variety of prayer experiences (e.g. prayer circles, school prayer, thank you prayers).

Participate respectfully in meditative prayer.

Identify and use practices that assist them to prepare for and engage in meditative prayer.

## Prep Achievement Standard

Students understand that prayer helps believers to follow the teachings of Jesus; to live according to God's plan. They recognise ways in which believers pray either alone or with others, using word, music, action, silence, images, symbols and nature, and participate with respect in a variety of these prayer experiences, including meditative prayer, the Sign of the Cross, and Amen.

Note:

In terms of meditative practices, the goal of Christian meditation is that by the end of Prep, students should be able to engage in meditative stillness and silence for about five-six minutes, as well as the specific meditative practices mentioned for this year level.

# Practices to assist silence and stillness

## A. Relaxation to prepare the body for stillness and silence

### 1.1 Closing Eyes

The most obvious way to avoid distractions while relaxing or meditating, is to close the eyes. For some people, including young students, this can be difficult. It requires practice and the creation of a “safe” environment. Practising closing eyes for extended periods of time with groups of younger students, is a skill that may occupy quite a few lessons before Meditation can be introduced. Difficulties have been overcome in a number of ways: some classes use “blackout masks” similar to those provided by airlines; in other classes students who are not yet ready to close their eyes look down at the desk or an image, or their hands in their lap and contract not to let their eyes wander around and distract others.

### 1.2 Relaxing the Body

Posture:

Relaxation and meditation are not the same thing. It is a good idea to relax the body before beginning the work of meditation. If you or your students fall asleep, then they are relaxing, not meditating. It is for this reason that lying down is not a posture for Meditation. It is always recommended that participants sit with straight backs- either on a chair or on the floor, possible against a wall.

There are many ways to relax the body in preparation for Meditation. Some simple Yoga exercises or Tai Chi movements can do this. A commonly used exercise is a visualisation and muscle relaxation ritual. In this exercise, participants are led through a process of tensing and then relaxing body muscle groups.

See **Appendix 1** for Guided Body Relaxation and Simple Tai Chi Movements.

## B. Practices to assist meditative stillness and silence

### i. Practising Sitting/Being Still

For younger students, practising stillness can initially be presented as a challenge and a competition- to see how long they can be very still personally and as a group.

Say:

*Being still for a long time can be hard to start with. And just when you want to be still, parts of your body sometimes need to move- because of an itch or a pain. So before we start, let's rub our noses...ears...face...arms...legs...head...neck...shoulders.*

*Now, let's begin to still our body bit by bit.*

*Let's start with our toes. Wiggle them inside your shoes. Then we say: "be still, toes!"*

*Now we wriggle our whole feet. Then we say "Be still, feet!"*

*Let's move to our legs. Move your legs out and in, while keeping your feet on the ground. Then we say: "Legs, be still!"*

*Let's wriggle our bottoms on the chair, while keeping our feet and legs still. Then we say: "Be still, bottoms!"*

*Keeping our bottoms, legs and feet still, let's move our bodies and shoulders. Then, we say: "be still body!"*

Now let's wiggle our hands and fingers, without moving our torso, legs or feet. Then we say: "Be still, hands!"

Keeping our hands, arms, bodies, legs and feet still, let's wriggle our face: jaws and noses, and blink our eyes. Then we say: "be still, face!"

Lastly, we move our head back and forward, up and down, side to side, while keeping our face, arms, hands, torso, legs and feet still. Then we say: "Be still, head!"

Now, every part of our body is still. Let's see if we can hold that stillness for ..... minutes. (Up to five by the end of prep)

Now that we have been very still for .... whole minutes, let's gently stretch our muscles as we come back to normal movement.

## ii. Breathing

Being still and silent by focusing on breathing. Note: You may want to take this exercise in stages- simple slow breathing, moving to use of nose and lips; then counting, then using a word. The point of the exercise is to get students to the point of doing this for longer periods of time. For five year olds, five minutes is the goal.

### Breathing Exercise

**Note: For meditation, students should NOT lie down. They should remain seated, with straight backs. If children go to sleep, they are not meditating, they are relaxing.**

Close your eyes and let your body come to a quietness and stillness.

Listen to your breathing.

Breathe in slowly....

Breathe out slowly. .... (Repeat 3 or 4 times)

Practise breathing in through your nose and out through pursed lips. This is a special way of breathing when we meditate. Feel your breath as it comes in through your nose and as it passes over your lips.

Now, as you breathe in, count to four in your mind: In, two three four; and then blow out through your lips, out, two, three, four.

Now, let us take time to think about peace..... (two, three, four...)

On your in breath, breathe in peace.....

On your out breath, breathe out peace..... (Repeat 3 or 4 times)

Think about a time when you have felt peace.

Breathe in the peace of the trees outside.....

Breathe out peace.....

Breathe in the peace of this room.....

Breathe out peace.....

Imagine yourself totally surrounded by peace e.g slowly wrap yourself in a blanket of peace)

Count in your mind slowly from 5 to 1 and when you are ready, open your eyes.

### **Breathing Exercise / Visualisation**

**Note: For meditation, students should NOT lie down. They should remain seated, with straight backs. If children go to sleep, they are not meditating, they are relaxing.**

Let us take some time to be still...

Close your eyes and become aware of your body sitting on the floor/chair.

Feel the ground under your feet and the air touching your nostrils.

Be aware of your nostrils breathing in air.

Listen to the gentle sound of your breathing.

Breathe in slowly...

Breathe out slowly...take a deep breath in and then let it out.

Keep your eyes closed to help you see the following...

Imagine an eagle gliding through the air... (pause)

Imagine the sails of a boat being blown in the wind...(pause)

See the clouds moving quickly across the sky...(pause)

See yourself flying the most colourful kite on a windy day...(pause)

Feel the breeze on your face as you walk on the beach/ up a hill/ in a park... (pause)

Listen to your breathing.

Slowly open your eyes....



### iii. Practising being silent (and still)

#### Practising Silence for Meditation

**Note: For meditation, students should NOT lie down. They should remain seated, with straight backs. If children go to sleep, they are not meditating, they are relaxing.**

Practising being silent also means becoming aware that when we are silent, the noisy world does not, and it can intrude into our silence. Students learn how to accommodate that noise without becoming worried about it.

*Often when we try to be silent, the first thing we notice is.....noise! Let us try that: being silent and noticing what noises we can hear.*

*Let's sit very still and close our eyes. Let's listen for what we can hear- in the room and outside the room. Let's be as quiet as we can for 30 seconds and listen for what we can hear.*

*Who heard anything? What was it? Do we notice these things when we are about our normal classroom activities? What changed?*

*When we try to be still and silent, we don't worry if we hear noises. We simply note that we heard the noise and then return to trying to be silent- in our bodies and in our minds.*

*Being silent in our minds is to try to stop thinking thoughts- to empty our mind of thinking so that our bodies and our minds can be still and silent.*

*One way to do that is to listen to our breath as it comes in our nose and gently out through our lips. Let's try that. Listening and feeling our breath as it comes in.... and then blows out....*

*We can turn our stillness and silence into a prayer by adding a word to our breathing: a special prayer word is Ma-ra-na-tha, which means: come Lord Jesus! We say (in our minds) **Ma** as we breathe in; **ra** as we breathe out; **na** as we breathe in again and **tha** as we breathe out again. Let's say that aloud and then silently, just in our minds.*

*Another way is to use the English, saying in our minds: **Come** (in breath) **Lord** (out breath) **Je**(in breath) **sus** (out breath).*

#### iv. Meditating Using a Candle

##### Lighting of a Candle

**Note: For meditation, students should NOT lie down. They should remain seated, with straight backs. If children go to sleep, they are not meditating, they are relaxing.**

Sit comfortably with your feet on the floor, back straight and hands resting in your lap.

We are going to take some time to be very still and quiet.

As we sit here quietly, watch as n..... lights the candle..... (Note, it may be more effective to light a number of candles, or to use electronic candles)

Look at the flame of the candle as it flickers.....

Watch the flame grow and move.....

When we light a candle, we invite the Spirit of Jesus to come and be with us. Is there anything you would like to say to him?.....As we look at the candle which represents Jesus among us, let us say "thank you" to Jesus for promising to be with us always.

Sit quietly and relax, watching the candle flicker and burn. (Extend this time as the year goes on)

Notice your breathing going in and out of your body. ....In and out, in and out.

Let us watch now as the candle is put out (Use a candle snuffer) ..... Watch the smoke rise.... and go out and around (just like our prayers go out to God)

**v. Being “Still Like a Frog”**

In her book *Sitting Still Like A Frog*, Eline Snel offers this exercise: (Pp 23-24)

Say:

*A frog is a remarkable creature. It is capable of big leaps, but it can also sit very, very still.*

*Although it is aware of everything that happens around it, the frog tends not to react right away.*

*The frog sits still and breathes, preserving its energy for when it has to react.*

*The frog sits still, very still, while it breathes.*

*Its frog tummy rises and falls. Rises and falls.*

*Anything a frog can do, you can do too!*

*All you need to do is practise your breathing and sit very still.*

*Focus on your breath coming in your nose and out your mouth.*

*Be still and be quiet: like the frog.*

Snel, E. 2013. *Sitting Still Like a Frog*. Shambhala, Boston Ma.

## Other Prayers and Rituals for use in Prep

### I. Prayers of Thanks

While to start with students can use the simplest for “Thank you, God for..... Teachers can begin to model the simple use of the “You-Who-Do-Through” framework for all prayer when composing prayers of thanks.

*e.g. Generous God, thank you for our class- for our friends, for feeling safe and happy, for all the new things we learn each day. May we use all that we learn to help our world to be a better place. We make this prayer through Jesus, our brother. Amen.*

Also, it is an opportunity to expand the students’ repertoire of things for which they are grateful: for example, taking them beyond pets and family. They can be grateful for the weather, for their education; for what they learned today; for their health; for their school and friends; for living in peace in this country; for their way of life; their toys and their homes; for good food and safe drinking water; for an unpolluted environment; for Jesus coming to tell us of God’s love....a simple thing such as a prayer of thanks can incorporate other aspects of the curriculum!

### II. The Sign of the Cross

The sign of the Cross is probably the most often used prayer of Christians and for many, the first prayer they learned as children - “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.” Despite its simplicity, the sign of the Cross is an ancient prayer rich in meaning. References to it appear in writings dating back to Tertullian (d. 230 C.E.) and it is believed that it was in use during the earliest days of Christianity.

#### The How

Initially, the sign of the Cross was made with thumb, usually on the forehead but sometimes on the lips and chest. This small sign of the Cross was in common use by the end of the fourth century and is still used today, preceding the proclamation of the Gospel at the celebration of the Eucharist. In doing this, we acknowledge our belief in the Word of God, our commitment to spread God’s Word in our daily lives and our awareness of God’s presence in our hearts. In other words, we pray that we should understand it with our minds, speak it with our lips and believe it in our hearts. Likewise, the sign of the Cross made with the thumb occurs when receiving the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Anointing of the Sick. It also is used for marking the forehead with ashes on Ash Wednesday. By the end of the Middle Ages, the Western Church had adopted the practice of making the large sign of the Cross with an open hand and touching the left shoulder before the right. This is the form we continue to use today.

### III. Amen

#### Four things we can teach children about “Amen.”

##### 1. Amen is a way for all of us to participate in prayer or preaching

Amen is a very old Hebrew term that means “so be it,” “indeed” or “truly.” Numerous times in the Bible, individuals or a whole group of people would say “Amen” in response to a prayer, a blessing,

or a curse uttered by someone else (Deuteronomy 27:15-26; 1 Chronicles 16:36; Nehemiah 8:5-6; Jeremiah 11:5; 1 Corinthians 14:16).

When you say or whisper “Amen” after someone has just said a prayer or spoken a great promise from the Bible, it is *letting others know you agree* with what was just said. When you are paying close attention to what people pray or preach, saying “Amen” is a way you can join them, even if you aren’t the one speaking.

It is important to remind our children that we should learn to never say Amen mindlessly. Saying Amen means we have heard what was said in prayer and agree.

## **2. Amen is the most widely known word in the world**

On occasion, when ideas are moving from one culture to another, one language to another, words are *transliterated* instead of translated. This happened in the Greek-speaking world of the early church, for instance, with the word Amen. Instead of finding a suitable Greek word, New Testament authors chose to keep the sound of original Hebrew word Amen intact.

Find any culture where Christianity has taken root and you’ll likely find the same pattern: churches in China, Nigeria, Spain, Japan, Brazil, and nearly any other place in the world all say “Amen” at the end of their prayers. Some believe the word Amen is *the most widely known word in the world*.

When we say Amen, we are saying something that thousands of cultures and languages understand. It reminds our children that they are practising a tradition that dates back to the earliest Christians and is common to Christians all over the globe.

## **3. Jesus used Amen unlike anyone before Him**

We typically say Amen at the end of our prayers or right after someone says something true. According to the writers of the Gospels, Jesus uses the word amen more than 70 times, and most of the time He says it, He uses it *before* He speaks. Sometimes it is translated, “Truly, I tell you,” or “Verily, I say to you.” What He is saying is, “Amen, I tell you.”

## **4. Jesus is the reason we can say Amen to all of God’s promises**

Paul writes, “[A]ll the promises of God find their Yes in him [Christ]. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory” (2 Corinthians 1:20). God has made many, many promises in the Bible—so many, it would be hard to count them all. In this passage, Paul says that every promise from God you can find, no matter what it is, *Jesus* is the answer to all of them. When we hear a promise from the Bible, we can say “Amen,” because we know Jesus is the ultimate answer to that promise.

Every time we say Amen after hearing a truth from the Bible, in the back of our minds this should mean: “Yes! I believe this is true *because of Jesus*.” Every promise of blessing, peace, provision, comfort, forgiveness, life, and holiness is fulfilled because of the work and person of Christ. He is the great Amen (Revelation 3:14).

From <http://www.intoxicatedonlife.com/2014/09/04/5-things-teach-child-word-amen/>

# Prayer and Meditation Practices in Year One

## Year 1 Level Description

They explore the many ways in which Mary, Mother of Jesus, is honoured by Christians past and present and develop their understanding of the Hail Mary, a Catholic prayer honouring Mary. Students understand that prayer was an important part of Jesus' life and is important in the lives of believers. They continue to learn about ways in which believers pray, either alone or with others.

### Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding

Mary, Mother of Jesus, has been honoured in many ways by Christians both past and present (e.g. prayer, images, music). The Hail Mary is a Catholic prayer, using words of [scripture](#) (Luke 1:26-28; Luke 1:39-42) and developed over a long period of time.

### Skills

Identify ways believers past and present have honoured Mary.  
Communicate an understanding of the language, purpose and context of the Hail Mary.

### Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding

Meditative prayer uses silence and stillness to assist believers to listen and talk to God. There is a range of practices (including closing eyes, and praying with beads and music) that helps believers prepare the body and the mind for meditative prayer and engage in the 'work of meditation'.

### Skills

Participate respectfully in meditative prayer.  
Identify and use practices and spiritual exercises that assist them to prepare for and engage in meditative prayer.

## Year 1 Achievement Standard

They recognise some ways in which believers past and present honour Mary, Mother of Jesus, including praying the Hail Mary. They recognise the significance of prayer in Jesus' life and in the life of believers and participate with respect in a variety of personal and communal prayer experiences, including meditative prayer, Grace and the Hail Mary.

Note:

In terms of meditative practices, the goal of Christian meditation is that by the end of year one, students should be able to engage in meditative stillness and silence for about six-seven minutes, as well as the specific meditative practices mentioned for this year level.

## Meditative Prayer Practices

### i. Closing Eyes

Teach about closing of eyes- when we close our eyes: to sleep; to block out damaging dust or light; when we are afraid; when we don't want to be distracted; when we want to be still; when we want to imagine..... Always remember to invite children to close their eyes: it is difficult and even threatening for some children to do this: it requires practice and patience and feeling safe.

Practising closing eyes for extended periods of time with groups of younger students, is a skill that may occupy quite a few lessons before Meditation can be introduced. Difficulties have been overcome in a number of ways: some classes use "blackout masks" similar to those provided by airlines; in other classes students who are not yet ready to close their eyes look down at the desk or an image and contract not to let their eyes wander around and distract others.

#### Preparing to Meditate by Closing Eyes

**Note: For meditation, students should NOT lie down. They should remain seated, with straight backs. If children go to sleep, they are not meditating, they are relaxing.**

Say:

*To help us to be still and silent and to be able to meditate, it is best if we can close our eyes. This stops us from looking around and being distracted and distracting others. Closing our eyes helps us to begin our journey inside ourselves and to forget about the outside world.*

*Let's practise closing our eyes. Some of us can do that straight away. Others may need to put their hands over their eyes to start with. If you do not comfortable closing your eyes yet, then look down to your lap or at your hands. Let's do that for ten seconds.*

*How did that feel? Was anyone worried?* (Allow sharing of experiences)

Once students are comfortable with closing eyes, you may wish to dim lights and/or light a candle. Music can also be used.

*We feel safest when we remain seated. So now let's see if we can sit with our eyes closed for twenty/thirty/forty seconds.*

*We have now had our eyes closed for ....seconds. when you are ready, gently you're your eyes and come back to the present. You may need to blink a few times to help refocus your eyes.*

*We might keep a record on the board as to how well we are going. We will continue to practise this and then add some other skills such as focusing on our breathing and listening to music with closed eyes.*

## ii. Listening to music

An easy way to help students relax, still and silence the soul and therefore meditate, is to listen to music. Music that is calming and reflective can help us escape from the busyness and noise of life. You could use “relaxation music” as well as classical music or music which is reflective of the sounds of nature e.g. birdsong, rainforest, water. Listening to music with closed eyes, helps both the skill in keeping eyes closed and focusing hearing.

Music that excites, stirs or over stimulates is not the best for this purpose. Familiar pop culture music is not suitable either, even if it is only the music without words. Some students will be able to let their minds follow the rise and fall of the cadences of the music.

As well as listening in stillness, students could be given the opportunity to sketch, write words, feelings, emotions and response during or after listening to the music. They can colour mandalas or even labyrinths. They can colour words such as “Peace” or Jesus” or even “Maranatha”! DVDs that combine images with music could be used e.g., The ABC series *SWOON*. It is worthwhile creating a small catalogue of appropriate music.

### **Meditating with the Help of Music**

**Note: For meditation, students should NOT lie down. They should remain seated, with straight backs. If children go to sleep, they are not meditating, they are relaxing.**

Say:

*We are now going to listen to some music to help us to be still and to journey inside ourselves. We begin by closing our eyes, sitting as still as we can and by beginning our breathing for meditation. Let's do those things. Breathing in and holding it and then breathing out. In, two, three, four. Out- two- three- four.*

*I will now start the music. Continue your breathing. Keep your eyes closed. The music goes for .....seconds/minutes. You might be able to use your breathing and imagination to float or soar with the music.*

Or

*While you listen to the music, you may colour in the word/diagram/labyrinth in front of you. You do not speak to anyone else, but think about what you are doing- the colours, the people, the images the music creates in your mind.*

When music stops.

*It's now time to come back quietly to the present. Finish what you are doing and then sit quietly until everyone is ready. Now take one big cleansing breath and stretch your arms and body.*



### iii. Meditating with Beads

#### Using beads to enhance mantras and meditation

The use of beads to enhance concentration is a practice used across the centuries by many faith traditions. These range from the 99 beads to enable Muslims to recite and reflect on their 99 names for God; Rosary Beads, to a circle of 12 beads which fit over four fingers and represent three repetitions of the four stage breathing cycle, or one decade of the Rosary plus the *Our Father* and *Glory Be*. The latter are easily and cheaply made. In Brisbane, the Bead Trimming and Craft Company at 304 Logan Rd Stones Corner (ph 38445722; [www.beadtrimmingcraft.com.au](http://www.beadtrimmingcraft.com.au)) has a wide range of cheap supplies.

It would be a great exercise for the students to make their own set of beads (circle of 12) which they can keep to use for themselves at various times of the day.

#### Meditating with the help of beads

**Note: For meditation, students should NOT lie down. They should remain seated, with straight backs. If children go to sleep, they are not meditating, they are relaxing.**

Say:

*Using beads can help us to avoid being distracted during meditation. They can also help us slow down our breathing and to keep using our mantra.*

*Let us begin by using the beads to breathe in and out four times. Breathe in and count four beads; then four more for a breath out; another four for the breath in and another four for the breath out. Practise doing that slowly, so you can help slow your breathing. We can just use the beads to keep our breathing even while listening to music also.*

*Once we have slowed our breathing using the beads, then we can add our mantra: such as Ma-ra-na-tha. Using the beads, breathe in "ma" and count four beads; breathe out "ra" and count four beads; breathe in "na" and count four beads; then breathe out "tha" and move four beads. Or, we can use another word such as "peace" "love"; "joy" and "hope".*

## Other Prayers for Study in Year One:

### I. Grace

There are many variations on this prayer. It is not necessary to retain the old English version with its “thys” and with “bounty” which students in Yr One would not understand.

