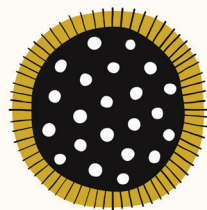
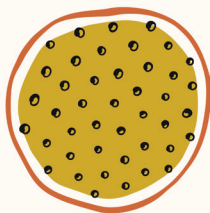
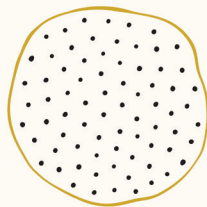
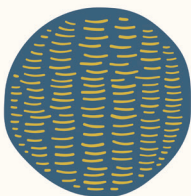
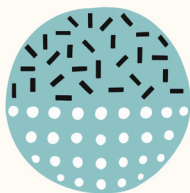
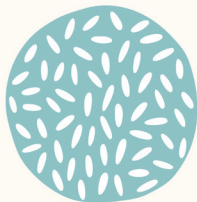


PRAYERS & REFLECTIONS



for TEACHERS



Compiled by Ann Rennie



Published in Australia by
Garratt Publishing
32 Glenvale Crescent
Mulgrave, VIC 3170
www.garrattpublishing.com.au

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Cover Design by Garratt Publishing
Compilation and extra text by Ann Rennie
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ISBN 9781922484178

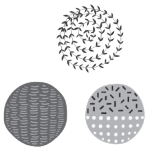


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Introduction

The Jesuit theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin emphasised the integral nature of the spiritual and transcendent in human experience; that numinous more of us beyond the mere daily transaction of living. This is the part of us that rises beyond blood and bone into the heavenly realm of the mystery of encounter with the divine.

The sacred experience moves us from the ordinary struggles of this finite life. Throughout millennia, human beings have prayed above and beyond themselves to the creator; the God of beginnings, the God of the Genesis story, who saw all creation and named it good.

Ancient civilisations had their creation myths with marvellous and sometimes wrathful deities. Our First Nations people have their Dreaming stories and ancestral explanations for the land and its creatures and their elemental bond to it. We have an abiding Judeo-Christian story and a covenantal relationship with a triune God who loves us. We also have the richness of other faith traditions whose foundational precepts share similarities in outlook, highlighting love, justice and compassion for others and obedience to a higher power.

In Australia, we understand that we all have different ways to God and may well worship in churches, shrines, synagogues,

temples, and other gathering spaces such as halls and convention centres. Even without a particular faith affiliation, we may still possess a spiritual sensitivity or dimension without necessarily conforming to a religious framework or tradition. What we all belong to is the human family in all its rich diversity. We also belong to the beliefs, rituals, ethics and sacred stories that build our worshipping communities and how we individually live out those communal expectations day to day.

This is our multicultural miracle.

What we do share is the capacity to pray, reflect and commune spiritually, whether as individuals or in institutions. This capacity to slow down and think beyond the urgencies and busyness of our lives and their frenetic pace and daily demands, enables us to reach our inner selves. Here we can seek forgiveness and enlightenment and be moved beyond the immediate and earth-bound. In prayer we have the possibility, as William Blake wrote,

*To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.*

We also come to acknowledge that time properly devoted to a prayerful pause or personal reflection is necessary for holistic balance. With prayer, all things are possible.

Prayer is a gift.

It is time surrendered and oriented very differently from the other uses of time wedged into the busyness of the day. It is time honoured as we free ourselves from digital demand or due dates and deadlines. Especially in school systems with their timetables, bells, assessment tasks and the corridor

crush, we can often feel like we are running on empty. Gentle reflection is a balm and benison for all who take this time out to ponder the sacred in their lives; the God-things and good things, the holiness all around us, the blessings in disguise, the simple joys of the day ahead, still with its busyness and tasks to do, but anchored in the holiness and dignity of work and agency.

Prayer sanctifies the daily struggle and allows us the time to recognise the everlasting in the everyday. When we pray we commit to doing and being better; we get out of our own way to think of others and of God and how we can live more authentically. Prayer moves us from words to action. Pope Francis reminds us to be people of peace in prayer and deed. The two must work together if we are to make our classrooms, schools, homes, neighbourhoods, states and countries peaceful.

When we start with prayer in our hearts, our intentions are already oriented towards outcomes as we put ourselves into the presence of God. When we pray for peace we become peace-filled and act that way in the world. Saint Teresa of Avila emphatically reminded those who asked that the purpose of prayer was always good works, good works, good works.

Prayer is transformative. Perhaps the question we should ask ourselves is: Do we pray-oritise? Do we allow ourselves and others to be the beneficiaries of this sacred and profound religious and human tradition? When we pray, we enter that special spiritual zone where we offer the truth of ourselves to God. We are unmasked and unmediated – in direct communication. We may not be eloquent or articulate in our private prayers, but we are heartfelt and earnest.

