

Little school of prayer

Make the decision.



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

Be faithful in little things.



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

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

ROMANO GUARDINI

Take time to pray.



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

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

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

Prepare a place.



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



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

MATTHEW 6:6

Rituals give structure to your prayer life.



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

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

SAINT GERTRUDE THE GREAT

Week One – My path with God

WEEK
1
SUNDAY

YOU KNOW ME



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

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

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

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

+ **Lord, open my senses**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



I saw you

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

JOHN 1:47–49

Silence

My petition for the day...

Our Father

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

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

MATTHEW 6:9–13

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

Come to us

Come to us, O God, when the night surrounds us!
Come to us in the night of disappointment,
Come to us in the night of guilt,
Come to us in the night of fear,
Come to us in the night of hatred,
Come to us in the night of loneliness,
Come to us in the night of lost love,
Come to us in the night of anxiety,
Come to us in the night of pain,
Come to us in the night of questioning,
Come to us in the night of rejection,
Come to us in the night of broken relationships,
Come to us in the night of despair,
Come to us in the night of hopelessness,
Come to us in the night of death.



Come to me in my night
and stay with me, my God,
in every night. Amen.

In sickness

Lord, I have time. A great deal of time.
When I was healthy, I thought how beautiful it would be
to have plenty of time.

Now I do have time, necessarily so.
But these hours and days
are another kind of time.
Time to think and time to ponder,
to question, and to make reproaches too.
So many things are going through my head.



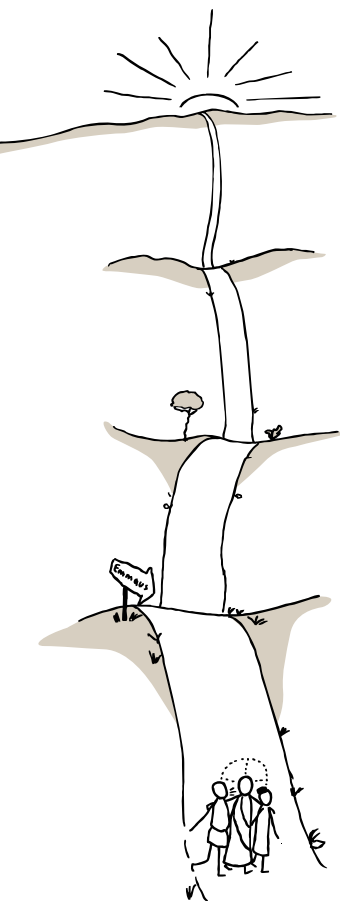
Lord, I need you.
Help me to keep courageous, trusting, and confident
in your goodness to us, your children.
May you be our God, in joy and suffering. Amen.

BLAISE PASCAL



Fear knocked at the door. Faith answered. And **lo**, no one was there.

Author unknown



Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.

The disciples on the road to Emmaus, LUKE 24:29

On the road to Emmaus

My eyes are locked in,
my memory trapped and in chains.
Imprisoned in the horror experienced,
like the loop of a recurring film.

My hopes are utterly dashed,
my faith is disillusioned,
my love has been fooled and shamed,
crucified and derided,
and even its body has been stolen.

Behind me, my Jerusalem.
I look back to the town
in frozen horror.
Before me, an Emmaus,
with some lodgings, somewhere
on the way to nowhere.

Tell me, unknown traveler,
what really happened there?
And who was it that I believed in?

Help me, mysterious teacher,
unlock my frozen gaze,
and open up the door
of my imprisoned memory.

Stay with me, strange friend,
for evening is near
and my day is almost done –

unless you break the Bread for me,
and open my eyes to recognize You. Amen.

GEORG LENGERKE (see Luke 24:1–35)



These words of the Gospel are the first prayer addressed by the Church to the risen Christ. It is a prayer – without even being aware of it – an everyday phrase that springs from a deep emotion, gratitude, joy, and a profound yearning and concern combined. Rarely was a more beautiful prayer uttered.

HEINRICH SPAEMANN

Glossary of names

Alcuin of York, Saint (735–804). Anglo-Saxon, Benedictine abbot, and adviser to Charlemagne; taught many great figures of his age. **126**

Alphanus of Salerno (ca. 1015/1020–1085). Benedictine abbot, poet, and physician. **68**

Ambrose of Milan, Saint (339–397). Bishop of Milan, theologian, administrator, and Doctor of the Church. **37, 83, 90–91, 118**

Augustine of Hippo, Saint (354–430). Bishop, spiritual writer, theologian, and Doctor of the Church. **22, 32, 36, 50, 101, 107, 153**

Benedict of Nursia, Saint (480–547). Hermit, then founder of Benedictine order and author of its Rule; highly influential for later religious orders. **33, 118**

Benedict XVI, Pope (Joseph Ratzinger, *1927). Priest, archbishop, and theologian; elected Pope in 2005. **15, 54, 60, 64, 72, 78, 101, 152, 158–159, 165**

