

The
Catholic
Youth Prayer
Book

Third Edition



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SPEAK,



LORD,

for your



SERVANT

is

listening.

1 Samuel 3:9



Introduction

Why We Pray

The simplest and most profound way to define *prayer* is as a conversation with God. When we are able to focus ourselves in prayer, we open our hearts to God and we gain new insights and new perspectives.

When we talk with God and ask for help, we are in conversation with the One who has the power to do or change anything. God even has the power to change us. Sometimes, we ask for God's guidance in a certain way and then find out we have grown differently. Placing our needs and concerns before God allows us to share our struggles with one who is loving and accepting, and who wants what is best for us.

In the process, not only do we often find that a situation or problem is better than we thought, but we can also see the situation from a new perspective. This is the power and grace of God at work.

Sometimes, amid challenging times, we might feel sorry for ourselves. We might ask God for things that may not be good for us. For example, "God, please make _____ love me" might be the prayer of a heartbroken person.

Psalm 139:13 tells us that God knew us before we were born. God knows everything about us. Because we do not know all that God knows, it is possible that we don't always ask for what is best—especially if our vision is clouded by heartbreak or selfishness.

Even though our plans might not turn out as we prayed, God often surprises us with wonderful alternatives. For example,

many young people have prayed to attend a college they had their hearts set on. When they were not accepted, they might have been disappointed. However, God may have opened a door for them to attend a different school, one that was perfect for them. Their years there were great, and they discovered a major that suited them perfectly.

Sometimes prayer helps us to recognize the presence of God in our lives amid pain and suffering. When a loved one is sick, we may pray for a cure. The cure may not come, but in prayer, we find that God walks with us in our suffering and gives us the strength we need.

All of this is part of the wonder of prayer. We intentionally spend time in conversation with God so that we may be shaped in the image of Jesus and grow to love what he loved as deeply as he loved.

As the Son of God, Jesus knew and experienced the Father intimately. The experience of God as a loving parent is offered to us in prayer. Jesus was love and gave everything he had for others. The process of being changed into love is ours in prayer. God loves us profoundly and wants to give us things. God wants us to ask. God also offers something more for us in prayer. God offers a relationship that fulfills the deepest longing of the human heart.

Imagine it, believe it, and then—*pray!* Pray when you are

- reflecting on events
- contemplating big decisions
- asking or petitioning for yourself or others
- struggling with life
- feeling grateful for people who are important to you
- celebrating your gifts and accomplishments
- searching for something more

How to Use This Book

Although prayer is personal in many ways, it is also a community experience. When you pray, God hears you. In addition, all the angels and saints pray for you and your prayer. Family, friends, and other people you know are united with you in prayer too. Therefore, prayer is ever changing, ever growing, ever evolving.

Because of the community aspect of prayer, some prayers have been handed down for many generations. These traditional prayers may have their origins in Scripture, the life of a saint, a Catholic teaching, or a specific person or event.

This book contains a collection of prayers. It includes some traditional prayers for you to pray. It also includes some contemporary and traditional ways to pray, such as an adaptation of the form of prayer known as the Liturgy of the Hours, and journaling. These options offer variety in the way you choose to pray, which might depend on your mood, needs, and energy level.

The table of contents gives an overview of the prayers and prayer forms in this book. In addition to the prayers in each chapter, you will also find articles that dive deeper into prayer, notes that help you learn about prayer in general, and articles that describe the origins of certain prayers or ways to be inspired in your own prayer life.

Strategies and Tips for Prayer

Be intentional about how you incorporate prayer into your life. If you have so much as uttered the words “But I don’t know how to pray,” then you are already on the way to learning how to pray. At the very least, prayer is talking to God, and there is no right or wrong way to do that. This book will introduce you to many great ways to pray. Just ask God to guide you, and God will plant the seeds of deeper prayer in your heart.

Think about how you like to pray. Is there a place or thing that inspires you to live a prayerful life? Create a prayer space, a prayer box, or a prayer journal containing the information and tools you need to allow yourself the opportunity to pray often.

Consider having some of the following items nearby or in your prayer space. They can help to create an environment for prayer or help you to invite a friend, parent, or sibling to pray with you.