Sometimes, we can pray together in words long-loved and traditional, that remind us of our identity and belonging

and the common ground we share. We recite these from the heart. Sometimes our own urgencies and preoccupations will be the impetus for spontaneity; prayers that spring from our anxieties or questions or our love and compassion for others in our lives.

As we pray, we psychically remove ourselves from the clang and clamour of the external world to reside, albeit briefly, in the silence of spiritual surrender. We are immersed and present. Here we have the chance for the nourishment of the soul – that part of us that wants to be united with the universal goodness of the Spirit. In prayer, we ask and seek and thank and lay our hearts open to be lifted up. As Saint Teresa of Calcutta reminds us: 'God speaks in the silence of the heart. Listening is the beginning of prayer.'

Are you listening?

True for ourselves and true also for our students, is that we must make the time to pray. This small sliver of time has to be built into daily practice. It is symbolic of what is common to a worshipping community. Prayer may well be part of homeroom gatherings or time set aside at the start of an RE lesson; its routine nature becomes (over time and with consistent and careful practice) embedded as part of the school culture. It then becomes a natural part of the school's culture to respond with prayer to daily concerns, larger liturgical celebrations and the occasional life-or-death events that can cause upheavals or uncertainty in generally cohesive and stable groups. When prayer is a natural response to all that happens in a community, it identifies and holds that community together. We are reminded that whenever two or three are gathered in Jesus' name, he is there amongst them.

As the school year unfolds, with its predictable patterns and its occasional upheavals, it is important that we do not

neglect our inner lives. This resource book aims to provide you with words of hope and consolation; words to uplift you and with which you can carry forward the Good News to those you teach and work with.

Give the students time to pray and reflect, seeking words of inspiration from sources spiritual and secular; words to shape their lives and the future they are building, lesson by lesson, day by day.

Ann Rennie



24 January – 28 January

Monday

24.1.2022



*For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD,
plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a
future with hope.*

Jeremiah 29:11

As we start the new school year we gather as a school community to bless the work we will do over 2022. We will need collegiality and collaboration as we build the future.

Let us place our joys and sorrows and hopeful expectations in God's care as we ask for a blessing over all who belong to our school.

Ann Rennie



Tuesday
25.1.2022



We give thanks for the holidays we have just enjoyed;
the time to regenerate and relax, to catch up with family
and friends and catch up with ourselves.

Let us be thankful for those unburdened days as we rejoin
the busy rhythm of our working lives at school.

Remind us to continue to find time out for those small
delights as our year unfolds.

Ann Rennie

Wednesday

26.1.2022

AUSTRALIA DAY



As we celebrate Australia Day around the country, let us remember we are a nation of migrants and settlers who have arrived in waves to inhabit a land already in the custodianship of the First Nations people who have lived on this land for 60,000 years. We have many blessings in this land down under. Let us look to all the stories that unite us so we can find common ground in our island continent. Let us honour the past, dignify the present and work towards the dreams of the future as we make Reconciliation real.

Ann Rennie



Thursday
27.1.2022



*To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower;
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.*

William Blake

Small wonders remind us that the world is beautiful and that
the gift of each new day is a blessing.

Ann Rennie

Friday
28.1.2022



*Wisdom teaches her children
and gives help to those who seek her.*

Sirach 4:11

Wisdom is something we acquire through our own life experience, the ebbs and flows of our ordinary days. It is a rich and enduring gift that can aid others in their own journeys. If we are wise, we will also continue to listen to those around us. Wisdom shared within a community strengthens all.

Ann Rennie

**How do you intend to share your wisdom
with colleagues this year?**

Prayers and Reflections for Teachers is a must-have resource for the busy teacher's toolkit. Accessible and engaging, it provides spiritual and inspirational insights to help teachers as they manage the demands and duties of the contemporary educational landscape. It puts a thoughtful spin on the work teachers do as they negotiate the changes in an increasingly secular pluralist society.

Whether a teacher needs a just-in-time reflection for a staff meeting, a prayer to start the day in class, or a prayer for personal use, this prayer book is essential. It offers an invaluable opportunity for a brief pause to pray and ponder, and to steady teachers for the pace of the school day.

*'Every page provides a refreshing wellspring for that important quiet pause in our otherwise busy day. What Ann has chosen and written here resonates with the opening lines of Psalm 42: **Like a deer that yearns for running streams, I yearn for you, my God!** Each prayer and reflection carries fresh water that enables our spirits to flourish and celebrate.'*

– Charles Watt, DP Faith & Mission,
Genazzano FCJ College



www.garrattpublishing.com.au