It is the concept of gratitude we need to impart, not exact words. Therefore you may have our own prayers before meals.

**Bless us, O Lord.. and these, your gifts.. which we are about to receive.. from your goodness. We make this prayer through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.**

### II. The Hail Mary

*The Place of Mary and the Saints in the Prayer of the Catholic tradition*

All Christian denominations and other faith traditions tend to develop their relationship with God or their particular deity through practices of praying that have as their purpose adoration, thanksgiving, petition and contrition. Praying in the Catholic tradition reflects its richness and uniqueness through an inclusion of prayer that recognises the special devotion afforded to Mary, the angels and the saints as well as prayer addressed to God. Prayers and rituals such as litanies, the Angelus, the Hail Mary and various prayers to specific saints generally include statements of praise for God for the great things that have been done for those honoured. This is followed by a request for the intercession of Mary or the saints on behalf of all people that they too may follow the path of faith, hope and love that once found daily expression in the lives of those now with God, to whom devotion is shown.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1966) articulated with clarity that while all prayers are ultimately addressed to God, prayers to Mary, the angels and saints in heaven are requests for them to intercede before God for us. (cf. LG 50).

At the same time, let the faithful be instructed that our communion with those in heaven, provided that it is understood in the more adequate light of faith, in no way weakens, but rather on the contrary, more thoroughly enriches the supreme worship we give to God the Father, through Christ, in the Spirit (LG 51).

To God, whom we give absolute worship, we pray: “Have mercy on us,” while to Mary and the saints to whom we show a different kind of honour, we ask: “Pray for us.” (cf. LG 67).

*The Hail Mary*

**While this is a predominantly Catholic prayer, it is important that all students know about it and its place in the history of the Church. It is not acceptable to “excuse” students from learning about the Hail Mary if they are not Catholic, nor to choose not to teach about it because some students in the class are not Catholic. This is education about religion. Students may choose not to believe it, but they need to know what they are not accepting.**

The early history of the Hail Mary is not clear, as the words are taken from Scripture and it is difficult to ascertain when the greeting/prayer was distinctly used. One source attributes the distinct use of the first half to St. Idelfonsus of Toledo in the 7th century. Its use as a salutation and prayer began to

appear from frequently in the 11th and 12th centuries, though the first half only was regarded as the 'Hail Mary'. Here are the parts of the prayer:

- Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee (Luke 1:28 with 'Mary' gradually added by the Church)
- Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus ( Luke 1:42 with 'Jesus' being added by Pope Urban IV in 1261)
- Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen (based on the declaration of the Council of Ephesus in 431, this part of the prayer appeared in the mid-15th century, being codified by the Council of Trent in 1568)

## **Prayer and Meditation Practices in Year Two**

### **Year 2 Level Description**

Students examine ways in which prayer and the wisdom of the saints help believers to nurture their loving relationships with God, with others and with all creation. They develop their understanding of prayer in the Christian tradition through an exploration of prayer for forgiveness (acts of contrition and Penitential Act) and meditative prayer.

#### ***Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding***

Prayer for forgiveness requires admission of sin, saying sorry, asking God's help to change and seeking to heal one's loving relationships with God, with others and with all creation.

#### ***Skills***

Communicate an understanding of the language, purpose, gestures and context of prayers for forgiveness including acts of contrition and Penitential Act (A, B, C).

Participate with respect in a variety of personal and communal prayer experiences, including prayer for forgiveness.

#### ***Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding***

Meditative prayer uses silence and stillness to assist believers to listen and talk to God. There is a range of practices (including centred breathing and attending to posture) that helps believers prepare the body and the mind for meditative prayer and engage in the 'work of meditation'.

#### ***Skills***

Participate respectfully in meditative prayer.

Identify and use practices and spiritual exercises that assist in preparing and engaging in meditative prayer.

### **Year 2 Achievement Standard**

They recognise that prayer and the wisdom of the saints help the believer to nurture their relationship with God, with others and with all creation. They participate with respect in a variety of personal and communal prayer experiences, including meditative prayer and prayers for forgiveness.

Note:

In terms of meditative practices, the goal of Christian meditation is that by the end of year two, students should be able to engage in meditative stillness and silence for about seven-eight minutes, as well as the specific meditative practices mentioned for this year level.

## Practices to Assist Meditation

### 1. The Posture for Meditation

Relaxation and meditation are not the same thing. It is a good idea to relax the body before beginning the work of meditation. If you or your students fall asleep, then they are relaxing, not meditating. It is for this reason that lying down is not a posture for Meditation. It is always recommended that participants sit with straight backs- either on a chair or on the floor, possible against a wall.

There are many ways to relax the body in preparation for Meditation. Some simple Yoga exercises or Tai Chi movements can do this. A commonly used exercise is a visualisation and muscle relaxation ritual. In this exercise, participants are led through a process of tensing and then relaxing body muscle groups. See Appendix 1 for both of these exercises.

It is not necessary for simple meditation or Christian meditation to assume poses such as the Lotus position used in some Buddhist meditation. A straight back, either sitting on the floor or a chair, with hands resting comfortably in the lap or joined in prayer, is sufficient. If in a chair, one's feet should be able to touch the ground.

Teachers may prefer to have two or more "postures" - namely, seated on a chair at students' desks and a prayer circle where they sit on the floor.

#### **"Assuming the Posture" for Meditation**

Say:

*Let us prepare for the work of meditation by assuming the posture for meditating. Sit straight in your chair, with your feet touching the ground. Move around a little until you "fit" into your chair and all parts of your body are comfortable. If any parts of your body need rubbing or scratching, do that now.*

*Place your hands in your lap or on your desk- wherever they can rest without your having to move them for several minutes. If you are using beads, hold them in your hands now.*

*Close your eyes and begin to slow your breathing, using a mantra if you have chosen one. Today we are going to meditate in stillness and silence for .....minutes. I will sound the chimes three times to begin and three times to end.*

*Let us begin the work of meditation.*

(Sound chime)

## 2. Centered Breathing to Assist Meditation

The controlled use of breathing has been a key “ingredient” in relaxation and meditation techniques for millennia. It is the easiest method to learn, especially combined with “aids” such as mantras, beads and music.

Physiologically, we can slow our metabolic rate by decreasing the rate of our breathing. This should be as natural as possible, because laboured breathing with too much “intake” of air can result in hyperventilation. The purpose is to focus on filling and completely emptying one’s lungs in a slow pattern, first in order to slow the metabolism of the body but also to focus the mind away from the distractions of life onto the act of living itself (and to stop us going to sleep!). Beginning by “counting in” and “counting out,” our breathing soon leads to a slower pattern and the time lapse can be lengthened and shortened as suits individual needs. In simple meditation, it is recommended we breathe in through our nose and blow out through pursed lips. (This also helps concentration.)

For example, begin by counting as we **inhale**: in-two-three-four; **hold**-two three-four; **exhale**-two three-four. We can visualise the breath filling our lungs and feel our diaphragm rising and visualise our breath leaving our mouth and returning to the atmosphere and our diaphragm contracting. Once the pattern is achieved, the conscious counting in and out can be discontinued. Beads can assist and substitute for conscious counting. The slower breathing then becomes the “natural” style until we return to a more active demeanour.

The “task” is to reconnect us mindfully with what we normally do automatically, in order to effect stillness and simplicity through a slowing down and focusing of body and mind. It can continue for as long as we choose.

With young people, it may be necessary to practise this technique for some time before incorporating it into meditation. They will need to work out a pattern that suits them and does not cause them to hyperventilate.

## **Centred Breathing**

Say:

*We have learned how to slow our breathing by counting our breath in and out and by using beads. As we get better at controlling our breathing, we can use our breath to centre our attention, so we do not get distracted by other thoughts. We focus on our breath going in and out.*

*Having assumed the posture for meditation, let us begin to centre our breath. We breathe in through our nose and fill our lungs, feeling life coming into our body. We feel the breath as it comes up our nose and as our chest rises and fills to receive the life-giving air.*

*We hold that air in our lungs and let our body take what it needs and then slowly, we blow the used air out through our lips, feeling the vibration as it passes over them.*

*Then we start again, drawing air in through our nose, holding it and then breathing out through our mouth. We continue to think about this becoming aware of what usually just happens naturally without thinking.*

*Let's continue to do this breathing for .....minutes.*

## Other Prayers to be Taught in Year Two

### Prayer for forgiveness

Formal prayers for forgiveness include the Penitential Act and the Act of Contrition.

#### ***I. Penitential Act***

These prayers are the ones used at Mass and so it is useful for the students to learn the responses.

PRIEST:

Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, that we may prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.

FORM A

I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

FORM B

Priest: Have mercy on us, O Lord.

People: For we have sinned against you.

Priest: Show us, O Lord, your mercy.

People: And grant us your salvation.

FORM C

You were sent to heal the contrite of heart:

Lord, have mercy.

You came to call sinners:

Christ, have mercy.

You are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us:

Lord, have mercy.

PRIEST:

May almighty God have mercy on us and lead us, with our sins forgiven, into eternal life.

*If form A or B is used, the Kyrie follows:*



PRIEST:

Lord, have mercy.

PEOPLE:

Lord, have mercy.

PRIEST:

Christ, have mercy.

PEOPLE:

Christ, have mercy.

PRIEST:

Lord, have mercy.

PEOPLE:

Lord, have mercy.

## **II. Act of Contrition**

**Act of Contrition** (from the website of the [Archdiocese of Brisbane](#))

O my God, I am sorry that I have sinned against you, because you are so good, and by the help of Your grace, I will not sin again.

Amen

## **Prayer and Meditation Practices in Year Three**

### **Year 3 Level Description**

They investigate prayers of thanksgiving and prayers of praise, including psalms and doxologies, to facilitate an appreciation of the significance of these forms of prayer for Christians.

#### ***Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding***

In the Christian tradition, essential forms of prayer, including prayers of thanksgiving and prayers of praise, nurture the spiritual life of believers.

For Christians, a primary role of prayer is praise and thanksgiving to a God who knows and cares for each person individually. There are many examples of prayers of praise and thanksgiving in the Christian tradition, such as: psalms of praise and thanksgiving; words of praise and thanksgiving from Paul's letters; and doxologies, including Glory to the Father [Glory Be].

#### ***Skills***

Communicate an understanding of the features (e.g. language, purpose, structures, gestures, context) of prayers of thanksgiving and prayers of praise, including the Glory to the Father [Glory Be].

Select and use an appropriate prayer structure (e.g. You Who Do Through) to demonstrate an understanding of the role of prayers of praise and prayers of thanksgiving for Christians.

#### ***Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding***

Meditative prayer uses silence and stillness to assist believers to listen and talk to God. There is a range of practices (including guided meditation and mindful listening) that help believers prepare the body and the mind for meditative prayer and engage in the 'work of meditation'.

#### ***Skills***

Participate respectfully in meditative prayer. Identify and use practices that assist to prepare for and engage in meditative prayer.

### **Year 3 Achievement Standard**

They identify prayers of thanksgiving and prayers of praise, including Glory to the Father [Glory Be] and demonstrate understanding of the significance of these forms of prayer for Christians. ...They participate respectfully in a variety of prayer experiences, including meditative prayer, prayers of thanksgiving and prayers of praise.

Note:

In terms of meditative practices, the goal of Christian meditation is that by the end of year three, students should be able to engage in meditative stillness and silence for about eight –nine minutes as well as the specific meditative practices mentioned for this year level.

## Practices to Assist Meditation

### 1. Guided Meditation

Whereas simple and Christian meditation seeks to have the person put aside all thought processes and focus on “being” rather than thinking, guided meditation engages the cognitive processes and takes the participant on a journey of reflection or discovery, usually about their relationship with Jesus or God.

Teachers should make this clear distinction and continue to develop the meditation of stillness and silence and simplicity as well as providing guided meditation. In guided meditation, the participant is “guided” by a voice or a “formula” - for example, the steps in *Lectio Divina* or *The Examen*.

Recordings of Guided Meditation for Young People are available commercially (see ResourceLink catalogue) and from the [Archdiocese of Brisbane](#).

Guided meditations are available from ResourceLink, [online](#) and bookstores for teachers to read to the class. In the ResourceLink catalogue, type in CLPS9 for a list of resources available.

### 2. Mindful Listening

Like guided meditation, mindful listening is not the same as simple, silent, still meditation. Mindfulness is the deliberate, cognitive, compassionate interaction with one’s everyday life situations. It is a deliberate reaction to the mindless, automatic, removed response to life that many in our culture have adopted as part of our “survival” and what we term the “busyness” of our lives.

Mindfulness is: paying attention, in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally. (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) An awareness of one’s conduct and the quality of one’s relationships, inwardly and outwardly, in terms of their potential to cause harm, are intrinsic elements of the cultivation of mindfulness. (Kabat-Zinn, 2011)

Mindfulness is a deliberate slowing, of every one of our interactions and tasks, so as to “notice” and respond to them. St Benedict called it “listening with the ear of your heart” to your world. It’s not about being a busy-body: it is being alert to the signs of the times, so that we can respond with the head, heart and hands of Christ.

Like all lost arts, it takes practice, because in so many ways it is counter-cultural to a community that walks around with head phones in and reading their smart phones. Mindfulness is about opting in, not opting out.

#### Benefits of mindfulness

Research has found mindfulness to be effective in:

Reducing stress; lowering blood pressure; boosting the immune system; increasing attention and focus, including for those with ADHD; dealing with anxiety and depression; increasing self-awareness; enhancing emotional intelligence and wellbeing.

Meditation and Mindfulness are not the same thing: in fact, they can be seen as complementary, if not opposites. However, simple, still and silent meditation increases the capacity of the brain for mindfulness and compassion. Mindfulness is the way we should interact with our world AFTER we have meditated.

Some Mindfulness exercises can be found here. A sensory Walk (see below) is an example of a mindfulness exercise. Some guided meditations also assist mindfulness.

## Sensory Reflection Exercise

**You can either wander, or rest quietly to do the following:**

**What do I see?** (Take in the view) Repeat to yourself: I see....; I see.....; I see ...until you cannot add anything. Be amazed how much you can see: from the small to the grand scale! We need to retrain our minds to “mindfully” take in all that is around us!

***What insight (internal seeing) does this exercise give me?***

**What do I hear?** (Take time to listen to the sounds around you) Repeat: I hear....; I hear...; I hear... until you cannot add anything. Be amazed at what you can hear when you are still. ***What am I hearing in my heart as a result of doing this exercise?***

**What do I smell?** (Take time to smell the environment around you.) Take some deep breaths and feel the air coming in your nostrils and then coming out of your body through your mouth. Then repeat to yourself: I smell....I smell.... I smell.... ***What is the smell of God?***

**What do I feel?** Take time to feel the environment around you: by touch; through the soles of your feet; through your skin; your face; heat, cold, rough; smooth; wet, dry.

***What does this experience leave me feeling inside?***

**BE** in the moment and give thanks to God for the gifts of creation.

Stop and hold your hand on something from nature and offer a spontaneous word or prayer of gratitude.

Some mindfulness activities for young people can be found [here](#) and at other places online.

There is a lesson on Mindful Listening from Scholastic [here](#) that you may want to adapt.

## Other Prayers to be Taught in Year Three

### I. Glory Be

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

### II. Doxologies

The word doxology is a familiar word to Christians. We are familiar with it but we may not understand it fully. So let me just give a brief definition for doxology. It is really nothing more than a praise saying. It comes from two Greek words: doxa which means glory and lagas which means to say or a word or a saying. It is a saying about God's glory. That is to say it is praise or it is offering God thanks. It is saying thanks by means of praising God. A doxology is a praise saying.

#### Doxologies in Liturgies:

Doxologies appear in various liturgies of the Church. One of the most familiar is the doxology at the end of the Lord's Prayer: "For the kingdom, / the power and the glory are yours / now and for ever." During the Liturgy of the Hours, there are doxologies at the end of the psalms. The Rosary includes the "Glory be." Hymns, especially ancient ones, have a doxology as the final or part of the final, stanza. Finally, there is the doxology at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer: "Through him, and with him, and in him, / O God, almighty Father, / in the unity of the Holy Spirit, / all glory and honour is yours, / for ever and ever."

#### The Psalms:

Psalms 150 is the concluding doxology for the Psalter of all 150 chapters. And, in fact, if you have at all studied the Psalms, you came across the reality that there's not really one book of Psalms, but there are five - five books within the Psalms. And if you look through the Psalms, you will see in the margin or at the heading of certain chapters that this is book one, book two, book three, book four and book five. Book one ends in Psalm 41. Book two ends in Psalm 72. Book three ends in Psalm 89. Book four ends in Psalm 106 and, then, book five ends with Psalm 150.

Now what is interesting about that is that the conclusion of each of the five books is a doxology. And, in fact, the conclusion of the whole Psalter is not only a doxology in Psalm 150, but several other doxologies in the prior Psalms.

So it sort of a crescendo-ing book. It starts out book one ends with a doxology, book two a doxology, book three a doxology, book four a doxology, and then book five, doxology upon doxology upon doxology.

## **Paul's Doxologies**

Galatians 1: 3-5

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup> who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup> to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Romans 16: 25-27

<sup>25</sup> Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages <sup>26</sup> but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— <sup>27</sup> to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever! Amen.

1 Timothy 17

To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. <sup>[b]</sup> Amen.

Ephesians 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> just as he chose us in Christ <sup>[b]</sup> before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love.

Romans 11: 33-36

O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways!

<sup>34</sup> 'For who has known the mind of the Lord?

Or who has been his counsellor?'

<sup>35</sup> 'Or who has given a gift to him,  
to receive a gift in return?'

<sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen.

Philippians 4: 19

And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. <sup>20</sup> To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Jude 1: 24

Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, <sup>25</sup> to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and for ever. Amen.

## **III. Prayers of Thanksgiving**

While to start with students can use the simplest for "Thank you, God for..... Teachers can begin to model the simple use of the "You-Who-Do-Through" framework for all prayer when composing prayers of thanks.

*e.g. Generous God, thank you for our class- for our friends, for feeling safe and happy, for all the new things we learn each day. May we use all that we learn to help our world to be a better place. We make this prayer through Jesus, our brother. Amen.*

Also, it is an opportunity to expand the students' repertoire of things for which they are grateful: for example, taking them beyond pets and family. They can be grateful for the weather, for their education; for their health; for their school and friends; for living in peace in this country; for their way of life; their toys and their homes; for good food and safe drinking water; for an unpolluted environment; for Jesus coming to tell us of God's love....a simple thing such as a prayer of thanks can incorporate other aspects of the curriculum!

**Grace after meals is a prayer of thanksgiving**

**The Eucharistic Prayers of the Mass are the greatest prayers of thanksgiving.**

## Prayer and Meditation Practices in Year Four

### **Year 4 Level Description**

They examine prayers of blessing, petition and intercession to facilitate an appreciation of the significance of these forms of prayer for Christian communities.

#### ***Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding***

In the Christian tradition, essential forms of prayer, including prayers of petition and intercession, nurture the spiritual life of believers. By prayers of petition, Christians seek forgiveness and turn back to God. Intercessions are prayers of petition in which Christians intercede for the needs of others (e.g. the community, the church, the world, leaders) as well as for themselves. Intercessions may take the form of a litany. A litany is a form of prayer in which a person makes fixed responses to a series of petitions.

#### ***Skills***

Communicate an understanding of the features (e.g. language, purpose, structures, gestures, context) of prayers of petition and intercession, including litanies.

Create a prayer of petition or intercession, using an appropriate prayer structure, such as a litany, to demonstrate an understanding of the role of prayers of petition and prayers of intercession for Christians.

#### ***Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding***

In the Christian tradition, essential forms of prayer, including prayers of blessing, nurture the spiritual life of believers. Every blessing acknowledges and praises God's presence and prays for God's gifts for self and others.

#### ***Skills***

Communicate an understanding of the features (e.g. language, purpose, structures, gestures, context) of prayers of blessing, including Psalm 148.

Create a prayer of blessing for a particular purpose (e.g. grandparents' day, mothers' day, fathers' day, sick class member) using an appropriate prayer structure.

#### ***Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding***

Meditative prayer uses silence and stillness to assist believers to listen and talk to God. There is a range of practices (including praying with the help of colour and mandalas) that helps believers prepare the body and the mind for meditative prayer and engage in the 'work of meditation'.

#### ***Skills***

Participate respectfully in meditative prayer.

Identify and use practices that assist preparation for and engagement in meditative prayer.

### ***Year Four Achievement Standard***

They use an appropriate structure to create prayers of blessing, petition and intercession, and demonstrate understanding of the significance of these forms of prayer for Christian communities. They participate respectfully in a variety of prayer experiences, including meditative prayer and prayers of blessing, petition and intercession.

Note: In terms of meditative practices, the goal of Christian meditation is that by the end of year four, students should be able to engage in meditative stillness and silence for about nine-ten minutes as well as the specific meditative practices mentioned for this year level.



## Practices to Assist Meditation

### I. Praying with Colour

There are many ways use of colour can assist meditation and mindfulness. The specific activity below comes from the text *Praying in Colour* by Sybil MacBeth.