Bernanos, Georges (1888–1948). French Catholic writer. **44, 106**

Bernard of Clairvaux, Saint (1090–1153). French Cistercian abbot, preacher, and mystic; greatly influenced political events of his time. **99, 138, 161**

Bloom, Anthony (1914–2003). Russian Orthodox monk, bishop, and spiritual writer. **15, 131**

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich (1906–1945). German Lutheran pastor and theologian; opposed Hitler, imprisoned, and executed in Flossenbürg concentration camp. **45, 66, 139**

Buber, Martin (1878–1965). Jewish philosopher and writer on religion. **26**

Catherine of Siena, Saint (1347–1380). Italian lay Dominican, mystic, and Doctor of the Church; renowned for her letters to major figures of her time. **109**

Chardin, Pierre Teilhard de (1881–1955). French Jesuit and palaeontologist. **30**

Charles de Foucauld, Blessed (1858–1916). Wild youth, then deep conversion as soldier in Africa; became monk, priest, and hermit among Muslim Tuareg in Sahara; later died there as martyr. **107, 141**

Claudel, Paul (1868–1955). French poet and dramatist. **112**

Clare of Assisi (1193/1194–1253). Italian; at the age of eighteen followed Saint Francis of Assisi in his radical new monastic way of life; foundress of the Poor Clares. **162**

Claudius, Matthias (1740–1815). German poet and journalist. **93**

Delp, Alfred (1907–1945). German Jesuit theologian and writer; executed for resistance to Third Reich. **49**

Domin, Hilde (1909–2006). German poet. **134**

Eckhart, Meister (ca. 1260–1326). German Dominican mystic and spiritual writer. **24**

Ephrem the Syrian, Saint (ca. 306–373). Great poet of early Church whose mystical writings often merge into prayer and praise; Doctor of the Church. **52**

Faustina Kowalska, Saint (1905–1938). Polish nun and mystic who experienced the revelations of Divine Mercy. **97**

Francis de Sales, Saint (1567–1622). French Bishop of Geneva and outstanding pastor of post-Reformation era; religious founder and Doctor of the Church. **14, 97, 125, 129**

Francis of Assisi, Saint (1182–1226). Italian; renounced father's wealth at age twenty-four to "follow naked the naked Christ"; founder of Franciscan Order, mystic, and renowned for sense of unity with all God's creatures. **74, 124, 140–141, 163**

François-Xavier (Nguyen Van Thuan, 1928–2002). Vietnamese priest, bishop, and cardinal who spent thirteen years in prison for his faith and nine in solitary confinement. **129**

Gertrude the Great, Saint (1256–1301/1302). German Benedictine, mystic, and theologian; renowned mystic, Scripture scholar, and spiritual counselor. **13, 58**

Guardini, Romano (1885–1968). Italian Catholic priest and philosopher; profoundly influenced liturgical and youth movements of his time in Germany. **12, 21, 66, 71, 107, 135, 153**

Hammarskjöld, Dag (1905–1961). Swedish politician and writer; United Nations General Secretary and Nobel peace prize winner. **106**

Hermann von Reichenau (Hermann the Cripple, 1013–1054). Benedictine monk on island of Reichenau, Lake Constance, Germany. Poet, musician, teacher and polymath. **160**

Hildegard of Bingen, Saint (1098–1179). German Benedictine abbess, poet, musician, mystic, natural healer, and sought-after counselor. **103, 161**

Höfer, Alfons (b. 1937). German Jesuit priest and theologian. **42**

Houselander, Caryll (1901–1954). English lay-woman, artist, poet, popular religious writer, and mystic. **116**

Ignatius of Loyola, Saint (1491–1556). Founder of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), important teacher of the spiritual life, and author of the *Spiritual Exercises*. **55, 123**

Irenaeus of Lyons, Saint (c. 135–c. 202). Important Father of the early Church. **21**

Jean-Marie Vianney, Saint, (Curé of Ars, 1786–1859). Simple French priest renowned for his holiness and wisdom in the confessional; patron of priests. **28, 109, 127, 147**

John Henry Newman, Blessed (1801–1890). English Catholic convert from Anglicanism, cardinal, renowned writer, theologian, and philosopher. **30, 31, 48, 57, 96**

John Klimakos (Climacus), Saint (525–c. 606). Greek monk, hermit, ascetic, and writer. **133**

John Paul II, Blessed (Karol Wojtyła, 1920–2005). Polish theologian, bishop, and Pope from 1978 to 2005. Charismatic spiritual leader; played crucial role in collapse of communism; founder of World Youth Days. **56, 63, 77, 124, 165, 166**

John of the Cross, Saint (1542–1591). Spanish Carmelite priest, poet, and mystic; Doctor of the Church. **44, 117**

John XXIII, Blessed. (Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, 1881–1963). Patriarch of Venice; Pope from 1958 till 1963; called Second Vatican Council. **138**