

PRAYERS & REFLECTIONS

For Australasian Teachers

2021



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Introduction

The beauty and simplicity of saying a prayer is that anyone can do it, anytime, anywhere. One does not have to be especially holy or eloquent to have a quiet word with God. Trying to pray, even if it is a stumbling and clumsy attempt, is a start. It is always the intention in the heart that comes before the articulation of the words that is most important. God does not worry about grammar.

We pray at different times, for different reasons, in the different seasons of our lives. Our prayer lives and experiences are as unique as we are. Sometimes we want to thank God exuberantly for the abundance of gifts we enjoy; other times we want to praise and honour him. Sometimes yearning or impotence or outrage or sorrow or guilt may be at the bottom of our hearts as we seek to find answers to questions that mystify us and occasionally ambush us. God always answers us, but it may not be quite the answer to our prayers that we were expecting. The poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning reminds us:

*God answers sharp and sudden on some prayers,
And thrusts the thing we have prayed for in our face,
A gauntlet with a gift in it.*

Praying is not always easy – such good things sometimes require practice and persistence.

There are many different ways to pray, depending on time and place, inclination and personal preference. Sometimes we relish communal prayers of solidarity and identity and belonging; sometimes we want the solace of a one-on-one with God, whomever we perceive him or her to be in the light of our own

particular affiliation. We can recite traditional Christian prayers, such as the Our Father, which do not need too much thinking about as recitation is grooved ineradicably into memory and there's a comfort in these well-worn words. We can pray as we work, study and walk, small spontaneous chats in the daily round. We can pray in silence or while listening to the dawn chorus, the orchestra of creation humming its hymn of joy as a new and unscripted day unfolds in our lives.

Mahatma Ghandi reminds us that Prayer is the key of the morning and the bolt of the evening. The habit of prayer helps us in our daily lives as we confide in the God who knows, understands and loves us. It bookends our days with the sacred; a time when we can tell the truth away from the demands, deadlines and occasional duplicities that can comprise any workplace. But, when we pray, collectively, collegially and intentionally, a new institutional identity is created. We build ourselves into better and that benefits everyone. The habit of prayer can profoundly affect the way we treat each other and treat ourselves. It gives us time to reflect, to soul-search, to look beyond the here and now and to recognise that, in what we do every day in nurturing the children in our care, we are working for eternity.

The primacy of prayer as a communal response was highlighted last year during the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Prayers were ever more urgent during this time of crisis and prolonged uncertainty when we sought solace, individually and collectively. Whilst faith and community gatherings were limited in number, prayers were numberless and ceaseless from people of goodwill caring for the plight of their fellow human beings. Prayer provided hope; a wellspring of wisdom on which to cast our doubts and despair and to find, in turn, the spiritual strength and solidarity needed to rise above fear and panic.

Prayer is for both good times and bad times. It can provide ballast and buoyancy when the world is perplexing and is a means of expressing joy, gratitude and praise when things are going well. The beauty of prayer is that there is a miraculous elasticity that covers the infinitesimal variations inherent in the human condition. Our prayer life is a co-creation with God and it lends us time to look beyond the temporal timetable to which we are so often chained. Prayer gives us spiritual space. It comes from the truth of who we are, unmasked and unmediated. And when we pray together, as a class or staff or before a meeting or a school assembly, we are creating a larger prayer, multiplying its intensity and purpose because it has our collective intention behind it.

It has wings.

It is hoped that this book will provide the reader with some insight and inspiration, something that they can take with them as they undertake this most crucial job of educating the next generation of Christians and of citizens. Perhaps it will be a just-in-time resource for the prayer roster or it may be the prompt for deeper unpacking and consideration. It may find the sacred in the secular and the wisdom of the ages for a new audience. Prayer is spiritual sustenance. It is a gift that we can use anytime, anywhere – and we know that we are always heard by the God who loves us.

Ann Rennie & Gemma Thomson

25 January – 29 January

Monday

25.1.2021



As we begin the 2021 school year, we give thanks for the new opportunities and challenges it will present. There will be surprises and serendipities, doubts and delights. There will be short weeks and long terms and the colour and movement of life in and beyond the classroom. We will be reminded of the challenges we faced in 2020, particularly the coronavirus pandemic and its wide social and economic repercussions. We will be proud of our collective impulse to come together as an Australian community that looks after each other through struggle and success. As we look forward let us take with us an attitude of gratitude for all we do have. Let us build ourselves better and stronger this year as we acknowledge that in all we do we are always in it together as part of God's greatest gift – the human family.

Ann Rennie





Tuesday
26.1.2021
AUSTRALIA DAY



Lord of this Great Southern Land,

*Bless all those who live here,
that they may live in peace and harmony together,
respecting difference and diversity and the creeds and
cultures that make us so marvellously multicultural.
This is our national blessing of inclusivity and acceptance.*

*Bless our First Peoples,
who have stewarded this land for millennia
and let us listen to and heed their ancient wisdom.*

*Bless those who have arrived in later waves of migration to
settle and contribute to this land we all call home.*

*Bless us as we work together for the common good and the
future of our island continent.*

Amen.

Ann Rennie

Wednesday

27.1.2021



Prayer of the New Year

Faithful companion, in this new year I pray:

*to live deeply, with purpose,
to live freely, with detachment,
to live wisely, with humility,
to live justly, with compassion,
to live lovingly, with fidelity,
to live mindfully, with awareness,
to live gratefully, with generosity,
to live fully, with enthusiasm.*

Joyce Rupp
Anchors for the Soul



Thursday

28.1.2021



*Feet are for walking,
mouth is for talking.*

*Dear Lord, help me not
to put one into the other.*

Amen.

James. M. Fitzpatrick
Prayers for the Journey

Friday
29.1.2021



*What you are
is God's gift to you,
what you become
is your gift to God.*

Hans Urs von Balthasar