#### **Praying using Colour**

*Before we begin, let's get into a meditative state of mind by being still and silent for a few minutes, slowing our breathing and putting aside distracting thoughts.....*

*To begin, draw a shape about the size of two fifty cent pieces in the middle of your page. Write your name inside it. Then doodle your shape by adding some extra lines, borders or smaller spaces to or within it. Now add colours to your shape and even your name.*

*Now draw another shape that moulds itself around a part (but not all) of the original shape. Draw in the name of someone you want to hold before God for protection, health or thanks. Embellish that shape and colour it in.*

*Repeat the process, adding another shape that touches "your" shape and embellish and colour it. You may be developing a pattern, or repeating colours for similarities, or even using colours to represent your feelings about that person.*

*You can keep doing this for any number of people you want to pray for.*

*Or, you can create separate shapes for friends, family, sporting teams, siblings etc.*

*Once you have finished, we will all return to our still and silent meditation, saying each name as a mantra – e.g. "thank you God, for....." in time with your breathing.*

#### **Praying with Names**

*On your sheet of paper, write in large capital letters (or use a stencil, or print out a page on which you have used digital art) the names of your family, friends or a team.*

*While the music plays, use colours to highlight each name. As you do so, think about that person and what they mean to you. Ask God to bless each person and thank God for who they are for you in your life.*

## II. Using Mandalas to Meditate

The lost art of colouring and drawing is preserved in mandalas and colouring labyrinths. Colours can represent moods and stages of life. They can just be chosen in response to creative urges. Colouring while listening to music is conducive to relaxation, mindfulness, restfulness and building neglected neural pathways associated with creativity and expression.

Colouring mandalas and even labyrinths are a simple means of focusing and stilling the mind and teaching the benefits of silence. Mandalas can be downloaded from the web, purchased in books and can even be religious in theme if required. Playing music at first to accompany the activity helps bridge the transition to silent activity. This can be an individual activity for students when they have completed tasks and have an opportunity for finding a moment of “sanctuary” in their daily routine.

See the Appendix for an example.

### **Being still and silent using mandalas**

*Today we are going to take time by ourselves, being silent and staying in one place, to concentrate on colouring a mandala.*

*Before we start, let us be still and silent and think about how we are feeling today and anything in our life about which we are happy or concerned.....*

*As you choose which colour to use, think about the overall colour pattern you wish to make. Colour slowly, allowing whatever thoughts you might be having at present to come to the front of your mind. Think about the people and events in your life as you colour. You might choose colours to represent the way you are feeling at present. The mandala could represent you and your life at the present time.*

*The quiet music playing is to allow you to be silent in yourself and not to speak to others.*

## Other Prayers to be Taught in Year Four

### I. Prayers of Petition

*Prayer is not a list of requests; it is an introspective process, a refining process of discovering what one is, what one should be and how to achieve the transformation. "*

*"Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God."*  
(Catholic Catechism, 2559)

Can we change the course of events through prayer? Can we manipulate the mind and heart of God? Can we ward off some evil occurrence by specifically imploring God to save us from it? Richard McBrien in his text *Catholicism* (1994) states that we need to avoid the two extreme positions on prayer - namely:

- at one end of the spectrum which argues that prayer is a completely useless activity because it cannot change the course of events, or is simply auto-suggestion;
- and the other extreme, which depicts God as some sort of dispenser of beneficence who can be bargained with, cajoled or harassed into changing our destiny.

Christian prayer is perhaps most associated with seeking the help of God, the saints or any or all of the company of heaven for everything from living a life worthy of Jesus and therefore heaven, to finding lost items, being cured of disease and passing exams. Prayers for help stem from words attributed to Jesus: "I will do whatever you ask for in my name" (Jn 14: 13); and "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you" (Mt 7:7-8).

Note though, there is a difference between petitions such as "May your will be done on earth as in heaven" and a petition for personal help such as "Give us today the food we need". Not all prayers of petition are prayers for help.

Prayers for help across the centuries have been addressed to God as father or loving parent, stern judge or powerful creator; to Jesus as Lord, redeemer and brother to humanity; to the Holy Spirit particularly for inspiration and presence in difficult times.

### II. Prayers of Intercession

*Invitation, Petition, Response.*

Invitation: Trusting that our God is near, let us pray for the needs of the world.

Let us pray for...  
We remember....  
We put before God...  
We thank God for...  
Let us thank God for

Prayer Starters:                      That....  
   For .....

Petition:                                Lord hear us; Hear us, Our God.

Response:                              Lord hear our prayer; Hear and answer us, O God

**Invitation to prayer:** Trusting that our God is near, let us pray for the needs of the world.

**Prayers of intercession:**

For all members of the church throughout the world .....PAUSE    Lord hear us

**Response: Lord hear our prayer**

For all people in our school and families ..... PAUSE...Lord hear us

**Response: Lord hear our prayer**

For the care and protection of God's world.....PAUSE ....Lord hear us

**Response: Lord hear our prayer**

For peace in our world.....PAUSE..... Lord hear us

**Response: Lord hear our prayer**

For the prayers in our hearts today.....PAUSE.....Lord hear us

**Response: Lord hear our prayer**

**Concluding Prayer:** We make this prayer through Christ our Lord Amen

### **III.    Blessings**

A blessing prayer is one that calls on God's power to care for a person, place, thing or undertaking. In praying a prayer of blessing, we ask for God's presence, goodness and protection to be evident in the lives of those the prayer is intended for or those who will enter the place that is being blessed e.g. a school, church, classrooms, library

There are many opportunities to use blessing prayers. It is a matter of recognising opportunities to use them. It is also important to teach about them so that students are familiar with the process and come to a sense of feeling comfortable in blessing situations.

Blessing prayers can be prayed:

- at the start of a new school year
- at the end of the day
- before a trip or pilgrimage or service learning activity
- on a birthday or anniversary
- before a retreat or camp
- for school student leaders
- to welcome new students
- to farewell teachers and/or students

- for the school holidays
- for a sports event
- for students preparing to celebrate a sacrament
- for fathers, mothers, grandparents, families

A blessing prayer is always included at the end of a mass and may also be included in other liturgical celebrations. They can also be used in the context of prayer assemblies and in the classroom.

### **How to teach about blessings:**

- Explore the greeting used in the school e.g. May God bless you; Peace be with you. What does this mean? Why do we say it? What should we be thinking and feeling when we use this greeting?
- Invite students to name times that they may have experienced a blessing from someone else e.g. at baptism, confirmation, mass, liturgical celebration, class or school ritual.
- Discuss with students about times that they bless themselves e.g. making the sign of the Cross, using holy water, tracing the cross on their foreheads, lips and hearts before listening to the gospel.
- Encourage students to name when they have been involved in giving someone a blessing e.g. a farewell ritual, a birthday blessing, a blessing for a new student, blessing of student leaders, blessing of people going on a pilgrimage e.g. WYD
- Explore plaques or foundation stones in the school environment.
- Discuss the concepts in blessing prayers at the end of a mass.
- Explore blessings from Scripture: leaders often blessed people, especially when getting ready to leave them e.g. Moses (Deut 33; Joshua (22:6-7); and Jesus (Luke:24:50). The First Letter from Peter 1:3-9 has several elements of a blessing prayer beginning with giving thanks and praise to God.
- Learn Blessing songs which can be used at school and liturgical celebrations.
- Involve the students in writing blessing prayers for specific occasions. Use the structure of You, Who, Do, Through.

### **How to pray a blessing**

There are many ways to pray a blessing, including having all those doing the blessing raise their hand over the person or group to be blessed. A blessing might also involve placing a hand on the person's shoulder or head.

### **How to write a blessing:**

Using the You Who Do Through structure

**YOU-** begin by addressing God or naming God. e.g. *God of new beginnings* .

**WHO-** name 'WHO' God is for us, e.g. *You are our strength and hope*

**DO-** we ask God to bless, to 'DO' something e.g. *Be with us as we journey together this year.*

**THROUGH** - We pray to God in and THROUGH Christ, so our prayer concludes with a simple *Through Christ our Lord Amen*

## Examples of Blessings

<p><b>Blessing for a Birthday</b>  Loving God, you are with us in all we do.  Bless _____ as he/she celebrates his/her birthday.  May he/she be blessed with peace &amp; joy.  May he/she continue to grow in your love.  We make this prayer through Jesus, our loving friend.  Amen.</p>	<p><b>Blessing for Mother's/Father's Day</b>    God of gentleness, you look after us and never stop loving us.  Bless our mum/dad.  May she/he know that I/we love her and that I/we appreciate all she does for me/us.  May she/he know she/he is precious in the eyes of our God.  Amen.</p>
<p><b>Blessing for School Student Leaders</b>    Spirit of God, you guide us and light our way.  Bless our Year six/eleven students as they take on the role as leaders of our school/campus/college.  Bless our community as we encourage and support them in their leadership role.  We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.  Amen.</p>	<p><b>Blessing for a school camp/retreat</b>    God our guiding light, you are protector of us all  Bless us as we experience new things on camp.  Bless us all as we enjoy our time together and keep us safe.  We make this prayer through Jesus, our loving friend. Amen</p>
<p><b>Blessing to welcome a new student</b>    Loving God, you love and care for us all.  Bless (name) as he/she begins his/her journey with us.  Bless us all as we welcome him/her to our class community.  We make this prayer through Jesus your Son.  Amen</p>	<p><b>Blessing for a Sports Event</b>    God of creation, you inspire us and protect us.  Bless our class/school and help us to have fun at the athletics/swimming/sport carnival.  We make this prayer through Jesus our brother.  Amen</p>

## Simple and short blessings to end homeroom prayer, a prayer ritual, liturgy or the day:

May our God of Hope fill us with joy as we spend time with others . Amen	May the peace of Christ guide us as we journey through the day. Amen
May the Spirit of wisdom inform our thoughts. Amen	May God's word live in our hearts. Amen
May God keep us safe and from all harm Amen	May God's wisdom guide us. Amen
May God's tender hand support us. Amen	May God's love surround us. Amen

#### **IV. Praying with Litanies**

Litanies are simple, ancient forms of responsive petition, used in public liturgical services and in private devotions, which serve purposes of prayers for help, praise, forgiveness, thanksgiving and blessing. Litanies consist of a lead statement followed by a repeated response, such as “pray for us” or “we praise you, we bless you, we thank you” or “Lord hear us”; or “Lord Have Mercy”.

**Leader: Statement or Petition**

**All: Repeated Response**

A **litany** is the name given to a repetitive form of communal prayer in which the assembly sings or recites a common response to a series of petitions or acclamations sung by a cantor or proclaimed by a reader. It comes from the Greek word *litaneia* which means petition or supplication.

Litanies can have the effect of mantras - that is, the response is by rote or becomes automatic, not requiring thought. They are rhythmical and can accompany a procession. As with other prayers, litanies can be addressed to God, persons of the Trinity, Our Lady and the saints.

Because they involve the repetition of a single phrase, litanies serve the purpose of involving everyone without the use of texts. They are easily committed to memory and can serve a teaching function in the theological issues or statements made in the petition section of the litany.

Litanies can be found in the Psalms- e.g. Psalm 135 and in the *Song of the Men in the Fiery Furnace* (Dan 3: 57-87). They have been included in the liturgies of the Eastern and Western rites since earliest times and still have forms in the Modern Mass in the Penitential Rite and Prayers of the Faithful.

Litanies were developed in Christendom for use in processions. In the West there were traditionally four days for these processional litanies, the Rogation Days. The Eastern liturgies make frequent use of litanies, recited by the deacon; the response is usually “Lord, have mercy.” The Kyrie eleison or Lord have mercy is a relic of such a litany.

A good example of a litany is the Litany of the Saints that is prayed during the celebration of Baptism.

All present are invited to invoke the saints:

***Holy Mary, Mother of God***

***Pray for us***

***Saint John the Baptist***

***Pray for us***

***Saint Joseph***

***Pray for us***

***Saint Peter and Saint Paul***

***Pray for us***

***All holy men and women***

***Pray for us***

This Litany of the Saints, dates from the 5th century and can be used on the feast of All Saints. Modelled on it are a number of non-liturgical (i.e., non-prescribed) litanies: Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus (15th cent.), Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary (or of Loreto; 16th cent.), Litany of the Sacred Heart, and Litany of St. Joseph.

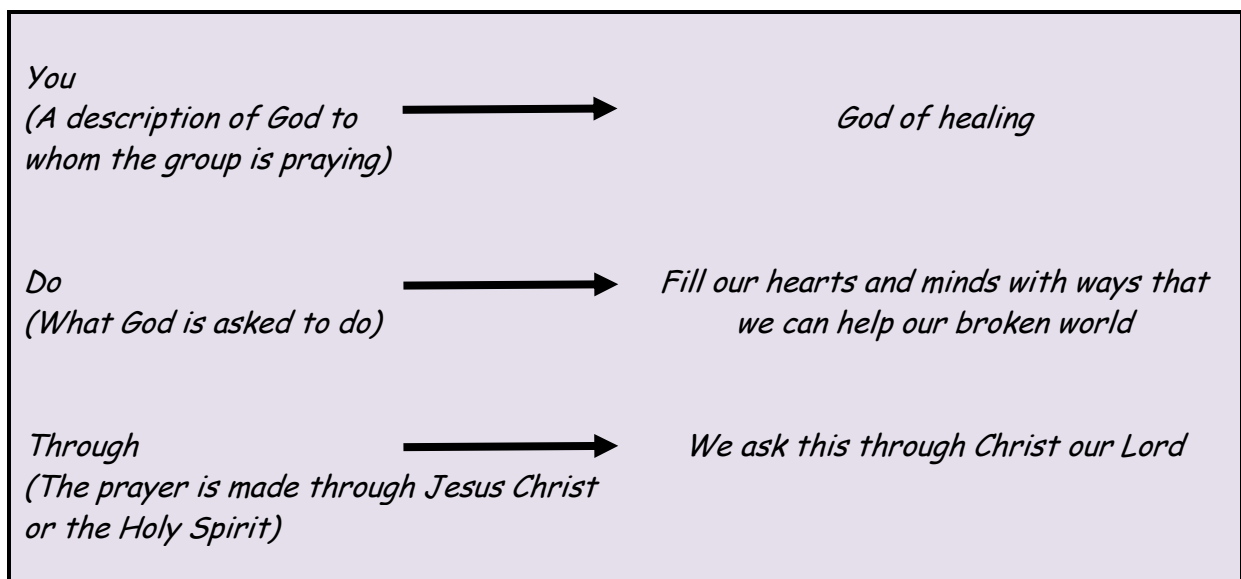
A litany is a devotional prayer for two or more people gathered together. The principal phrase (versicle = v.) is said or prayed by one person, and the responses (r.) by the others in unison.

## V. Prayers for Forgiveness

While St Paul assures us that Christ died “once and for all” for the forgiveness of humanity’s sins, Christianity presumes that as fallible human beings, we will continue to fail to fall short of the mark and be in need of reconciliation with God and each other. The sacrament of Reconciliation evolved in response to the desire of Christians to repent times when they did not live up to the model Jesus set and to resolve to better their lives.

In the Lord’s Prayer, the model for all Christian prayer, the fifth petition states: “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us” (Mt 6:12). In Matthew’s gospel, Jesus goes on to say: *If you forgive others the wrongs they have done to you, your Father in heaven will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive the wrongs you have done.* (Mt 6: 14-15). Praying for forgiveness, then, involves a twofold act. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (2608) states: “From the *Sermon on the Mount* onwards, Jesus insists on *conversion of heart*: reconciliation with one’s brother (sic) before presenting an offering on the altar, love of enemies and prayer for persecutors, prayer to the Father in secret, not heaping up empty phrases, prayerful forgiveness from the depths of the heart, purity of heart and seeking the Kingdom before all else. This filial conversion is entirely directed to the Father.” In another place (2631), it states: “Asking forgiveness is the prerequisite for both the Eucharistic liturgy and personal prayer.”

Prayers for forgiveness then, not only have the aspect of saying “sorry”, but require a commitment to reconciliation with the one against whom the offence has occurred: there is a personal and communal dimension to prayers for forgiveness.





## VI. Blessing Prayers:

Blessing is the act of declaring, or wishing, favour and goodness on others. The blessing is not only the good effect of words; it also has the power to bring them to pass. In the Scriptures, even if spoken by mistake, once a blessing was given it could not be taken back. The nature of blessing is always reciprocal: we are blessed and, in turn, we must bless. But to be blessed and to bless, we must be compassionately connected. Blessing is a technique of inner transformation which moves us to a greater realization of self and God. It is a concrete action.

**Benediction** is a prayer that God may bestow certain blessing on people. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the form of priestly benediction was prescribed in the Law: “The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.” You may recognise this formula as now forming part of the Rite of Blessing in the Dismissal Rite of the Christian Eucharist.

Blessings have five distinct purposes:

1. God blesses creation: e.g. nature (Gen 1:22); humanity (Gen 1:28); the Sabbath (Gen 2:3); nations (Ps 33:12); and individuals (Gen 24:1). God also blesses people by giving life, riches, fruitfulness or plenty (Gen 1:22, 28).
2. People “bless” God-for the purposes of worship, adoration and praise (Deut. 8:10; Ps 101:1, 2 etc.).
3. Those in positions of power and authority and holy leaders can bestow blessings on others: patriarchs pronounced benefits on their children, often when near death (Gen 49:1-28). Leaders often blessed people, especially when getting ready to leave them- e.g. Moses (Deut 33); Joshua (22:6-7); and Jesus (Luke: 24:50).
4. Equals can bless each other in friendship (Gen 12:3); support and to establish connections and links with people who are special. We “bless” ourselves with the sign of the cross.
5. People can bless things when they are set aside for sacred use. (1Cor:10:16)

The Lord bless you and keep you;

<sup>25</sup> the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;

<sup>26</sup> the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. (Numbers 6: 24-26)

## VII. Heartfelt Blessings

Another mindfulness practice is the sending of loving blessings to people who may need them. One thinks of them, pictures those people in one’s mind and then mentally blesses them. This is a practical development of just saying: “I’m thinking of you”. It also increases our mindfulness- we end up actively seeking out people who might need our blessings!

A further development of this- in the spirit of peace and reconciliation is also to think of people we do not like and send a blessing to them.

### **Heart-full Blessings: Unleashing the power of the universe!**

Say:

Today we are going to visualise and pray for people we know and love, who may benefit from this heart-full message we send them now. When we next meet them, it would be great to tell them what we have done!

First, let's enter stillness and silence in the usual way. Assume the posture for meditation and begin to slow your breathing. We will do this for two minutes.....

Now, think of and bring to mind people you love. Picture them, one by one, and "send" a blessing to them: It may be as simple as "Bless you for being my mum"; or "May God bless you for the love you share with me!"

Take some time now to picture those people and send them a blessing.....

Now bring to mind some people who have particular needs- whether illness, or a difficulty in life, or in trouble. Picture them in your mind and send each one a blessing- of courage, of strength, of perseverance, of support.....

Now think of some people for whom you are grateful, or have supported you in some way.

Picture each of them and send them a blessing of thanks, or as a "gift" of grace. You could say: "May your love and support be rewarded many times over!"; or May your generosity and service bring you closer to God!"

Now, think of people who annoy you; or whom you fear or dislike, or even despise- in your life, in society, around the world.

Send them a heart-full blessing: e.g. to terrorists: "may you experience a conversion of heart"; to a politician who annoys you: may you open yourself to compassion and justice'; to an annoying neighbour: "may you receive the gift of empathy for others". After doing that, maybe you will come to have a different view of them. Here is a practical way to change the world!

*But I say to you, **Love your enemies** and pray for those who persecute you...Mt 5:44*

## **Prayer and Meditation Practices in Year Five**

### **Year Five Level Description**

They learn about the significance of Marian prayers (including the Hail Mary, the Rosary and the Litany of Mary of Nazareth) in which believers praise God and entrust cares and petitions to Mary as mother of Jesus and mother of the Church.

#### ***Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding***

Christians past and present seek Mary's intercession through prayer because of her humanity and her role as mother of Jesus and mother of the Church. Marian prayer invites believers to a deeper relationship with Christ, draws them into the life of the Church and models a balance between prayer and action. In Marian prayers, including the Hail Mary and the Litany of Mary of Nazareth, there are two elements: praising God and entrusting cares and petitions to Mary.

#### ***Skills***

Analyse and explain the elements and features of some Marian prayers (e.g. text structures, vocabulary, images; language patterns).

Make connections between Marian spirituality and how believers pray, live and act.

Create a Marian prayer using appropriate structure and elements.

#### ***Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding***

Meditative prayer uses silence and stillness to assist believers to listen and talk to God. Believers use a range of practices for preparing the body and the mind for meditative prayer, and engaging in the 'work of meditation'. Praying the Rosary is a meditative prayer in the Christian tradition.

#### ***Skills***

Participate respectfully in meditative prayer, including The Rosary and mantras.

Identify and use practices that assist preparation for and engagement in meditative prayer, including praying with Rosary beads.

### **Year Five Achievement Standard**

They analyse the elements and features of some Marian prayers (including the Hail Mary, the Rosary and the Litany of the Mary of Nazareth) to describe the role of Marian prayer in the lives of believers past and present. They participate respectfully in a variety of personal and communal prayer experiences, including Marian prayers and meditative prayer.

Note:

In terms of meditative practices, the goal of Christian meditation is that by the end of year five, students should be able to engage in meditative stillness and silence for about ten-eleven minutes as well as the specific meditative practices mentioned for this year level.

## Practices to Assist Meditation

### 1. Mantras

Mantras, which assist centering prayer, involve the repetition of a particular phrase or word as part of one's breathing pattern. Repetition is essential, as it aids the rhythmical nature of this kind of prayer and of the breathing itself while assisting one to maintain focus. Over a period of time, however, the words become less important in themselves when a place of inner silence and stillness is reached. This takes constant practice and adequate time given for the mantra. The Rosary has been used within the Catholic tradition as a form of contemplative Mantra, as well for meditation on the lives of Jesus and Mary.

Many traditions employ **mantras** - spoken, chanted or repeated mentally- as a means of creating "white noise" to block out unwanted distractions or thoughts. For example, repeating "Gospel Values" words such as *Peace*; or repeating *All will be well, all will be well*, ( from Julian of Norwich) can both serve to focus one but also direct one towards a certain value or state of mind. It is suggested that the repetitive pounding of the feet on a treadmill can also serve to beat out a mantra for those who want to combine exercise and meditation!

For **Christians** wanting to turn meditation into prayer, the mantra is always a prayer, or Scripture text or "religious" word. The most famous word is *Maranatha*, which means *Come, Lord Jesus*. Any four syllable word or phrase or aspiration that is able to be adapted to enable one to inhale and exhale twice in time to the syllables or words, is acceptable. E.g. Ma (breathe in and hold while saying it mentally); -ra (Breathe out and hold while saying it mentally); -na (in); -tha (out). Another example is *Jesus, brother, mentor, friend*. Many Christians use *Have Mercy on me, forgive my sins*. By focusing on the constant repetition of the word or phrase, one blocks out other thoughts and distractions. The Jesus Prayer mentioned above, is the oldest mantra of Christian meditation.

### 2. Mantras and the twelve bead circle.

Students can make their own twelve bead circlet, which fits nicely over four fingers and can be rotated with the thumb. They can use the oldest mantra still in use: the so called *hesychast* tradition of monasticism, has used the same mantra continuously in meditation for more than 1500 years. It is called *The Jesus Prayer*.

#### The Jesus Prayer

*Jesus Christ (in breath)*

or

*Jesus Christ (in breath)*

*Son of the living God (out breath)*

*Son of the living God (out breath)*

*Have Mercy on me (in breath)*

*Be with me always (in breath)*

*A Sinner (out breath)*

*Guide my way (out breath)*

The twelve bead circlet is easily and cheaply made. The Bead Trimming and Craft Company at 304 Logan Rd Stones Corner (ph 38445722; [www.beadtrimmingcraft.com.au](http://www.beadtrimmingcraft.com.au)) has a wide range of cheap supplies.

## **Other Prayers to be Taught in Year Five**

### ***I. The Hail Mary***

The Hail Mary, traditionally known as the Ave Maria, is a Biblical prayer. In the first half, the words are directly from the Gospel of St. Luke, while the second half reflects what this could mean to us, praying Christians in the Body of Christ, pondering these things in our hearts.

The account of the angel Gabriel announcing to Mary that she is to be the mother of our Savior is familiar to all Christians. We find here the first elements of the Ave Maria. The angel's words are "Hail, full of grace," (Luke 1:28).

What does it mean to be greeted as one "full of grace"? At the very least, Mary is highly favored by having been chosen to bear the Son of the Most High. The Latin translation using "full" points to the overflowing abundance and perfection involved. God Himself will dwell in her womb, the Creator will come into the world. The Holy Spirit will overshadow and dwell in her. It is all of grace. By this grace, Mary is special and blessed. The Church's reflections over the centuries have their root in these words of the angel Gabriel, sent from God. She teaches us to look to Mary for our model of what we ourselves hope to become by God's fullness of grace.

Mary, and we too, have the next words of the angel to assure us of His help in this. "The Lord is with you" (Luke 1:28). How many times in salvation history have servants of God heard these words? In Genesis 26:24, the Lord appears to Isaac, saying, "Fear not, for I am with you". The Lord God promises to be with Jacob (Gen. 31:3), with Moses (Exod. 3:12), with Joshua (Joshua 1:5), and with Gideon (Judges 6:16). Jesus Himself tells his accusers, "He who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him" (John 8:29). The Lord will be with Paul in the city where He has many people (Acts 18:10). This is His promise to the Church in Matthew 28:20, "I am with you always." And in Revelation 21:3, a great voice tells us, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them and they shall be his people and God himself will be with them." The Lord is with Mary, according to the angel, and we know He is with us. His assistance in the Old Testament has been brought to great fulfillment by His very presence with Mary in her womb. "The Lord is with you," has been a pregnant phrase throughout salvation history. And now in the Church, His real presence is with us in His Eucharist.

"Blessed art thou among women," says the prayer, in the words of Elizabeth (Luke 1:42). All the promises of blessing in the Old Testament are fulfilled with the coming of the Savior. Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, continues, "and blessed is the fruit of your womb". Mary is blessed because of her child, Son of the Most High. Elizabeth recognizes this, saying in astonishment, "And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43). Both Mary and Elizabeth are pregnant miraculously, by the grace of God, emphasizing to us that our life in God is all of grace, all by His willing and doing. We, too, are totally dependent on His grace, His mighty acts, his fulfilling of promises. In the Incarnation, Mary is blessed to have the God of the universe dwell in her womb.

In the Church, we are graced to receive in the Eucharist His presence, His very body, the fruit of Mary's womb.

The scriptural first half of the prayer ends with the name of Jesus (Luke 1:31). We are told in Acts that "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Mary rejoices in God her Savior, and all generations shall call her blessed. Like Mary, we are to rejoice in God's salvation through Jesus. Like Mary, we are blessed in the Son of the Most High. And like her, we are to be conformed to his image. "For those whom He foreknew, He also pre destined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). Catholics believe that Mary's sinlessness is due only and completely to the grace of her Savior, her Son. She did not earn this great privilege, but was prepared by His saving grace to shine as a promise of what we will be, when "we shall be like Him" (1 John 3:2).

The second half of the prayer is a prayer of the Body of Christ, His Church. "Holy Mary," we pray. When we call anyone or any thing holy, it is because of its relationship to God, who is "Holy, holy, holy" (Isaiah 6:3, Rev. 4:8). Vessels for the temple were considered holy because they were set aside for sacred use. We call the Bible the "Holy Bible," because it is the word of God. People become holy when they become close to God. Mary listened to the angel's message, and she answered humbly, "Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). She carried Jesus in her womb and gave birth to Him, she nursed Him and lived side by side with Him. Her holiness comes from her relationship to God. She responded freely and with total faith, giving herself completely to God. "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord" (Luke 1:38). Her obedience of faith (cf. Rom. 16:25) made her holy. Her nearness to her Son made her holy. Our nearness and obedience to Her Son is to make us holy. "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct, since it is written 'You shall be holy because I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:14-16).

Mary can rightly be called holy, but what about addressing a prayer to her? As members of the communion of saints, we often ask fellow believers here on earth to pray for us. Catholic faith sees that those who have gone before us are nonetheless truly alive in Christ, "... who died for us, so that whether we wake or sleep, we might live with Him" (1 Th. 5:10). Therefore, it is appropriate to ask for their prayers, also. When we ask the Saints in heaven to pray for us, we are not offering them worship. "Praying to" the saints means asking them to pray for us, not worshipping them as divine.

So we pray, "Holy Mary, Mother of God." Mary's title, Mother of God, does not mean she existed before God and brought Him into existence; it does not mean He is dependent upon her. The title grew out of the Church's struggle against the Arian heresy in the fourth century. The Arians denied that Jesus was God. The Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431 declared that Mary was the "God-bearer" (Theotokos) as a way of teaching that Jesus was truly God. They intended to teach about Jesus, but they also taught about Mary. Jesus is truly God. If Mary is the mother of Jesus, and if Jesus is God, then she is the mother of God. He is one person, and she is His mother, and so she is the mother of God. In this way, Jesus is recognized as both Son of God and Son of Man. The Protestant heretical "Reformers" also accepted this title of Mary, for example in the Lutheran Formula of Concord (1577).

"Pray for us sinners." Here we come back to the issue of praying to saints. We, saints and sinners, are all in this Body of Christ together, whether we are living or "dead," because we all are united in Christ by the same Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit made us saints, and also perfected our brothers and sisters, the Saints in heaven. Although we seem to be separated by both space and time, in Him we are united as members of Christ. There is no big difference between asking a breathing saint beside us to pray for us, and asking St. Francis de Sales or Mary to pray for us. We are all in Christ. He is alive, and we are all alive in Him.

Protestants are not accustomed to addressing anyone but God in prayer. That's why, at first, praying to saints may seem idolatrous to them, even when a Catholic explains that we are really just asking—to pray means to ask—we are asking the saints to pray FOR us. But if one really thinks about it carefully one will find that to ask for prayers from Saints in Heaven are really no different then when a Protestant asks his friends to pray for him on Earth. For if one can ask his relatives or friends to pray for him on Earth, how much more can we then not ask our friends in Heaven? Catholics know Mary is not God. She is not the Savior. She is not the ONE Mediator. Jesus is the only Mediator between God and man; we can always approach Him.[1] He loves us tenderly. He also loves Mary tenderly. She is, like each of us, a member of His Church, embodying for all of us the prayerful posture, "Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). She is a living example to us of receiving all the grace He desires to give us. She stands with us, in the Church, receiving grace upon grace. She also stands as our example of how powerful the grace of Christ is. She is the new Eve, the new Ark, the pure vessel, the sealed gate, and the Mother of God. To fail to have devotion to her is equivalent to a man in the Old Testament who would refuse to venerate the Ark of the Covenant or would refuse to march behind it to a battle. Such a man would fall prey to the enemies of God and would be separated from the camp of God's people.

"Now and at the hour of our death. Amen." This is God's eternal now, in which our deaths, too, are present to Him. In Catholic faith, the communion of saints includes all the members of the Body, past, present, and future (to us) who are being built together by Him into a holy temple (cf. Eph.2:22), our prayers for one another being an aspect of each part working properly (cf. Eph.4:16). The prayers of Mary and the saints are certainly to be counted among those of the righteous, which we always need (cf. James 5:16). The first half of the Hail Mary, then, is directly from Scripture. The second half is simply putting into practice what Scripture teaches about our life in the Body of Christ, which is His Church. As we pray this beautiful prayer, may we behold the glory of the Lord in his presence with us and, like Mary, be "changed into his likeness, from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18).

[1]. It must be made clear that the Catholic Church in no way teaches that the saints are mediators in the special sense used in 1 Timothy 2:5. Because of the Incarnation, Jesus has a unique role as mediator. Since he is the only one who is God and man, the only contact point between us and the Father, only he is capable of bridging the chasm of sin that separates us from God. No saint can take Christ's place as mediator. The Catholic Church does not teach that any Christian is a mediator in the sense used in 1 Timothy 2:5. It teaches instead that all Christians are intercessors who, because of Christ's mediatorship, are able to pray for each other. (*The official Catholic position on this issue appears in Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, Session V ("Decree on Original Sin"), 25-28, Session XXV ("Decree on the Invocation of Saints")*) <http://www.st-mary.info/hail-mary.php>

## I. The Rosary

It is usually suggested that the rosary began as a practice by the laity to imitate the monastic Office (Breviary or Liturgy of the Hours), by which monks prayed the 150 Psalms. The laity, many of whom could not read, substituted 50 or 150 Ave Marias for the Psalms. Sometimes a cord with counters on it was used to keep an accurate count.

The first clear historical reference to the rosary, however, is from the life of St. Dominic (+1221), the founder of the Order of Preachers or Dominicans. He preached a form of the rosary in France at the time that the Albigensian heresy was devastating the faith there. Tradition has it that the Blessed Mother herself asked for the practice as an antidote for heresy and sin.

One of Dominic's future disciples, Alain de Roche, began to establish Rosary Confraternities to promote the praying of the rosary. The form of the rosary we have today is believed to date from his time. Over the centuries the saints and popes have highly recommended the rosary, the greatest prayer in the Church after the Mass and Liturgy of the Hours. Not surprisingly, its most active promoters have been Dominicans.

Rosary means a crown of roses, a spiritual bouquet given to the Blessed Mother. It is sometimes called the Dominican Rosary, to distinguish it from other rosary-like prayers (e.g. Franciscan Rosary of the Seven Joys, Servite Rosary of the Seven Sorrows). It is also, in a general sense, a form of chaplet or corona (also referring to a crown), of which there are many varieties in the Church. Finally, in English it has been called "Our Lady's Psalter" or "the beads." This last derives from an Old English word for prayers (bede) and to request (biddan or bid).

There are many variations on praying the rosary. To use the Rosary as a meditation, students can use the words and the beads; or just the beads themselves to regulate their breathing. It is, after all, the repetition that is important in creating a sense of stillness and calmness. Students who may not want to pray Marian prayers can simply follow the class prayer by moving from bead to bead. Some may feel free to breathe in "Mary" and "pray for us" on the out- breath. Others may use each bead to use a mantra such as "Abba" and "Father"; or "Jesus", "Lord" using both beads and breath.

### **Rosary Beads for Meditation**

*Today, we are going to use the rosary beads for meditation, not simply reciting the Rosary. The beads will help us regulate our breathing- we simply move along each bead as we breathe in, hold the breath and then breathe out.*

*We start with the "Our Father" bead with "Abba" on the in breath and "Father" on the out breath.*

*Then we take 10 breaths in and out- slowly. We may use 'Hail Mary' on the in breath and "Holy Mary" on the out breath. Or, we can use "Jesus" on the in breath and "Lord" on the out breath.*

*When we come to the "Glory Be" bead, we can use the mantra "bless me", "bless us".*

*We can practise this aloud and then silently.*



### 3. Litany of Mary of Nazareth for Meditation

Because of their repetitive nature, litanies can also create a meditative state and students can also use beads to assist their focus. The [litany of Mary of Nazareth](#) can be used with beads and the mantras as a form of guided meditation. Music could be used as part of the prayer experience.

### 4. The Litany of Mary

Mother of God	<i><b>We honour and praise you</b></i>
Mother of the Church	<i><b>We honour and praise you</b></i>
Mother of Jesus	<i><b>We honour and praise you</b></i>
Mother of all	<i><b>We honour and praise you</b></i>
Mary most faithful	<i><b>Teach us to be like you</b></i>
Mary most loving	<i><b>Teach us to be like you</b></i>
Mary most gentle	<i><b>Teach us to be like you</b></i>
Mary most kind	<i><b>Teach us to be like you</b></i>
Woman of strength	<i><b>Show us the way</b></i>
Woman of goodness	<i><b>Show us the way</b></i>
Woman of justice	<i><b>Show us the way</b></i>
Woman of compassion	<i><b>Show us the way</b></i>
Woman who listened	<i><b>Remember us to God</b></i>
Woman who suffered	<i><b>Remember us to God</b></i>
Woman who wondered	<i><b>Remember us to God</b></i>
Woman who loved	<i><b>Remember us to God</b></i>

## 5. Hail Mary Litany

### Hail Mary,

Source of peace...

Model of strength...

Model of gentleness...

Model of patience...

Woman of mercy...

Widowed mother...

Political refugee...

Woman, centred in God...

Woman of wisdom and understanding...

Pray for us

Be our guide

Transform us

Empower us

Pray to God for us

### Holy Mary,

Source of peace...

Model of strength...

Model of gentleness...

Model of patience...

Woman of mercy...

Widowed mother..

Political refugee...

Woman, centred in God...

Woman of wisdom and understanding...

Pray for us

Be our guide

Transform us

Empower us

Pray to God for us

# Prayer and Meditation Practices in Year Six

## Year 6 Level Description

They develop their understanding of prayer in the Christian tradition through an exploration of the Our Father, The Examen, and meditative prayer practices including prayer journaling.

### ***Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding***

Meditative prayer uses silence and stillness to assist believers to listen and talk to God. Believers use a range of practices for preparing the body and the mind for meditative prayer and engaging in the 'work of meditation', including prayer journaling. The Examen is a meditative prayer in the Christian tradition.

### ***Skills***

Participate respectfully in meditative prayer, including The Examen.

Identify and use practices that assist in preparing for and engaging in meditative prayer, including prayer journaling.

### ***Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding***

In response to the request of his followers "Lord, teach us to pray as you do", Jesus gave them the Our Father or the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:1-13; Matthew 6:5-15). The origins of The Lord's Prayer are deeply rooted in the Jewish tradition. The Our Father is a central prayer in Christianity and an integral part of Catholic liturgy. Seven petitions are identified in The Lord's Prayer:

1. Hallowed be your name
2. Your kingdom come
3. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven
4. Give us this day our daily bread
5. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us
6. Lead us not into temptation
7. Deliver us from evil

The first three petitions praise God. The remaining four petitions present to God the needs of believers.

## Year 6 Achievement Standard

They explain the significance of personal and communal prayer, including the Our Father and The Examen, and the use of spiritual exercises, including reflective prayer journaling and praying with the icons of the saints, for the spiritual life of believers. They participate respectfully in a variety of these personal and communal prayer experience and spiritual exercises.

Note:

In terms of meditative practices, the goal of Christian meditation is that by the end of year six, students should be able to engage in meditative stillness and silence for about eleven – twelve minutes as well as the specific meditative practices mentioned for this year level.

## Practices to Assist Meditation

### 1. Journaling as a Tool of Meditation

Another mindful, reflective practice is that of journaling. It is deliberately recording thoughts and feelings rather than just allowing them to remain stream of consciousness or a conversation.

Journaling, especially with a focus on gratitude, assists mindfulness and reminds us of graces available to us each day.

The text in journals can be revisited and can also demonstrate how we have grown in wisdom and insight!

In a therapeutic mode, journaling can help with stress reduction and self-acceptance, especially when guided by a mentor.

Journaling is not the same as writing a diary. It is reflection on an action- one's day; something one has done or said or thought. There is an element of stream of consciousness- that is, it should be allowed to flow, not be edited during or after, though one may add more thoughts after on something already recorded.

Journaling is a discipline, is self-conscious and therefore sometimes hard to start because one might be tempted to put blocks in the way of honest self-examination. The audience for a journal is oneself and maybe God, but no one else. Therefore one should feel free to write whatever one needs to write.

#### Journaling in class

*Today we begin/continue our meditative prayer using our journals.*

*Before we start our writing, let us enter a meditative state by controlling our breathing, focusing our mind and reciting a mantra.*

(Alternatively, you may employ a Lectio Divina meditation, The Examen, or Meditating with colour or music)

(After the time required)

*When you are ready, you may wish to now begin writing or drawing or doodling, or all of these. You may wish to pause when writing or drawing and return to your centred breathing. There is no set amount to write, or topic. Write whatever is on your mind or in your thoughts.*

*I will allocate 10 minutes initially and then we can decide if we want more time.*

*Let us begin our journaling meditation.*

## 2. The Examen

The Prayer of Examen is a form of prayer that was developed by Ignatius of Loyola in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, the founder of the Jesuit Order of priests. During his personal conversion Ignatius jotted down those exercises that helped him in his faith journey. Ignatius named the Examen as the central exercise of Ignatian spirituality which is to help *find God in all things*.

Through the Examen we come to know God's love for us more deeply, gradually becoming more aware of God's presence in everything. The Examen provides a mirror which reflects God's active presence in our everyday lives.

The Examen may be prayed at the end of the day, at the end of the week or at the end of a term. Students participate in the 'Prayer of the Examen', a reflective prayer with a particular structure. Students could focus on a lighted candle that may be used as a symbol of God's presence in the group, while being guided through the following prayer of the Examen.

### Steps of the Examen for Older Children and Teens

Try the traditional form of the Examen during Family Prayer with older children and teens, setting aside ten to fifteen minutes to do it well. What follows is a simple outline; you can find more detailed versions using the resources below.

Consider lighting a candle or playing quiet music to set a prayerful atmosphere. Briefly describe each step, allow several minutes for each one.

**1. Enter God's presence.** Take a few moments to quiet down, to recall that God has accompanied you every step of the way during the day, and to open yourself to God's presence.

**2. Review the events of the day in a spirit of gratitude.** Move through your day, hour by hour, taking special note of its many small gifts: the warmth of a child's hand, a cup of coffee, a flock of birds, the kindness of a stranger. Recall that God is revealed in each of these details. Think, too, about the gifts you were able to give others: an encouraging word, a smile, work well done.

**3. Pray for a "Spirit of truth."** Prepare for the next step by asking for the "Spirit of truth" to "guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). Prepare yourself to be honest as you examine your actions during the day, knowing that the truth will free you to grow closer to God. Recall, too, God's unconditional love for you.

**4. How were you open to God's presence in the events of the day?** Next, examine how you responded (or didn't) to God's presence in the key events of the day. When were you loving? When did you miss an opportunity to love? When were you were sinful? How much were you in charge of your actions, and what did you do out of simple habit? Pay attention to your emotions around these events. St. Ignatius taught that the Holy Spirit often speaks to us through our emotions, even the "negative" ones. What truth might God be leading you to through your emotions?

**5. Bring it to Jesus.** Finally, respond in prayer to the insights revealed in the previous steps. You may want to imagine this as a friendly face-to-face meeting with Jesus, one in which you offer words of sorrow, gratitude, or joy. You may want to ask for forgiveness, consolation, encouragement, the grace to overcome bad habits, and direction for how to grow closer. Continue to listen to Jesus as you resume your daily activities.

## The Examen for Younger Children

Introduce very young children to the idea of reviewing the day and bringing it to God by doing [Highs and Lows](#). For children ages 5–9, try talking through the steps conversationally using this shortened method:

**1. Entering God’s presence.** Set a prayerful tone (see “[Smells and Bells](#)” for some ideas). “Let’s pray about our day.” Make the Sign of the Cross. “God, you have been with us all day long, since the time we woke up until now; help us to remember our day, so we can bring it to you.”

**2. What happened today?** Review the events of the day, moving through the parts of the day and offering prompts as necessary. “What happened in the morning when we woke up? . . . What happened at school? . . . When we got home? . . . When were we angry? . . . Sad? . . . Happy? . . . What was beautiful? . . . What was amazing?” Optionally, write down responses on a dry erase board or in a prayer journal.

**3. How was God present, and how did we respond?** “How was God present to us today?” You will probably need to name this for your children at first, or supplement their responses with your own suggestions. It might be obvious that God is present in moments of beauty and joy, but you can help your children see how God is also present during times of challenge and sadness. Ask, “How did we respond to God’s presence? When were we loving? When weren’t we loving?”

**4. Pray the day.** Invite your children to think about what Jesus is saying to them through the events of the day. Ask guiding questions such as, “What do you think Jesus says about our day?” Invite them to pray in response: “What do we want to tell Jesus about what happened today?” Encourage simple words of praise, thankfulness, repentance, forgiveness, and petitions for the grace to draw closer to God in the coming day. Close with the Sign of the Cross.

## Another version of the Examen- focused on others.

One person names the highs and lows of his/her day.

After that person names the highs and lows of the day, another person in the family says a prayer for that person, thanking God for the highs and asking God to help that person with the lows.

Every member gets a turn to share the highs and lows of the day, and family member gets a turn to say a prayer for another person.

Close with an Our Father or other prayer.

## Other Prayers and Rituals for use in Year Six

### 1. The Our Father

#### ***Pray Then in This Way: John Dominic Crossan Reflects on the Our Father***

1. Crossan maintains that the earliest form of the Lord's Prayer was simply the phrase "Abba, the Father." What does this simple phrase mean, as a prayer, to you? What if this was the entire prayer—would it be effective? Why or why not?
2. Do you agree that a "mature prayer life" means moving from request and gratitude to empowerment? How have you worked towards this in your own life?
3. Crossan states that this prayer and a commitment to distributive justice are inseparable—like two sides of a coin. He argues that Jesus, like Paul, teaches that we are "heirs of God"—that is, we have a co-responsibility to help run God's world and make sure everyone/thing has enough.

*How does this outlook change how you view the world and your role in it? Is this responsibility empowering? Intimidating?*

#### **Chapter 2:**

##### ***Our Father in Heaven***

1. If you pray the Lord's Prayer, has the male-dominated language tripped you up in the past? Why or why not?

*Does Crossan's explanation of the inclusive nature of the word "Father" help you?*

2. Crossan says that the best way to think of what the biblical writers meant by "Our Father in Heaven" is as "Householder of the Earth"—he who takes care of the earth and everything on it. How does this change your conception of God? How does this change how you understand God's role in the world?
3. On page 49, Crossan says, "What happens to God and what happens to us are interactive, reciprocal, and collaborative." How do you feel about this? Is it presumptuous or empowering to say that God can't, or won't, effect change without us?

#### **Chapter 3:**

##### ***Hallowed Be Your Name***

1. Crossan argues that God is holy because he seeks justice for all. How does this change how we might "make holy" God's name?

#### **Chapter 4:**

## **Your Kingdom Come**

1. When you have prayed “Your kingdom come” in the past—what did you mean? Were you thinking God’s kingdom here on earth, or a heavenly kingdom in the future? Does Crossan’s interpretation of how Jesus might have meant “kingdom” as a nonviolent, present, and collaborative state, change the way in which you will pray these words?
2. Read again Desmond Tutu’s quote on page 94: “God without us, will not; as we, without God, cannot.” What role, then, do humans play in God’s work according to Tutu’s prayer? Do you think God works collaboratively with us? How does this change our conception of how we live?

## **Chapter 5:**

### **Your Will Be Done on Earth**

1. Crossan argues that what is wrong with the world (sin) is the natural “consequence” of injustice rather than being a violation that needs to be atoned for in order to escape divine “punishment.” Can you think of ways in which sin and its punishment works as consequence”?
2. If God is not seen primarily as the judge and punisher of sin and more as the restorer of justice and harmony, how might this change how and where we see God being active in the world? What do you think you might be asking for when you prayer for God’s will to be done “on earth as it is in heaven”?

## **Chapter 6:**

### **Give Us Our Daily Bread**

1. In Chapter 6, Crossan argues that “daily bread” calls up all the bread and fish stories scattered throughout the Gospels—the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus directing fishermen where to fish, the Last Supper—all emphasizing that God’s plan is for a just distribution of food so that no one has to worry about hunger, today and including all tomorrows. How does this change where you look for answers when you pray “give us this day our daily bread”? What does “food” or “bread” symbolize for you? How do you connect God and “our daily bread”?

## **Chapter 7:**

### **Forgive Us Our Debts**

1. The biblical notion of “debt” is tied closely to “slavery” and the hope of redemption and freedom. Crossan argues that Jesus’s call for the forgiveness of “debts” should be taken literally. God’s justice, as embodied in his redemption of Israel’s enslavement in Egypt, calls for the forgiveness of our debts and our pledge to forgive the debts of others. When you



*imagine yourself free from all your debts, what comes to mind? Why is being forgiven our debts connected to forgiving the debts of others? What would it look like in your life to live by this prayer more fully?*

## **Chapter 8:**

### ***Lead Us Not into Temptation***

*1. Most people think of temptation as an immoral inclination to do an evil act. But Crossan argues that “temptation” has a precise meaning, in this context, of using violence—even if your goal is a good and noble one. In that light, how does this portion of the prayer change its meaning for you? Likewise, what does it mean for you to ask to be “rescued from the evil one”? What does a commitment to nonviolence mean to you?*

### ***Epilogue***

- 1. How has your view of the Lord’s Prayer changed after reading this book? How has it changed what you believe you are praying for when you recite these ancient words?*
- 2. Crossan calls the Lord’s Prayer “a hymn of hope” and a “revolutionary manifesto.” What does each phrase mean to you? Do you agree with those descriptions? Why or why not?*

# Our Father, our Mother, in whom is heaven

What picture of God do I hold in my head? When, at the point of my death, I come “face to face” with God, what do I expect to encounter?

## May your name be praised by people everywhere!

How often do I praise or thank God for all the good things that happen to me every day? Do I recognise that God is my constant companion present in good and bad times? When are the points in the day when I can stop and say: “Thank you, God, for my life”?

May your dream for how the world should be, come about!

If I am called to be a steward of God's creation on earth, how am I helping God's dream come about? Am I being part of the solution for creating a "new heaven and a new earth" or am I part of the problem? What must I do? What must I be/become?

May the way we live on earth reflect the way life is in your presence!

How do I, as a follower of Jesus, help bring about a world built on what God wants it to be? How am I an instrument of justice, peace and compassionate living?

# Give us enough for our needs each day

The prayer is not “give me” but “give us”. For those of us who have far more than we need to live comfortably each day, does this not mean we have an obligation to share our excess? Are we not praying: “Take away our selfishness and greed?” What is one thing I can do in God’s name to help this prayer be answered for every human on the planet?

# Forgive us when we fail you and we will forgive those who fail us

Does this mean that if we do not forgive our neighbour, we do not expect God to forgive us?

Are there people in my life whom I have not forgiven or feel I cannot forgive? Has God forgiven them? Where does that leave me?

Be our sure and steady guide  
when we face temptation

How often do we ask God for guidance? Is it possible to build into our lives that pause, that stopping before we act or speak and insert into that pause a prayer for guidance or inspiration?

And protect us from the  
power of all that is evil.

Who or what could cause me evil? How can God possibly protect me from it? In asking God to protect me from it, what do I have to do so as not to put myself in the way of evil in the first place? Is evil always awful or can it be seductive and even attractive?

## The Lord's Prayer Drama: A way to reflect on the prayer

### Characters

- Person (seen)
- God (unseen)

### Stage Setting

- No particular setting is necessary, but it is good if the person could sit on a chair and lean on a table that has a Bible on it.

### Script

**Person:** Our Father, who...

**God:** Yes?

**Person:** Please don't interrupt me! I'm praying.

**God:** But you called me.

**Person:** Called you? I didn't call you. I was praying. Our Father who art in heaven...

**God:** There, you did it again.

**Person:** Did what?

**God:** Called me. You said, "Our Father who art in heaven." Here I am. What's on your mind?

**Person:** But I didn't mean anything by it. I was, you know, just saying my prayers for the day. I always say the Lord's Prayer. It makes me feel good, sort of like getting a job done.

**God:** All right. Go on.

**Person:** Hallowed be thy name...

**God:** Hold it! What do you mean by that?

**Person:** By what?

**God:** By "hallowed be thy name"?

**Person:** It means...it means.... Good grief! How should I know what it means? It's just part of the prayer. *(pause)* By the way, what does it mean?

**God:** It means honoured, holy, wonderful.

**Person:** Ah, that makes sense. I never thought about what hallowed meant before. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

**God:** Do you really mean that?

**Person:** Of course! Why not?

**God:** What are you going to do about it?

**Person:** Do? Nothing, I suppose. I just think it would be rather good if you got control of things down here the way you have up there.

**God:** Have I got control of you?

**Person:** Well, I go to church.

**God:** That isn't what I asked you. What about that bad temper? You've really got a problem there you know!

**Person:** Stop picking on me! I'm just as good as some of those hypocrites down at the church!

**God:** Excuse me, but I thought you were praying for my will to be done? If that is to happen, it will have to start with the ones who are praying for it. Like you, for example.

**Person:** Oh, all right! I guess I do have a few hang-ups. Now that you mention it, I probably could name some others.

**God:** So could I.

**Person:** I haven't thought about it much until now, but I really would like to cut out some of those things. I really would like to know how to be free.

**God:** Good! Now we're getting somewhere! We'll work together, you and I. Some real victories can be won. I'm proud of you!

**Person:** Look, Lord, I need to finish this up here. This is taking a lot longer than it usually does! Give us this day our daily bread .

**God:** You need to cut out the bread you're a little overweight as it is!

**Person:** Hey! Wait a minute! What is this? Here I am doing my religious duty and all of a sudden you break in and remind me of all my faults!

**God:** Praying is a dangerous thing. You could end up changed, you know. That's what I'm trying to bring across to you. You called me, and here I am. It's too late to stop now. Keep on praying. I'm interested in the next part of your prayer. *(Pause)* Well. go on!

**Person:** I'm scared to...

**God:** Scared of what?

**Person:** I know what you'll say!

**God:** Try me and see.

**Person:** Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.

**God:** What about Peter Brown?

**Person:** See! I knew you would bring him up! Why, Lord he told lies about me, and he cheated me out of some money. I swear that I'll get even with him.

**God:** But your prayer. What about your prayer?

**Person:** I didn't mean it.

**God:** Well, at least you're honest! But it's not much fun carrying around that load of bitterness inside, is it?

**Person:** No, but I'll feel better as soon as I get even! Have I got some plans for old Peter!

**God:** You won't feel any better. You'll feel worse. Revenge isn't sweet. Think of how unhappy you really are. But I'll change all that.

**Person:** You will? How?

**God:** Forgive Peter. Then I'll forgive you. Then the hate and sin will be Peter's problem and not yours. You may lose the money, but you will have settled your heart.

**Person:** It doesn't sound easy, but deep down, I know it would be worth the effort. Thank you, Lord, for helping me work through this. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. AMEN.

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Last changed: Saturday 12 August 1995*

## **Prayer and Meditation Practices in Year Seven**

### **Year Level Description**

Students examine ways in which believers nurture their spiritual life through prayer, ritual, the sacraments and sacred texts. They develop their understanding of prayer in the Christian tradition through an exploration of Lectio Divina and Ignatian Meditation.

### ***Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding***

Prayer in the Christian tradition, including formal prayers such as Sign of the Cross, Our Father and Hail Mary, nurtures the spiritual life of believers.

### ***Skills***

Participate with respect in a variety of personal and communal prayer experiences.

### ***Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding***

Meditative prayer uses silence and stillness to assist believers to listen and talk to God. Believers use a range of practices (including silence and stillness, and praying with icons and images) for preparing the body and the mind for meditative prayer, and engaging in the 'work of meditation'. Christian iconography expresses in images the same Gospel message that Scripture communicates by words. Praying with scripture is a form of meditative prayer in the Christian tradition. There are a variety of ways to pray with scripture, including Lectio Divina (Benedictine tradition) and Ignatian Meditation.

### ***Skills***

Participate respectfully in meditative prayer, including praying with scripture.

Identify and use practices that assist in preparing for and engaging in meditative prayer, including silence and stillness and praying with icons and images.

### **Year Seven Achievement Standard**

They participate respectfully in a variety of prayer experiences, including formal prayers such as the Hail Mary and Our Father; meditative prayer including Lectio Divina and Ignatian Meditation; and meditative prayer practices including silence and stillness, and praying with icons and images.

### **Note:**

In terms of meditative practices, the goal of Christian meditation is that by the end of year seven, students should be able to engage in meditative stillness and silence for about twelve-thirteen minutes as well as the specific meditative practices mentioned for this year level.



## Practices to Assist Meditation

### 1. Silence and Stillness:

See previous pages and the Appendix for specific practices to assist body relaxation, practising stillness and silence; the basic use of breath to bring about stillness and slowing the metabolic rate; meditating with music; meditating with mandalas.

### 2. Praying with Icons:

Meditating with icons is a more common practice in the Eastern (Byzantine) Rite of Christianity than in the Western (Roman) rite. However, as hesychast meditation (stillness, silence, mantra) has returned to the Western church in the past fifty years, meditating with an icon is becoming a more widespread practice among Catholic Christians. For more notes on Icons see the Appendix.

### A Guided Meditation with an Icon

Before the meditation, it is essential to read about them and the difference between western religious art and iconography. If the icon is of a particular saint, then it would also be beneficial to know some of the story of the saint.

Say:

*To begin, assume the posture of meditation and use your breath to enter into stillness and silence. Do this for five minutes.*

*Now open your eyes and gaze on the icon. Note that the figure's eyes are looking straight at you. Those large eyes are seeing the wonder and glory of God! Return that gaze and appreciate that this figure is alive, with and in God, at this very moment and that this icon is a window for you to communicate with the figure and to grow closer to God, with whom they now live. Take some time just to gaze at each other and experience heaven!*

*Note any other figures and scenes in the icon. They are depictions of aspects of the main figure's story. What do you recognise? An icon is like a continuous story frozen in one frame.*

*Note the high forehead of the figure. This represents wisdom. What wisdom does this figure offer you about who God is? What does it tell you about what God wants of you?*

*Note the large ears to hear the Word of God. Are there words of God or Jesus that come to mind as you gaze on this icon?*

*Examine the hands of the figure: they show the way to God. Are they pointing at you, or blessing you, or holding you?*

*Explore the colours used. What do they tell you about this figure and God?*

*Now just "sit with" the icon and let it speak to you. When you are finished, take a long refreshing breath and move away quietly.*

### 3. Lectio Divina

One practice of meditating on Scripture used for 1500 years in the monastic movements of Christianity is called *Lectio Divina*, or *Sacred Reading*. Devised by St Benedict, it involves reading, but more importantly, listening with the “ear of your heart” to a passage of scripture until a word or phrase strikes you. That word or phrase then becomes the object of meditation: to be used as a mantra or as a means of an interior dialogue as to what it is saying to you in your time and place. One’s meditation on the word or phrase ends with a prayer. **Read, Read again and Reflect; Read again and Respond; Read again and Rest.**

#### Lectio Divina for Young People

Assume the posture for meditation. (Sitting upright; feet on the floor; body relaxed and comfortable)

Begin to regulate your breathing to slow your metabolism and empty your mind of distracting thoughts.

Recite your mantra prayer: Maranatha (“Come Lord Jesus”); or “Speak to me, Word of God”; “Speak Lord, I am listening”; or one of your own.

When you are ready, either listen to, or read a chosen text from the Sacred Scriptures. This should not be long- a short paragraph is best. Read it (or have it read to you) slowly, pausing slightly at the end of each sentence. Listen for a word or phrase that stands out for you today.

After a short pause, listen to or read the passage again, this time locating the word or phrase you chose in the first reading of the text within the story or teaching. At the end of the second reading, think about your word or phrase and why it may have stood out for you at this moment in your life. Is it saying something to you? Is there something you need to do or change or consider? Listen to what the passage is saying to your heart: do you need to respond in love, or compassion, or empathy?

Listen to the passage again, and at the end of the reading respond to what it may be saying to you. Will you act or not on what you have thought about? Is there anything you can do? Ask for God’s help and the courage of the Holy Spirit to do what is best.

For the last time, read or listen to the passage and at the end, rest in silence. Return to your breathing and your mantra for a few minutes, clearing your mind of all thoughts. You may wish to turn the word or phrase you have been reflecting on into a mantra.

At the end of the meditation, you might like to spend a few minutes journaling whatever comes to mind, or walk a labyrinth, reflecting on the experience, or noting any reflections or responses you had to the text. You may wish to write a prayer to use on other occasions, or even construct a mantra from the word or phrase you heard today with the ear of your heart.

Some appropriate passages for *Lectio Divina* can be found in the Appendix.

#### 4. Ignatian Meditation

**The Ignatian** method of meditation is attributed to St Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, and involves the use of some of the principles of visualisation.

Say:

*To begin this meditation, assume the posture, stillness and silence of meditation. Place your feet firmly on the floor. Find a comfortable posture which will help you to be still and silent for up to ten minutes. Close your eyes. Begin to slow your breathing- in through your nose and out through pursed lips. Focus on that breath, putting aside all other thoughts. Do this for a few minutes, asking the Spirit of Jesus to speak to you in your heart. (Pause to allow stillness and silence.)*

*I will read this (parable; story, part of a letter; psalm; law or rule; saying; prophetic utterance etc.) from (Jesus, St Paul, the Psalmist, the prophet..... etc.). As you listen, imagine ..... (the person) is speaking to you directly: they are looking at you and addressing these words to you, even if you are in a crowd. You are sitting at their feet. Listen to what they have to say and listen for something that strikes you- as interesting; or challenging; or puzzles you; or angers you; or makes you happy/sad/ curious/worried.*

*(Read Scripture text)*

*Now imagine..... (the person) stops speaking and gets up and moves a little away from you. Think about what you heard and felt when the words were spoken to you. You have the opportunity to go up to the person alone. What would you say to them/ask them about what you heard? What might they say to you in answer?*

*Sit with your questions and possible answers, exploring what they might say to you about your faith or what you might need to do.*

*Now take a large, cleansing breath and return to the present and open your eyes.*

*For the next five minutes, you may like to journal your feelings or thoughts as a result of this experience. This journaling might include a prayer to The Spirit of Jesus to give you strength to live the life he asks of you.*

For some examples of Scripture texts to use, for this meditation, see the Appendix.

## **Other Prayers and Rituals for use in Year Seven**

### ***I. The Sign of the Cross.***

For background on the Sign of the Cross, see this section in the Prep notes.

### ***II. The Our Father***

For background notes and activities for the Our Father, see the notes and activities for Year Six.

### ***III. The Hail Mary***

For background notes on the Hail Mary, see this section in Year Five.

# Prayer and Meditation Practices in Year Eight

## ***Year 8 Year Level Description***

Students continue to develop their understanding of prayer in the Christian tradition through an exploration of The Liturgy of the Hours; meditative prayer, including praying with scripture; and meditative prayer practices, including centred breathing and attending to posture.

## ***Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding***

Prayer in the Christian tradition, including the ancient monastic prayer of The Liturgy of the Hours, nurtures the spiritual life of believers. The Liturgy of the Hours follows a prescribed pattern of Psalms, Scripture and intercessions, and is prayed at set times throughout the day. Believers pray on behalf of others and with others.

## ***Skills***

Participate with respect in a variety of personal and communal prayer experiences, including prayers from The Liturgy of the Hours.

## ***Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding***

Meditative prayer uses silence and stillness to assist believers to listen and talk to God. Believers use a range of practices (including centred breathing and attending to posture) for preparing the body and the mind for meditative prayer and for engaging in the 'work of meditation'. Praying with scripture is a form of meditative prayer in the Christian tradition. There are a variety of ways to pray with scripture, including Augustinian Prayer and Franciscan Contemplative prayer. All forms of vocal and meditative prayer are intended to lead believers to contemplation. Contemplative prayer is the simple awareness of the presence of God. It is prayer without words or images.

## ***Skills***

Participate respectfully in meditative prayer, including praying with scripture.

Identify and use practices that assist preparing for and engaging in meditative prayer, including centred breathing and attending to posture.

## ***Year 8 Achievement Standard***

They participate respectfully in a variety of prayer experiences, including prayers from The Liturgy of the Hours; praying with scripture; and meditative prayer practices, including centred breathing and attending to posture.

## ***Note:***

In terms of meditative practices, the goal of Christian meditation is that by the end of year eight, students should be able to engage in meditative stillness and silence for about fourteen minutes as well as the specific meditative practices mentioned for this year level.

## Practices to Assist Meditation

### 1. *Centered Breathing*

An exercise for leading students in centered breathing can be found under Practices to Assist Meditation in Year Two. (p. 22)

### 2. *Attending to Posture*

An exercise to lead students to attend to their posture for meditation can be found in Practices to Assist Meditation in Year Two. (p 21)

### 3. *Augustinian Meditative Prayer Using Scripture*

#### Augustinian Meditative Prayer Using Scripture

The Augustinian method of meditation is that of hearing scripture as if it were addressed to one personally. So, God's words to Israel, or Jesus' words to the crowd, or Paul's words to Timothy are read as being addressed to oneself. This becomes the content of the meditation, again using interior dialogue or thought as to the implications.

Say:

*To begin this meditation, assume the posture, stillness and silence of meditation. Place your feet firmly on the floor. Find a comfortable posture which will help you to be still and silent for up to ten minutes. Close your eyes. Begin to slow your breathing- in through your nose and out through pursed lips. Focus on that breath, putting aside all other thoughts. Do this for a few minutes, asking the Spirit of Jesus to speak to you in your heart. (Pause to allow stillness and silence.)*

*Now take up your pen and fill in the scripture text you have been given. Wherever there is a dotted space, write your first name, or the name your friends and family call you. Now read the text, including your name, hearing ....(God, Jesus, Paul James, one of the prophets) speaking directly to you; saying this to you alone.*

*Have a companion read this aloud to you.*

*Think about how this makes you feel.*

*Sit with your questions and possible answers, exploring what they might say to you about your faith or what you might need to do.*

*Now take a large, cleansing breath and return to the present and open your eyes.*

*For the next five minutes, you may like to journal your feelings or thoughts as a result of this experience. This journaling might include a prayer to The Spirit of Jesus to give you strength to live the life he asks of you.*

See the Appendix for some examples of Scripture texts to use with this exercise.

#### 4. Franciscan Meditative Prayer Using Scripture

##### Franciscan Meditative Prayer Using Scripture

In the **Franciscan** method, one first applies the Augustinian method of hearing the words of the scripture text addressed to oneself specifically and then asks, like the rich young man to Jesus: “What must I do in response to these words?”

Say:

*To begin this meditation, assume the posture, stillness and silence of meditation. Place your feet firmly on the floor. Find a comfortable posture which will help you to be still and silent for up to ten minutes. Close your eyes. Begin to slow your breathing- in through your nose and out through pursed lips. Focus on that breath, putting aside all other thoughts. Do this for a few minutes, asking the Spirit of Jesus to speak to you in your heart. (Pause to allow stillness and silence.)*

*I will read this (parable; story, part of a letter; psalm; law or rule; saying; prophetic utterance etc.) from (Jesus, St Paul, the Psalmist, the prophet..... etc.). As you listen, imagine ..... (the person) is speaking to you directly: they are looking at you and addressing these words to you, even if you are in a crowd. You are sitting at their feet. Listen to what they have to say and listen for something that strikes you- as interesting; or challenging; or puzzles you; or angers you; or makes you happy/sad/ curious/worried.*

*(Read Scripture text)*

Now ask yourself these questions:

If I truly wanted to live God’s dream for humanity, or to live and act as Jesus did, what must/should I do in response to this text?

How would it change my life? Is it possible for me to respond at this time of my life? Is there anything I can do, right now, which would begin my journey of response to this text?

*Now take a large, cleansing breath and return to the present and open your eyes.*

*For the next five minutes, you may like to journal your feelings or thoughts as a result of this experience. This journaling might include a prayer to The Spirit of Jesus to give you strength to live the life he asks of you.*

See the Appendix for some examples of Scripture texts to use with this exercise.

## Other Prayers and Rituals for Use in Year Eight

### *I. The Liturgy of the Hours or Prayer of the Church*

From earliest times, the Church has prayed according to the rhythm of the day – morning and evening are the times that are ‘ripe for prayer’; they are the ‘hinges’ on which the rhythm of daily prayer turn! This prayer is a liturgy of time – it is ‘time made holy’ and is based on the Church’s long tradition of praying at certain times of the day, morning, noon, evening and night time. Those praying this prayer are praying as the Church, the Body of Christ and are praying on behalf of all peoples – hence its power to unite the praying community with all peoples of the world.

It follows a particular pattern of Psalms, Scripture readings and intercessions. The usual structure is as follows:

- Invitation to Prayer
- Hymn
- Psalm (s)
- Scripture Reading
- Gospel Canticle (Morning-Canticle of Zechariah; Evening-Canticle of Mary)
- Intercessions
- The Lord’s Prayer
- Concluding Prayer
- Blessing

This structure may be adapted for use with children, but its essential elements are Psalms, Scripture reading and intercessions.

### **Activity:**

Students in learning teams of three or four, choose Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours – The Divine Office provided below. Alternatively, students could pray and study the Divine Office for that day. Students read the prayer communally. Students complete an outline of the prayer including the major headings and prayers identified. Students list some of the advantages of saying this style of prayer. Students search out the origins of the prayer and how it has developed.



<b>Morning Prayer</b> <b><i>Tuesdays of Advent to 16 Dec</i></b>	<b>Evening Prayer</b> <b><i>Tuesdays of Advent to 16 Dec</i></b>
<b><i>Invitatory antiphon</i></b> Let us adore the Lord, the king who is to come.	<b><i>Invitatory antiphon</i></b> Let us adore the Lord, the king who is to come.
<b><i>Hymn:</i></b> Hear the herald voice resounding: ‘Christ is near’, it seems to say, ‘Cast away the dreams of darkness, Welcome Christ, the light of day!’	<b><i>Hymn</i></b> Creator of the stars of night, The people’s everlasting light, Redeemer, Saviour of us all O hear your servants when they call.
<b><i>Scripture Reading Gen 49:10</i></b> The sceptre shall not pass from Judah, nor the mace from between his feet, until the day when he who is to be sent to us, comes: he, the hope of the nations.	<b><i>Scripture Reading 1 Cor 1:7b-9</i></b> You wait expectantly for our Lord Jesus Christ to reveal himself. He will keep you firm to the end, without reproach on the Day of our Lord Jesus. It is God himself who called you to share in the life of his Son.
<b><i>Short Responsory</i></b> Response R The Glory of the Lord will shine on you, Jerusalem. Like the sun he will rise over you. <i>Repeat R</i> His glory will appear in your midst. R Glory Be to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; as it was, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. R	<b><i>Short Responsory</i></b> Response R Come to us and save us, Lord God almighty. <i>Repeat R</i> Let your face shine on us and we shall be safe. R Glory Be to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; as it was, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. R
<b><i>Benedictus Antiphon Week 2</i></b> Rejoice and be glad, daughter of Sion. Behold, I am coming to live in you midst, says the Lord.	<b><i>Magnificat Antiphon Week 2</i></b> Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near, alleluia.
<b><i>Intercessions: Week 2</i></b> In a world divided by fear and greed, the Church calls again on the Saviour. R Lord Jesus, come to us in love. Help us to set our hearts where they will find fulfilment and not betrayal. R Lord Jesus, come to us in love. As we proclaim your saving power to others, let us not ourselves lose hold of your salvation.	<b><i>Intercessions: Week 2</i></b> Let us ask our Father to save us from our sins and send us forward into new life. R Father, may your Son bring us freedom. The Baptist preached a change of heart: free us from self-satisfaction. R Father, may your Son bring us freedom. The Pharisees refused the Baptist’s witness to the coming of your Son: free us from fear of the truth.

<p>R Lord Jesus, come to us in love. May our world be flooded with the grace of your coming: let us experience the fullness of your joy.</p> <p>R Lord Jesus, come to us in love. May we live our lives to the full in this world and transfigure it with the hope of future glory.</p> <p>R Lord Jesus, come to us in love.</p> <p>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 you trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation But deliver us from evil.</p> <p>For the Kingdom the power and the Glory are yours Now and forever. Amen</p>	<p>R Father, may your Son bring us freedom. The Baptist was glad to make way for him: free us from pride.</p> <p>R Father, may your Son bring us freedom. The dead longed for life: free them from death.</p> <p>R Father, may your Son bring us freedom.</p> <p>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 you trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation But deliver us from evil.</p> <p>For the Kingdom the power and the Glory are yours Now and forever. Amen</p>
<p><i>Concluding Prayer</i> Lord God, All the ends of the earth have seen your salvation. Give us the grace to await with joy The glorious day of our Saviour's birth. (We make our prayer) through our Christ, our Lord. Amen.</p>	<p><i>Concluding Prayer</i> Lord God, All the ends of the earth have seen your salvation. Give us the grace to await with joy The glorious day of our Saviour's birth. (We make our prayer) through our Christ our Lord. Amen.</p>

# Prayer and Meditation Practices in Year Nine

## ***Year Nine Year Level Description***

They continue to develop their understanding of prayer in the Christian tradition through an exploration of the writings of Christian spiritual fathers and mothers, prayers for forgiveness and healing, Christian Meditation and meditative prayer practices, including praying with labyrinths.

## ***Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding***

Believers pray, drawing on the richness of scripture, the Catholic tradition and the wider Christian tradition, including the prayers and writings of Christian spiritual fathers and mothers (e.g. Catherine McAuley, Nano Nagle, Edmund Rice, Don Bosco, Mary MacKillop) to nurture their spiritual life. Believers pray for forgiveness and healing, including the Penitential Act.

## ***Skills***

Participate with respect in a variety of personal and communal prayer experiences, including prayers for forgiveness and healing.

Analyse and explain the features of prayers from the Catholic and wider Christian traditions, including the prayers and writings of Christian spiritual fathers and mothers (e.g. language, vocabulary, images, purpose, context, structures, patterns, style).

Identify and discuss the relevance of prayers from the Catholic and wider Christian traditions for people today.

Create a response that draws on prayers from the Catholic and wider Christian traditions, using (dance, drama, media, music or the visual arts).

## ***Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding***

Meditative prayer uses silence and stillness to assist believers to listen and talk to God. Believers use a range of practices (including praying with labyrinths) for preparing the body and the mind for meditative prayer, and for engaging in the 'work of meditation'. Christian Meditation is a particular form of meditative prayer drawn from the Christian tradition. It is 'prayer of the heart' which takes place in silence, with the aid of a mantra. The World Community for Christian Meditation recommends the use of the mantra 'ma-ra- na-tha' (a word from Aramaic, the language of Jesus, meaning Come Lord). All forms of vocal and meditative prayer are intended to lead believers to contemplation. Contemplative prayer is the simple awareness of the presence of God. It is prayer without words or images.

## ***Skills***

Participate respectfully in meditative prayer, including Christian Meditation. Identify and use practices that assist preparation for and engagement in meditative prayer, including praying with labyrinths.

## ***Note:***

In terms of meditative practices, the goal of Christian meditation is that by the end of year nine, students should be able to engage in meditative stillness and silence for about fifteen minutes as well as the specific meditative practices mentioned for this year level.

## Practices to Assist Meditation

### 1. Christian Meditation

For **Christians** wanting to turn meditation into prayer, the mantra is always a prayer, or Scripture text or “religious” word. The most famous word is *Maranatha*, which means *Come, Lord Jesus*. Any four syllable word or phrase or aspiration that is able to be adapted to enable one to inhale and exhale twice in time to the syllables or words, is acceptable. E.g. Ma (breathe in and hold for a count of say four, while saying it mentally); -ra (Breathe out to a count of four and hold while saying it mentally); -na (in for a count of four); -tha (out for a count of four). In this way, the centered breathing is turned into a prayer.

Another example is Jesus, *brother, mentor, friend*. Many Christians use *Have Mercy on me, forgive my sins*. By focusing on the constant repetition of the word or phrase, one blocks out other thoughts and distractions. The Jesus Prayer: *Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, Have Mercy on me, a sinner* is the oldest mantra of Christian meditation.

### 2. Contemplative Prayer

Contemplation is the end point of the “work” of centering, ritualising and meditation. The journey may be long – and take a lifetime even- but it is the culmination of what St Augustine captured in his famous saying “O Lord, our hearts are restless until they rest in you”. Having stilled the senses, quietened the body and entered the silence of the spheres, one can then rest quietly, at peace and undisturbed by the outside world, in the “still point of the universe”, the “centre of all being” by whatever name we know it to be: God, or the demiurge or the cloud of unknowing.

The “task” is resting in the power and the embrace of the “other”. It is no longer work, it is contentedness and stillness and awe. It is drawing from the wellsprings of creation to nurture, re-create, to heal and to grow. Christians say that in meditation the person does the work; in contemplation, God does the work.

In contemplation, there are no “aids” or symbols or “helps”. It is contented resting. One merely brings oneself. One knows when one has arrived.

### 3. Praying Using labyrinths

First Option:

The labyrinth can be used as a mindful, meditative walk- where you call to mind your life, people, events, or scenes and repeat mantras of thanks, penance or petition in time with your steps:

Thankfulness- For your life; your family members; for the earth and the universe

Penance - Think of a situation where you have failed to live up to the mark Jesus has set us. The traditional *Jesus Prayer* is as old as Christian Meditation: *Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, Have*

*mercy on me, a sinner.* Pause in your walking at the end of the prayer; recall another slip and then start again.

Petition -View the path of the labyrinth as a symbol of how life events have taken you close to, and far from, your goals in life, or the centre of core of who you consider yourself to be. Pause in your walk at key points close to and far from the centre and ask God's help to avoid that situation again, or to repeat it.

#### Second Option:

The Labyrinth as a symbol of your life journey.

Decide, before you begin, what the centre represents for you this journey. Is it closeness to God? Is it acceptance of your life? Is it the "letting go" of the spirituality of the second stage of life? Is it release from wounded-ness, or anger, or lack of forgiveness?

#### Walking In

Take a pilgrim stone with you as you start the walk. The walk "in" could be your reflection on your first stage of life. Of leaving "home" for the first time to make your mark on the world. The walk out can be a reflection on the second stage of life- or your leaving "home" for the second time, for the journey to your final "home".

For the walk "in" recall your goals in life; what towers you wanted to build; what self-image was important; what quests you went on; what you wanted to get, to be, to build, to create. Recall your struggles against *diabolos*-chaos.

As you walk, picture yourself from a bird's eye view. Reflect when you are far from the centre in the outer rings, on what is kept/is keeping you far from that goal. Place the stone at the edge of the path as you do so. Pause. When you are ready, pick up the stone and continue.

When you have turned a corner and moved closer to the centre, pause and think what event, action or change caused you to "turn" or move closer to forgiveness, acceptance etc. Place the stone on the line of the path. Pause. When you are ready, pick up the stone and continue.

When a turn takes you further away again, think on what happened to cause this. Place the stone, pause, pick it up, and continue.

#### The Centre

Having reached the centre, pause and think of the times in life when you have felt you reached "the centre" whatever it was. Can you remember what that felt like? Is "building up" still your centre, or have you begun to "let go"?

If you are believe you are in the second stage of life, can you remember the event/s in your 30's which challenged you to face your woundedness, your frailty, your imperfection? That prompted your *Dark Night of the Soul*?

Wait in the centre until you know it is time to begin the outward journey. Pick up your pilgrim stone and begin the walk out.

#### The Walk Out

If you feel you have entered the second stage of life, then reflect on your actions/feelings as they have brought you closer to detachment and freedom from fear and when you were tempted to turn back to certainty, to tradition, to order and control of your life.

Think of your struggles with God- of ceasing to try to love God and to let God love you instead. Of letting go and falling into mercy and presence. Of shedding self-image based on achievement and adopting self-image based on simplicity, detachment, and acceptance.

Again, as you swing close to and far from the centre, do you recall events, experiences which draw you back, or tempt you to turn back; and which experiences are freeing you from the first stage of life.

As you approach the exit, reflect on what you consider your final destiny to be- your final home. Do you know where you are going to, or is it yet another journey into the unknown- another great adventure?

Replace your pilgrim stone and return another day to repeat the experience.

## Other Prayers and Rituals for use in Year Nine

### I. Sayings of Mary MacKillop

#### *Attitude Towards Others*

Try at least to excuse what you cannot understand and bear in mind that you have only to answer for your own faults. (1877)

Have patience with yourselves when you see that you have failed and patience with others when they seem to have done so. (1874)

Let us show love in our acts, bearing with one another. Forgiving and forgetting. (1890)

Many things we condemn are pleasing to God because God sees the motives. (1907)

Always remember to love one another. (1888)

Do not be hasty in judging one another. (1878)

Try at least to excuse what you cannot understand. (1877)

Put kind constructions where you can and where you can't be silent. (1878)

Forgive from your heart everyone who has pained you. (1890)

Bear with one another, help one another. (1873)

Judge not, leaving that most painful duty to those appointed for it.

If we cannot excuse anything we can at least excuse the intention. (1884)

Try to excuse what you cannot understand. (1877)

Bear in mind that you have only to answer for your own faults. (1874)

There must be gentleness towards the erring of others. (1871)

Forgiveness is love. (1871)

Try to be blind to the faults of those around you. (1877)

#### Attitude Towards Self

Be calm and full of hope. (1871)

Let not your crosses make you unhappy. (1890)

We must look before us; do what we do well and refuse undertaking too much. (1898)

Our courage needs to rise with difficulties and obstacles. (1890)

Try always to be generous. (1882)

Keep young as long as you can. (1874)

Let us all have courage. (1874)

Of ourselves we can never be sure that all that looks good is really so. (1875)

Never be ashamed of work done for God and for God's poor. (1874)

Work with constancy and courage. (1876)

No duty is too little to be done well. (1873)

Be faithful in the least as well as the great. (1873)

Do all you can to work on in unity. (1882)

Let not weakness make you discouraged. (1876)

We must take things quietly and just do what our good God enables us to do. (1875)

No matter what your shortcomings you shall certainly succeed in the end. (1874)

When a duty is clear to me it must be done at any cost. (1899)

True happiness depends on ourselves not on those around us. (1907)

Attitude Towards God

Prayer is our great weapon. (1907)

God will provide for the future. (1907)

I must only trust in the mercies of God. (1867)

God loves each one of one of us notwithstanding our faults. (1874)

With God on our side what need we fear? (1890)

Lean more on God and less on ourselves. (1877)

God's ways and ours are so different. (1878)

Never is God nearer to us than when danger threatens. (1880)

If men and women forget, God does not. (1884)

Courage, courage trust in God who helps you in all things. (1874)

God will draw good out of evil. (1874)

When I could not see my way God kept my heart full of trust to make all come right. (1874)



God's love is too deep for words to express. (1874)

A certain sense of God's wonderful love strengthens me. (1873)

God wants us to take fresh courage. (1877)

God understands us better than we understand ourselves or each other. (1877)

God is good and merciful. (1870)

Trust in God. (1874)

God helps us walk on water like St. Peter until he began to fear. (1890)

I can never think of God but as one of such tenderness that cannot be cast off. (1890)

God's will be done. (1898)

#### Other Sayings

We must teach more by example than by word.(1867)

Gratitude is the memory of the heart. (1907)

There where you are you will find God. (1871)

So great is the strength we possess in our unity. (1874)

Keep your mind in peace whatever happens. (1890)

Let us never admit grades of distinctions we are all humble followers of Christ.

Be eager in your desires but patient in their accomplishment.

Never see a need without trying to do something about it.

## **II. Sayings of Mother Catherine McAuley**

*Our centre is God, from whom all our activities should spring.*

*The only return God requires of us for all his favours is a return of love.*

*Try to act so at all times, and in all places, that if our Divine Lord were to appear on earth again, He might not be ashamed to point you out.*

*Through love of God, we should refrain from saying, doing, or thinking anything which we know to be displeasing to him.*

*Be ever ready to praise, to encourage, to stimulate, but slow to censure, and still more slow to condemn.*

*Let us fit young women for earth without unfitting them for heaven.*

*While we place all our confidence in God, we must always act as if success depended on our own exertions.*

*It is better to help a hundred impostors, if there be any such, than to suffer one really distressed person to be sent away empty.*

*Mercy receives the ungrateful again and again, and is never weary in pardoning them.*

*Each day is a step we make towards eternity and we shall continue thus to step from day to day until we take the last step, which will bring us into the presence of God*

*It is a special favour of God to be made the servants of his suffering poor.*

*By our vocation we are engaged to comfort and instruct the sick poor of Christ. This is the principal reason why we are Sisters of Mercy*

*One thing is remarkable: no breach of charity ever occurred among us. The sun never, I believe, went down on our anger. This is our only boast.*

*You must waste time with people. A good beginning is of great importance.*

*We must not make too many laws. If we pull the strings too tight, they will break.*

*We should never falter in our confidence that God will make all things turn to the best. It is God's will that everyone called to His service should be happy.*

*We have one solid hope of happiness in our journeying - we can keep our hearts fixed on God. If we don't take Tullamore, no other community will.*

*Prayer can do more than all the money in the bank of Ireland. Let us pray well and never grow weary. It is for God we serve the poor, not thanks*

*In silence and quiet the devout soul becomes familiar with God  
Try to meet all with peace and ease*

*You must be cheerful and happy, animating all around you.*

*The comfort comes soon after a well received trial*

*Prayer is a plant, the seed of which must be nourished or it will die.*

*While we place all our confidence in God, we must act as if all depended on ourselves.*

*Since very little good can be accomplished without money, we must look after it in small as well as in great matters.*

*See how quietly the great God does all his mighty works.*

*No work of charity can be more productive of good to society than the careful instruction of women. Put you whole confidence in God, he will never see you want.*

*The only action God requires of us for all his favours is a return of love.*

*Let us take one day only in hands at a time. Resolve to do good today and better tomorrow. Our name is Mercy; our spirit is compassion.*

*Our hearts can always be in the same place, centered on God. Mercy...pardons again and again.*

*I have great confidence in you to do what you think best. State your opinion and always act with courage.*

*We should be as shining lamps, giving light to all around us.*

*Since very little good can be accomplished without money, we must look after it in small as well as in great matters.*

*We have one solid comfort amidst this little tripping about, our hearts can always be in the same place, centered in God, for whom alone we go forward or stay back.*

*Let us fit the young women for earth without unfitting them for heaven.*

*Draw people to God by your words, by your example and by the works of Mercy.*

*No matter how small the gift, God gives the increase.*

*Do all you can for God, because time is short.*

*Compassion should be our animating principle when undertaking instruction with children and adults, since they are made in God's image.*

*The poor need help today, not next week.*

*The truest poverty consists in seeing that our wants are scantily supplied and rejoicing in the scantiness.*

*Sadness destroys and undermines union with God.*

*Sadness is an enemy to devotion*

*May God bless and animate you with his own divine spirit*

### **III. Catherine McAuley's Prayers**

#### **Suscipe**

Perhaps the best known prayer of Catherine McAuley is one she called her Suscipe or Act of Resignation.

*My God, I am yours for time and eternity. Teach me to cast myself entirely into the arms of your loving Providence with a lively, unlimited confidence in your compassionate, tender pity. Grant, O most merciful Redeemer, That whatever you ordain or permit may be acceptable to me. Take from my heart all painful anxiety; let nothing sadden me but sin, nothing delight me but the hope of coming to the possession of You my God and my all, in your everlasting kingdom. Amen.*

#### **Children's Suscipe**

*My God,*

*I will belong to You forever.*

*Teach me to trust in You because I know you love me and will always be near me.*

*Help me always to obey You even when it is hard.*

*Take from my heart all fear.*

*Help me never to be sad, but always joyful, knowing that You are my God and that someday*

*I will be with You in heaven.*

*Amen.*

#### **Morning Consecration**

*O compassionate Jesus, look on me today with tenderness and give me the grace to walk on the path of mercy marked out for those who follow you. May all I do today reflect your merciful love. Amen*

#### **Prayer Before Meditation**

*Come, Holy Spirit, dwell in our hearts and kindle in them the fire of your divine love. O eternal God, grant to us, we beseech you, the fullness of your divine Spirit and give us openness to the inspirations of your grace. Help us to put aside every thought and concern that may distract us from your holy presence. Through the life and death of Jesus Christ and through the intercession of Mary and all the saints, we sincerely ask that this prayer may glorify you and bring us to salvation. Amen.*

#### **Act of Consecration**

*God of my heart, my whole desire is in loving you. I give myself to you without reserve.*

*I consecrate to you my heart. Receive it as an offering of love and unite it to your heart. I desire to dwell with you all my days.*

*I consecrate to you my will. May it be joined to yours in all things. May my deepest desire be to do what is pleasing to you. May your Spirit guide me in the way of obedience and may selfish desires not find a home in me.*

*I consecrate to you my understanding. May I see with your eyes and choose what is life-giving. May I forego all that is false and passing that I may embrace what is true and enduring. Let me desire the good and all that brings the good to birth. May your grace bring my desire to realization.*

*I consecrate to you my memory. Let me always remember your goodness and beauty. I shall take delight in remembering your favors - the love and mercy you have shown to me. May my heart be forever grateful.*

*I consecrate to you my body. Make me a worthy dwelling for your Spirit, Jesus. I give you all that I am and I accept whatever limitations, sickness, sorrows and death will be mine. Let me desire what you desire. No matter how painful the cross that is mine to carry, I receive it with confidence in your strength and grace. May I accept it with lively gratitude and carry it with joy and constancy. May the words of St. Paul strengthen me; "With Christ I am nailed to the cross."*

*I consecrate to you all that I may ever possess in goods, influence or status. All is yours. Do with me what you will. I consecrate to you all that I can - joys, sorrows, life and death - to offer you my love and to witness to others the joy of loving you. May I serve you with devotion, relying on the help of your grace. May I be yours without reserve until the last moment of my life. Amen.*

### **Thirty Days Prayer**

*It was Catherine McAuley's custom to pray two Thirty Days' Prayers in times of need, for benefactors and co-workers and at the establishment of a new foundation. The following is an adaptation of the prayers.*

Merciful Jesus, you inspired in Catherine McAuley a lively conviction of your enduring love. In times of need she and her companions faithfully entreated your help, and they were never disappointed. In this same confident spirit we come to you now.

Because you walked among us, you know our human experience. You have shared our joys and sorrows. You have healed and comforted us, sustained and renewed us. Be with us now in this time of need. Let us experience your loving presence as you grant us this favor we ask of you:

We also ask your blessing on our living and deceased family members, our sisters in community, our associates, companions and benefactors. Show them your loving kindness.

Encouraged by your care for us, we will with lively fidelity devote ourselves to the works of mercy. Through our good works, may your people experience your unceasing care for them. We ask all this through the intercession of Mary, your mother and the mother of Mercy. Amen.

**More Prayers which capture the charism of Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy can be found [here](#).**

#### **IV. Prayer of St Don Bosco**

Most Holy Virgin Mary, Help of Christian,  
how sweet it is to come to your feet  
imploping your perpetual help.  
If earthly mothers cease not to remember their children,  
how can you, the most loving of all mothers forget me?  
Grant then to me, I implore you,  
your perpetual help in all my necessities,  
in every sorrow, and especially in all my temptations.  
I ask for your unceasing help for all who are now suffering.  
Help the weak, cure the sick, convert sinners.  
Grant through your intercessions many vocations to the religious life.  
Obtain for us, O Mary, Help of Christians,  
that having invoked you on earth we may love and eternally thank you in heaven.

#### **V. Characteristics of Don Bosco's Prayer**

Article 86 of Salesian constitutions says that "Salesian prayer is joyful and creative, simple and profound. It lends itself to community participation, is drawn from life and flows back to it". It clearly expresses the attitude and the characteristics of Don Bosco's own prayer. Thus, Don Bosco's Prayer is characterized by: 1) A Prayer of Easter Joy 2) A Creative Prayer that sprang from his Commitment 3) A Profound Sacramental Prayer 4) A Simple Prayer 5) A Marian Prayer.

#### **VI. Nano Nagle sayings**

*By degrees, with the assistance of God, we may do a great deal."*

*"The Almighty is all sufficient."*

*"If I could be of service in any part of the world, I would willingly do all in my power."*

*"It is all in the power of the Almighty, we do not know what is best for us and ought to be resigned to the Divine Will."*

*"The Almighty makes use of the weakest means to bring about His works."*

#### **VII. The Penitential Act**

##### **Form A: Confiteor**

*I confess to almighty God And to you, my brothers and sisters, That I have greatly sinned In my thoughts and in my words, In what I have done and in what I have Failed to do, Through my fault, through my fault, Through my most grievous fault; Therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, All the Angels and Saints, And you, my brothers and sisters, To pray for me to the Lord our God. –*

Form B

Priest: Have mercy on us, O Lord.

People: For we have sinned against you.

Priest: Show us, O Lord, your mercy.

People: And grant us your salvation.

Form C

Priest: You were sent to heal the contrite of heart.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: You came to call sinners.

People: Christ, have mercy.

Priest: You are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us.

People: Lord, have mercy.

The absolution of the Priest follows:

Priest: May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

People: Amen

# Prayer and Meditation Practices in Year Ten

They continue to develop their understanding of prayer in the Christian tradition through an exploration of Centering Prayer; prayers for justice, peace and the environment, including the Prayer of St Francis, the Magnificat and the Cantic of Creation; and meditative prayer practices, including praying with the help of nature.

## ***Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding***

Believers pray for justice, for peace and for the environment, including The Prayer of St Francis, The Cantic of Creation and The Magnificat. The Prayer of St Francis is a prayer for peace. In a world often troubled by war and violence, it calls us to be instruments of Christ's peace and love. The Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) is Mary's song of hope in God's salvation and justice for all. The Cantic of Creation is a prayer of praise for the creator God.

## ***Skills***

Participate with respect in a variety of personal and communal prayer experiences, including prayers for justice, peace and the environment.

Analyse and explain the features of prayers from the Catholic and wider Christian traditions, including The Prayer of St Francis, The Magnificat, and The Cantic of Creation (e.g. language, vocabulary, images, purpose, context, structures, patterns, style).

## ***Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding***

Meditative prayer uses silence and stillness to assist believers to listen and talk to God. Believers use a range of practices (including praying with the help of nature) for preparing the body and the mind for meditative prayer, and for engaging in the 'work of meditation'. Lectio of Nature is a form of meditative prayer in the Christian tradition. All forms of vocal and meditative prayer are intended to lead believers to contemplation. Contemplative Prayer is the simple awareness of the presence of God. It is prayer without words or images. Centering Prayer provides a way of enriching and nurturing the spiritual life of believers.

## ***Skills***

Participate respectfully in meditative prayer, including Lectio of Nature.

Identify and use practices that assist preparing for and engaging in meditative prayer, including praying with the help of nature.

Explain how Centering Prayer nurtures the spiritual life of believers in a contemporary context.

## ***Achievement Standard Year Ten***

They participate respectfully in a variety of personal and communal prayer experiences, including meditative prayer; prayers for justice, peace and the environment; and meditative prayer practices.

## **Note:**

In terms of meditative practices, the goal of Christian meditation is that by the end of year ten, students should be able to engage in meditative stillness and silence for about sixteen minutes as well as the specific meditative practices mentioned for this year level.



## Practices to Assist Meditation

### 1. *Centering Prayer*

As the name suggests, centering prayer is the use of breath to focus inwards; to clear the mind of all thoughts and to rest in the Divine without words. It is the highest or purest form of prayer.

#### **Breathing Exercise**

**Note: For meditation, students should NOT lie down. They should remain seated, with straight backs. If children go to sleep, they are not meditating, they are relaxing.**

Close your eyes and let your body come to a quietness and stillness.

Listen to your breathing.

Breathe in slowly....

Breathe out slowly. .... (Repeat 3 or 4 times)

Practise breathing in through your nose and out through pursed lips. This is a special way of breathing when we meditate. Feel your breath as it comes in through your nose and as it passes over your lips.

Now, as you breathe in, count to four in your mind: In, two three four; and then blow out through your lips, out, two, three, four. You might pray as you breathe: Come Lord Je- sus.

Continue this pattern of breathing.

Now, discontinue your mantra. As you sit in stillness and silence, be prepared to wait as the Spirit of God surrounds you and rests with you and in you and by you, becoming part of you, even as you become part of the very pulse of the universe. Rest in God, even as God rests in you. There is nothing to do, but wait and rest in God....

When you are ready, come back to the present, take a deep cleansing breath and open your eyes.

You might wish to journal this experience, or to offer a prayer of thanks to God for the experience.

## 2. Contemplation

Contemplation is the end point of the “work” of centering, ritualising and meditation. The journey may be long – and take a lifetime even- but it is the culmination of what St Augustine captured in his famous saying “O Lord, our hearts are restless until they rest in you”. Having stilled the senses, quietened the body and entered the silence of the spheres, one can then rest quietly, at peace and undisturbed by the outside world, in the “still point of the universe”, the “centre of all being” by whatever name we know it to be: God, or the demiurge or the cloud of unknowing.

The “task” is resting in the power and the embrace of the “other”. It is no longer work, it is contentedness and stillness and awe. It is drawing from the wellsprings of creation to nurture, re-create, to heal and to grow. Christians say that in meditation the person does the work; in contemplation, God does the work.

In contemplation, there are no “aids” or symbols or “helps”. It is contented resting. One merely brings oneself. One knows when one has arrived.

## 3. *Lectio of Nature*

Like the *Lectio Divina*, the object of ***Lectio of Nature*** is to listen with the “ear of your heart” to the presence of the Divine in nature. It is a mindfulness exercise of stilling oneself in order to heighten awareness of the natural world around us.



## Lectio of Nature Walk

Just as the *Lectio of Scripture* involves reading, reflecting, responding and resting, so too a *Lectio of Nature* calls you to listen with the ear of your heart to what God present in the forces and beauty of nature is saying to you.

Your walk then is attentive; it is mindful and alert to all that is around you.

Its purpose is not to relax you, but rather to teach you, to form you, to recreate you, to nourish you.

Hence, it is better to do this alone and without words.

You may choose to take some sketching materials or writing materials with you to record your responses.

Before you start:

Centre yourself through the use of breathing. Close your eyes. Breathe in slowly and deeply. Hold that breath and then blow out slowly and at length. Repeat this breathing for about five minutes.

Then, when you experience an inner clam and stillness, set out purposefully and:

**Read** from the text of nature and all that is around you.

**Reflect** on things that speak to you: stop and wonder, pause and think on creation.

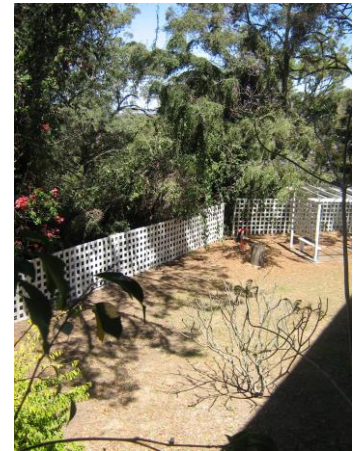
**Respond** in prayer, in gratitude, in writing or in images. Or simply “be” in awe and in the moment of it all.

**Rest /stay** in the wondering, drink in all that surrounds you. Be still, *for the presence of the Lord is moving all around!* Don't be in a hurry to move onto the next experience- enjoy the sensation while it lasts! Then move on slowly and purposefully until the next revelation occurs.

## Sensory Reflection Exercise

You can either wander, or rest quietly to do the following:

**What do I see?** (Take in the view) Repeat to yourself: I see....; I see....; I see ...until you cannot add anything. Be amazed how much you can see: from the small to the grand scale! We need to retrain our minds to “mindfully” take in all that is around us!  
**What insight (internal seeing) does this exercise give me?**



**What do I hear?** (Take time to listen to the sounds around you) Repeat: I hear....; I hear...; I hear... until you cannot add anything. Be amazed at what you can hear when you are still. **What am I hearing in my heart as a result of doing this exercise?**



**What do I smell?** (Take time to smell the environment around you.) Take some deep breaths and feel the air coming in your nostrils and then coming out of your body through your mouth. Then repeat to yourself: I smell....I smell.... I smell.... **What is the smell of God?**

**What do I feel?** Take time to feel the environment around you: by touch; through the soles of your feet; through your skin; your face; heat, cold, rough; smooth; wet, dry. **What does this experience leave me feeling inside?**



**BE** in the moment and give thanks to God for the gifts of creation.

Stop and hold your hand on something from nature and offer a spontaneous word or prayer of gratitude.

## Other Prayers and Rituals for use in Year Ten

### I. Peace Prayer (of St Francis)

#### Who Wrote the Peace Prayer of St. Francis?

by Friar Jack Wintz, O.F.M.

Few prayers are more popular around the world and better loved than the "Peace Prayer of St. Francis." Nearly everyone recognizes a happy harmony between the words of this prayer and the generous, joy-filled and peace-loving spirit of St. Francis of Assisi.

What will surprise many readers is that no serious scholar today, Franciscan or otherwise, would place the Peace Prayer among the authentic writings of St. Francis. In recent decades it has become evident that the prayer originated during the early years of the 1900's, but until recently no one has pointed out the exact year. Finally, researchers are getting to the bottom of the mystery.

About eight years ago, a Franciscan confrere gave me the e-mail address of French scholar Dr. Christian Renoux of the University of Orleans in France, who had come to know a lot about this issue. In 2001, Renoux authored a book in French, entitled *La priere pour la paix attribuee a Saint Francois. Une enigme a resoudre* (*The Peace Prayer Attributed to St. Francis: A Riddle to Be Solved*). While working on a writing project about 7 years ago, I asked Dr. Renoux if he could summarize his findings for me. Dr. Renoux kindly agreed to do so.

#### ▲ The Peace Prayer Takes a Circuitous Path

"The first appearance of the Peace Prayer," according to Dr. Renoux, "occurred in France in 1912 in a small spiritual magazine called *La Clochette* (the little bell). It was published in Paris by a Catholic association known as *La Ligue de la Sainte-Messe*, "The Holy Mass League," founded in 1901 by a French priest, Father Esther Bouquerel (1855-1923). The prayer bore the title of *Belle priere a faire pendant la messe*; "A Beautiful Prayer to Say During the Mass" and was published anonymously. The author could have possibly been Father Bouquerel himself, but until now the identity of the author remains a mystery.

"The prayer was sent in French to Pope Benedict XV in 1915. This was soon followed by its 1916 appearance, in Italian, in the *Osservatore Romano*. Around 1920, the prayer was printed by a French Franciscan priest on the back of an image of St. Francis with the title *Priere pour la paix*, "Prayer for Peace," but without being attributed to the saint. Between the two World Wars, the prayer circulated in Europe and was translated into English.

"The first translation in English that we know of appeared in 1936 in *Living Courageously*, a book by Kirby Page (1890-1957), a Disciples of Christ minister. Page attributed the text to St. Francis of Assisi. During the Second World War and immediately after, this prayer for peace began circulating widely as the Prayer of St. Francis and over the years has gained a worldwide popularity with people of all faiths."

The prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy;

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

## **Disturbance Prayer** Rina Wintour & Pat Lavercombe

Jesus, make me a channel of disturbance.  
Where there is apathy, let me provoke.  
Where there is compliance, let me bring questioning.  
Where there is silence, let me be a voice.

Where there is too much comfort and too little action,  
Grant disruption.  
Where there are doors closed and hearts locked,  
Grant the willingness to listen.

When laws dictate and pain is overlooked...  
When tradition speaks louder than need...  
When we refuse to take control of our own spiritual growth...  
Our own mission...  
Our own poor,  
Disturb me, O Lord ,  
Teach me to be radical. (R Wintour)

O Divine Master  
Grant that I may seek rather  
To do justice than talk about it;  
To be with as well as for, the poor;  
To love the hard-to-love as well as the lovely;  
To kiss the children of the poor rather than the feet of the crucifix.  
For it is in giving that we receive  
It is in walking-with that we truly understand.  
It is in challenging evil that we achieve justice.  
It is in the struggles of this life that we touch eternity.  
Lord, make me a channel of disturbance. (P Lavercombe)

## II. *The Magnificat*

This “prayer” is attributed to Mary by the writer of Luke’s Gospel. It does not appear in any other Gospel text. While it may well capture the feelings in Mary’s heart at the time she came to know of her role in God’s plan, there is no historical evidence that she actually used these words.

Rather, these are the words of every faithful servant of God, who is open to God’s plan despite a sense of powerlessness and disenfranchisement. It is the cry of the *Anawim of Yahweh*: the poor, the outcast, the powerless- the ones God tended to choose as messengers of the “Dream” to Israel and the world. Her prayer is reminiscent of the prayer of Hannah at the birth of the prophet Samuel (1Samuel 2:1-10). The mother of the saviour is speaking for the whole of her race that has laboured to bring forth the child of promise.

Like the Lord’s Prayer, the Magnificat is a very Jewish prayer and contains core themes from the Hebrew Scriptures: Numbers 6:24-26; Isaiah 54:8,10; Genesis 17:5-7; and in particular 1Samuel 2:4-8.

The prayer then should be prayed not as a Marian prayer, but of every servant of God. It is a prayer of praise, of surrender, of hope in God’s justice and mercy.

My soul magnifies the Lord,  
And my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.  
For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden,  
For behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.  
For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.  
And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation.  
He has shown strength with His arm:  
He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.  
He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree.  
He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent empty away.  
He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy;  
As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to His posterity forever.





### **III. Canticle of Creation**

#### **The Canticle of Brother Sun**

Most High, all powerful, good Lord,  
Yours are the praises, the glory, the honour,  
and all blessing.

To You alone, Most High, do they belong,  
and no man is worthy to mention Your name.

Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures,  
especially through my lord Brother Sun,  
who brings the day; and you give light through him.  
And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendour!  
Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.

Praise be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon  
and the stars, in heaven you formed them  
clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,  
and through the air, cloudy and serene,  
and every kind of weather through which  
You give sustenance to Your creatures.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,  
which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,  
through whom you light the night and he is beautiful  
and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth,  
who sustains us and governs us and who produces  
varied fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.

Praised be You, my Lord,  
through those who give pardon for Your love,  
and bear infirmity and tribulation.

Blessed are those who endure in peace  
for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.

Praised be You, my Lord,  
through our Sister Bodily Death,  
from whom no living man can escape.

Woe to those who die in mortal sin.  
Blessed are those whom death will  
find in Your most holy will,  
for the second death shall do them no harm.



Praise and bless my Lord,  
and give Him thanks  
and serve Him with great humility.

AMEN

---

Song, music, and poetry were so deeply a part of the nature of Saint Francis that in times of sorrow and sickness as well as of joy and good health he spontaneously gave voice in song to his feelings, his inspirations, and his prayers. The clearest expression of this aspect of the personality of the Poverello is the Cantic of Brother Sun. G. K. Chesterton, in his reflections on the saint, wrote of this work: "It is a supremely characteristic work and much of Saint Francis could be reconstructed from that work alone. " And Eloi Leclercq, O.F.M., has written: "The manner in which Francis here looks at the created world is a key to his inner self, for the Cantic undoubtedly has elements that reveal in a special way the personality of its author. "

The Cantic of Brother Sun is a piece of spiritual literature that comes at a transition period in the development of language, that is, when Latin was slowly becoming Italian. For this reason, philologists and literary scholars as well as students of spiritual theology have studied this work. In the twentieth century more than five hundred articles have examined the Cantic and within the past twenty years ten books have been written about it.

The Legend of Perugia, 43, narrates the circumstances of the composition of the first section of the Cantic, in which the saint invites all creation to praise its Creator. The author describes the intense suffering of the Poverello in that period after he had received the stigmata. "For his praise," he said, "I wish to compose a new hymn about the Lord's creatures, of which we make daily use, without which we cannot live, and with which the human race greatly offends its Creator." The second section of the Cantic, consisting of two verses concerning pardon and peace, was composed a short time afterward in an attempt to unite the quarrelling civil and religious authorities of Assisi. The same Legend of Perugia, 44, describes the reconciling power the Cantic had in the resolution of the conflict. The final verses of the work, which constitute the third section, were written at the death of Saint Francis. Once again the Legend of Perugia, 100, provides the details of the scene at the Portiuncula where the Seraphic Father enthusiastically sang the praises of Sister Death and welcomed her embrace.

This magnificent hymn expresses the mystical vision of the Saint of Assisi and, since it springs from the depths of his soul, provides us with many insights into the profundity of his life of faith in the Triune God, Who so deeply enters into creation. In this vision, however, the Little Poor Man does not lose himself in space or in the vastness of the created world. He becomes so intimate and familiar with the wonders of creation that he embraces them as "Brother" and "Sister," that is, members of one family. More than any other aspect of the Cantic, this unique feature has enhanced the spiritual tradition of Christian spirituality.

(This introduction on the "Cantic" has been taken from: The Classics of Western Spirituality - Francis & Clare - Translation and Introduction by: Regis J. Armstrong, OFM, Cap. and Ignatius C. Brady, OFM).

[http://www.franciscanfriarstor.com/archive/stfrancis/stf\\_cantic\\_of\\_the\\_sun.htm](http://www.franciscanfriarstor.com/archive/stfrancis/stf_cantic_of_the_sun.htm)

# Prayer and Meditation Practices in Years Eleven and Twelve

## ***Religious Knowledge and Deep Understanding***

Prayer in the Christian tradition nurtures the spiritual life of believers. Vocal prayer, meditative prayer and contemplative prayer are ancient examples of this.

## ***Skills***

Analyse and appraise the significance of prayer in the Christian tradition (vocal, meditative and contemplative) in the lives of individuals and communities (e.g. spiritual and emotional needs, devotional life, personal search for meaning, cultural identity, personal and communal wellbeing).

## **Note:**

In terms of meditative practices, the goal of Christian meditation is that by the end of year ten, students should be able to engage in meditative stillness and silence for about sixteen minutes as well as the specific meditative practices mentioned for this year level.

# Appendices

## **Guided Body Relaxation:**

Invite participants to sit with their feet on the floor and with backs straight and eyes closed. They can also regulate their breathing. (See next activity). Beginning with the toes, have them close their eyes and focus on their toes. Have them pull their toes back under the soles of their feet- “scrunching” them to the point of tension and/or pain. Then have them relax the toes by stretching them out and feeling the release of pain and tension. Repeat this three times.

Move to the balls of the feet and have participants push the balls of their feet (behind the toes) into the floor and feel the tension/pain in their calf and shin muscles. Then they drop their foot flat to the floor. Repeat three times. Then do this with the heels of their feet. Next, have them lift their legs off the ground and hold them out straight and pull their feet back towards their calf (not with their hands). Again remind them to be aware of the tension/pain in their shins and calf muscles. Repeat three times.

For the abdomen, have them raise their buttocks slightly off the chair and clench these muscles using their thighs, holding the tension to the point of trembling or pain. Release and repeat three times. Then pull the pelvic floor muscles towards the spine, holding and releasing them three times.

This process of tightening and releasing can be applied to the shoulders, by pulling them backwards and then releasing; the fingers dug into the palms; pectorals by clenching the fist and bending the elbows, pulling the arms towards the body; releasing neck muscle tension by gently moving the head from side to side; clenching the jaws and releasing them by rolling the jaw; scrunching the forehead muscles down towards closed eyes then pulling them up and open. Massaging the scalp with fingers/fingernails will help relax tight scalp muscles.

There are two “tasks” here. One is to reconnect with various parts of our bodies, some of which we may not think about much! It gives us the opportunity to think about the parts of our body with which we feel comfortable; parts which we do not like, or even despise; parts which have caused us pain and hurt, or which we would like to change. Issues of self-acceptance and self-love can plague many of us all our lives, with all sorts of complex consequences.

The second “task” is to experience tension in these body parts-even recognise the sensation when they are tense when we have not realised it-and then to experience relaxation and to recognise that sensation as well.

All the while, we should try to slow our breathing, using it to help the physical manifestation of relaxation of the muscles.

1. Let's begin by practising a little bit of conscious breathing.  
Make sure your feet are placed firmly on the earth, your body is centered, your back is straight, shoulders relaxed.  
Allow your breathing to come down into your belly.  
You may like to smile and enjoy standing for just one moment.
2. Begin with your feet slightly apart, arms at your sides.  
Breathing in, keep your elbows straight as you lift your arms in front of you until they're shoulder level, horizontal to the ground.  
Breathing out, bring your arms down again to your sides.  
Repeat the movement three more times.
3. This movement can be done with your palms either facing inward, toward each other, or facing out to the front as you reach up to the sky.  
Breathing in, lift your arms in front of you and bring them all the way up, stretching them above your head.  
Touch the sky!  
Breathing out, bring your arms slowly down again to your sides.  
Repeat three more times.
4. In this exercise, you make a large circle with your arms.  
Breathing in, bring your palms together in front of you.  
Raise your arms up and separate your hands so your arms can stretch up over your head, and continue the circle, arms out, circling back, until your fingers point toward the ground.  
Breathing out, lift your arms back and reverse the circle, bringing your palms together as your arms come down in front of you.  
Repeat the movement three more times.
5. Move your feet out to the side so they're shoulder-width apart and put your hands on your waist.  
As you do this exercise, keep your legs straight, but not locked, and your head centered.  
Breathing in, bend forward at the waist and begin to make a circle with your upper body.  
When you're halfway through the circle, your upper body leaning back, breathe out and complete the circle, ending with your head in front of you while you're still bent at the waist.  
Do this three more times.
6. This exercise is called the frog.  
Begin with your hands on your waist, heels together, feet turned out to form a V, so that they make a 90° angle.  
Breathing in, rise up on your toes.  
Breathing out, stay on your toes, keep your back straight, and bend your knees down as far as low as you can keeping your upper body centered and without losing your balance.  
Breathing in, straighten your knees and come all the way up, still standing on your toes.  
From this position, repeat the movement three more times, remembering to breathe slowly and deeply.
7. In this exercise, you touch the sky and the earth.  
Your feet are hip-width apart.  
Breathing in, bring your arms up in front of you and stretch all the way up, with palms facing out in front of you as you touch the sky.  
Breathing out, bend at the waist as you bring your arms down to touch the earth. From this position, breathe in, and keep your back straight as you raise all the way back up and your arms reach back up to the sky.  
Breathing out, bend forward and bring your arms back down to touch the earth.  
Touch the sky and the earth three more times.

You have finished seven Mindful Movements. Stand firmly on two feet again and breathe in and out.

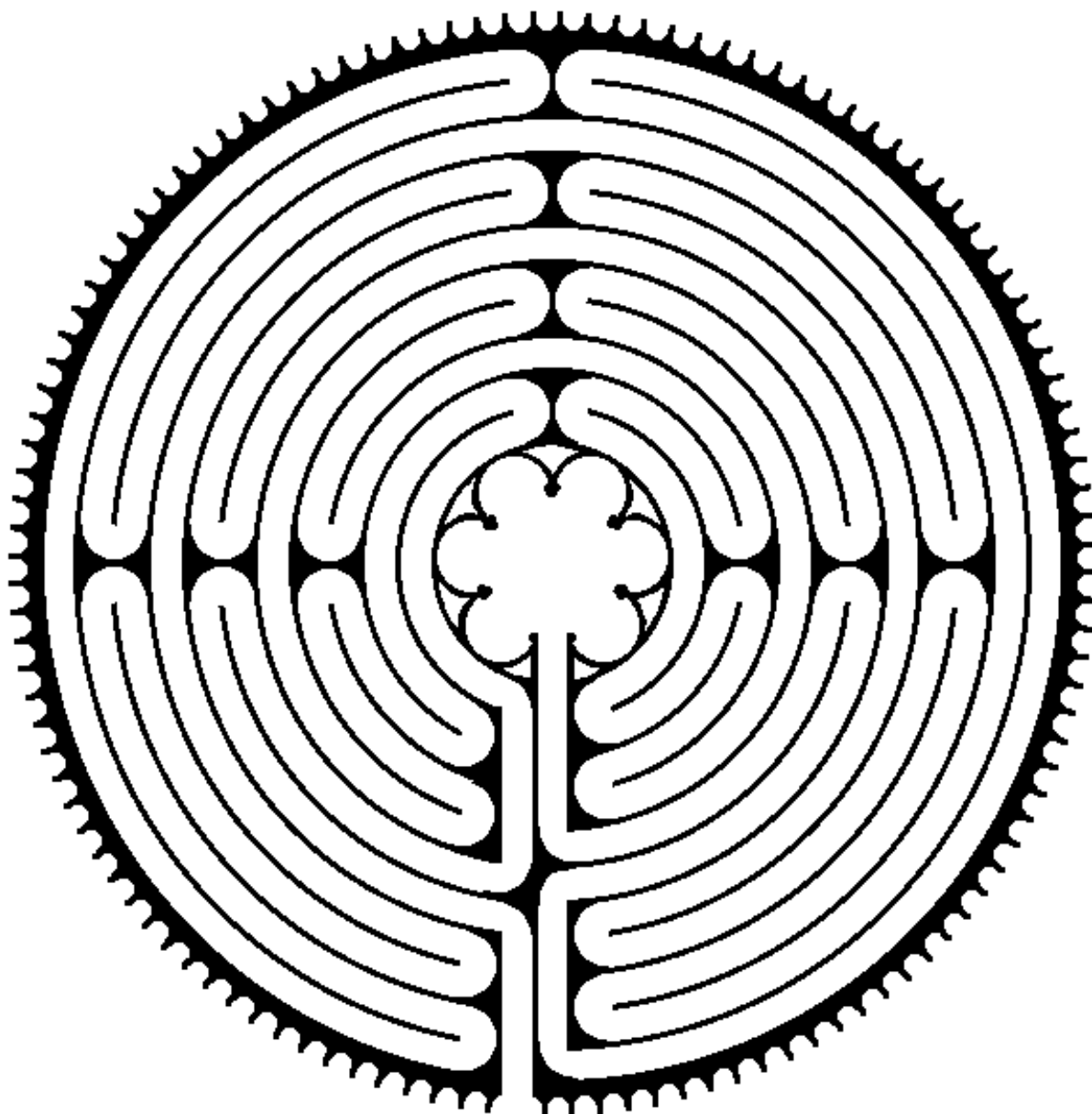
Feel your body relax.

## A Mandala to Colour



## A Labyrinth to Colour or Trace

If the centre is your journey, up to now, to a relationship with the Divine, what colours would you use to describe that journey?



## **Praying with Icons**

### **What is an Icon?**

An icon is not simply a piece of art, but it carries a lot of spiritual meaning. They have been referred to as 'theology in colour'. The difference between an icon and a portrait is that an icon is the image of a man or a woman who is united with God. Other characteristics also define an icon. Icons are a liturgical art and as so there are guidelines and principles which should be adhered to. There is no rule book but traditions that have endured since the 4th Century. Icons are said to be a window not a picture. Traditionally they are not signed as this would make them a work of art rather than a sacrament or a portal through which one can meet God.

Icons can be linked to the funerary portraits of the Ancient Egyptians but have been used since the beginnings of Christianity. Icons were a significant part of the early Byzantine, Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches and the tradition is still in place today. Early icons were often privately owned and portable. They were various shapes and sometimes were made as folding panels either 2-diptych or 3-triptych. They had aesthetic and didactic function.

### **Understanding Icons**

When one views an icon they are drawn into the image –the eyes will most often be directed at the viewer and this creates relationship and communion with the subject. Icons are intended to lead us closer to the heart of God. An evil figure in an icon will be shown in profile and not facing the viewer.

The stylized form of icons has been handed down for many hundreds of years. There is no evident source of external light but rather the light is meant to be glowing from within, the inner light of sacred figures and the divine light of Christ. There are no shadows as it is believed that all darkness has been driven out by the light of the Resurrection. The effect of this is that the images seem somewhat rigid and lifeless. Icons give the impression of complete flatness and the lack of perspective. It is only with deeper engagement with the image in a deeper and prayerful presence that the icon reveals itself to the viewer –it speaks to the inner self rather than the outer senses.

There is a psychological perspective which is based on the principle that the most important figure in the composition should be the largest and centrally placed. The viewer's attention is drawn to what is central and larger rather than to what is marginal and small.

Icon painting has the ability to represent several moments of the same story on one panel. The icon depicts a reality not bound by time and space. For example, in the scene of the Nativity we can see not only the birth itself, but also the arrival of the Magi, the shepherds spreading the good news, Joseph being tempted by the devil, and even the servant women washing the baby. Some scholars call this the "continuous style."

Other features of icons which help us in understanding their meaning are simplicity, clarity, measure or restraint, grace, symmetry or balance, appropriateness, and symbolic colours.

The act of working on an icon is an act of prayer and traditional iconographers were considered to be holy or even mystical people. When one creates an icon it is said they have 'written' the icon –just as a theologian would write in words, the iconographer writes in images. It is called 'writing' because it is more prayer than art and the elements are composed and assembled very carefully. Selecting the chosen elements from the master's prototype is like playing a piece of classical music –one uses the score and stays true to the intent but it will always be open to interpretation.

### **Features**

The following features are traditions that developed over centuries:

- Figures face the viewer and full expression is seen
- The eyes are large and wide because they have seen great things beyond the material world.
- The forehead is often large and high, expressing spiritual wisdom.
- The ears are large to listen to the words of God.
- The nose is drawn long and thin because it does not smell the things of this world but rather the aroma of spiritual fragrance.
- The gentle lips indicate that the saint obeyed God and also that only needs a small amount of food to survive.
- In Orthodox iconography the halo symbolizes the holiness of the person.
- A distinctive feature of the icon of the Virgin is the three stars –one her forehead and one on each shoulder to represent the Holy Trinity. The stars on the Virgin's veil represent her purity and goodness.
- The hands can be conveying a message: -'she who points the way'; a hand holding a scroll signifying the word of God; Jesus as a miniature adult who raises his hand in blessing.

### **Colour in Iconography**

More than decorative elements colours play a very important role in Byzantine iconography.



- Gold is reserved for Christ and symbolizes divinity. Traditional Icons are gilded with gold leaf. The gold shines through on the halos and other parts of the Icon. The gold symbolizes the eternal uncreated light of God and his heavenly kingdom.
- White is used to show heavenly purity and divinity. Icons of the resurrection will often show Christ in white robes pulling Adam and Eve from the depths. White is also used to depict swaddling clothes of babies, the shrouds of the dead and the robes of angels.
- Purple was the Byzantine symbol of royalty. It is used in icons to represent Christ's Kingdom
- Red is used in icons to represent humanity and the saving nature of the resurrection. It is the color of blood and thereby signifies life on earth.
- Blue signifies the heavens and the kingdom of God not on this earth. Byzantine icons of Mary show her with red outer garments and blue ones on the inside. This signifies her original human nature (the red) and her heavenly nature (the blue). In Eastern iconography Mary was depicted in red or brown to depict her as a physical (grounded) being but the earliest icons depict her in blue. It could have depended on the availability of pigment. Lapis Lazuli was ground to create the blue colour and was a very expensive stone.
- Icons of Christ will show him with Blue outer clothing and red inner clothing. Christ's inner garment is red and symbolizes his humanity. His outer garments are blue and symbolize his true divinity. In addition to blue, red and green are also reserved for Christ and Virgin Mary.
- Green is the color of the living earth and has been used to portray youth, hope and where life begins. This contrasts to brown which is meant to show our fallen nature on earth and that we will all eventually become dust.
- Black is used in Iconography to portray evil and death. Demons and satanic beings are portrayed in black. However, several religious orders use black vestments and in this case black is used as part of the traditional dress of the order.
- The colors of white, gray, blue, green, and light shades of red are used for other holy persons.

While the above describe the colours that were traditionally used many variations occurred due to the cost and availability of the natural pigments. Many older Icons were written in different parts of the world where some pigments were not available. There are many classical Icons where green has been substituted for blue because blue pigments were not available. Many older icons have been retouched over the years and variation in colours occurs on the same Icon due to differences in pigments. Over the years many Iconographers have deviated from the traditional styles and incorporated new colors into Icons.

### **How is an Icon Made?**

- Traditionally they were made of wood and painted in one of two methods: one used tempera paint (pigment bound with egg yolk) or the other an encaustic process using molten wax. In both cases the surface was primed with gesso –originally made with marble dust, chalk, gypsum and binding glue (rabbit skin glue).
- Pigments were hand ground and very precious being sourced from coloured rocks and semi-precious stones. These were mixed with egg yolk and this produced a translucent colour.
- Gold leaf was used and on the most elaborate gem stones were in laid.
- There is a sequence to the writing of an icon: from the back ground to the most specific detail such as the face and adornments. Gold is not always used but can be applied first as a constant reminder of the holiness and light of the subject. In practice it can be applied at any stage.
- The image was developed using the prototypes of the masters for inspiration.
- This was then engraved into the prepared panel and painted from the background to the foreground.

Evelyn Chapman

## Some Scripture Texts for Lectio Divina

*So then, let us always seek the ways which lead to peace and the ways in which we can support one another* **Romans**

**14:19**

*Therefore encourage one another, and build each other up* **1 Thessalonians 5:11**

*You are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you. Do not be afraid.*

*I am with you.* **Isaiah 43:4**

*Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand. Is* **41:10**

*If one part is hurt, all the parts share its pain (I Corinthians 12:26a), if one part is honoured, all the parts share its joy*

**1 Corinthians 12: 26b**

*I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you.* **Isaiah 43:1**

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*Jesus said "I will be with you always, even until the end of time."* **Matthew 28:20**

*The Spirit has given us each a special way of serving others.* **1 Corinthians 12: 7**

*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

**Ephesians 4:32**

*Be still and know that I am God...*

*Be still and know that I am...*

*Be still and know...*

*Be still...*

**BE... Psalm 46:10**

*Each of you is part of the body of Christ, and you were chosen to live together in peace. So let the peace that comes from Christ control your thoughts. And be grateful.*

**1 Colossians 3:15-16**

*I give you peace, the kind of peace that only I can give.*

**John 14:**