- *The Catholic Youth Bible*® or another edition of the Bible
- a pen and paper or a digital device for writing prayers and thoughts
- a cross or crucifix
- a rosary
- a candle and matches or a lighter (Remember to practice fire safety!)
- prayer cards
- pictures of saints or family members who inspire you
- a prayer shawl or blanket
- a rug or mat
- a small table with a tablecloth
- holy water

- statues or icons of saints
- a small fountain (for the sound of water)
- a chair or other special place to sit or kneel
- flowers or other items from nature
- this book, other books, and resources that include prayers and writings that inspire you
- music
- art supplies, such as markers, paints, clay, chalk, and paper
- a special item, such as your baptismal candle or a grandparent's rosary
- a resource (print or digital) that lists the weekly readings

Draw Near to God

However you choose to use this book, we at Saint Mary's Press hope it leads you to a closer relationship with the living God who loves you more than you can possibly imagine. We hope it strengthens your connection to your community and deepens your understanding of the person God calls you to be. As you think about your prayer life, remember that there is no right way and no singular path. Just trust, and let yourself be guided by the words found in the Letter of James, "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you" (4:8).



Proverbs 3:5



Part I

PRAYERS FOR DAILY LIFE

1

Prayers throughout the Day

Morning Prayers

Our Hope

Psalm 33:20–22

Our soul waits for the Lord;
 he is our help and shield.
 For in him our hearts rejoice;
 in his holy name we trust.
 May your mercy, Lord, be
 upon us;
 as we put our hope in you.

The Morning Offering

O Jesus,
 through the Immaculate Heart
 of Mary,
 I offer You my prayers, works,
 joys, and sufferings
 of this day for all the intentions
 of Your Sacred Heart,
 in union with the Holy Sacrifice
 of the Mass
 throughout the world,
 in reparation for my sins,
 for the intentions of all my relatives
 and friends,
 and in particular for the intentions
 of the Holy Father.
 Amen.

Morning Praise

Psalm 63:2–6

O God, you are my God; at dawn
 I seek you;
 for you my soul is thirsting.
 For you my flesh is pining,
 like a dry, weary land without water.
 I have come before you in the
 sanctuary,
 to behold your strength and your
 glory.

Your loving mercy is better than life;
 my lips will speak your praise.
 I will bless you all my life;
 in your name I will lift up my
 hands.
 My soul shall be filled as with a
 banquet;
 with joyful lips, my mouth shall
 praise you.

Reflection

Sanctifying the Day

To *sanctify* means to set something aside for holiness. Just how do you sanctify your day, or make it holy?

God makes things holy!

To set your day aside for God, simply recognize that you are in God's presence constantly. God is already there and already aware of what is happening with you. Remember this. Turn to God and say yes.

Think of God's presence in your life as being like the wind. It is constantly around us. God's presence and call to us are as real as the air we breathe. We cannot see air. Although it is invisible, although it is most often forgotten, air is still real. It still gives us life.

In the middle of a busy day, remembering God can be hard. But God doesn't go away when we don't think about God. God is all around us, like the air we breathe.

Use a reminder that will help you to remember to turn to God, perhaps every time the bell rings if you are at school. Pray: "Thank you, God, for being with me. Help me to stay near you as I continue my day."

Connect your day with God. Make it, and yourself, holy.

Prayers for Being Authentic

Prayer for Holy Words

Merciful Jesus,
 It is very easy for me to join
 my friends
 when someone is being talked
 about,
 when the conversation is
 about something inappropriate,
 or when the language becomes
 nasty.
 Give me the right words when
 the wrong words are being used.
 May my words be only those that
 will bless others,
 not hurt or offend them.
 Amen.

Living True

Jesus,
 Sometimes I know exactly what
 you want me to do,
 but I don't have the courage to
 do it.
 I am tired of being this way.
 Help me to stand up straight
 and be who you made me
 to be—
 Strong, confident, and unafraid.
 Amen.

My Heart

Dear God,
 My mind is filled with worries,
 My heart is scared to love.
 My body shakes with fear,
 My soul cries out for help.
 You say,
 "Do not let your hearts be
 troubled" (John 14:1).
 My heart is the center of me.
 So by not letting my heart
 be troubled,
 I'm free!
 Free to love and follow you,
 And though I do not know
 What my future will be,
 I am sure that I'll be rewarded
 By the happiness of others and
 My opportunity to be with you.

I Want to Do Good Work in the World

Lord,
You call me to great things.
You have created me good.
In my Baptism, you placed
 within me
the same Spirit
that raised Christ Jesus from
 the dead.
Help me, Lord,
to open my heart
and let the good that you have
 placed in me
flow out into the world.
Amen.

The Path I Want to Walk

Loving God,
The Bible says
that your Word is a lamp for
 my feet
and a light for my path.
Light my way, God,
while I fill out college
 applications
and choose my major
and interview for jobs.
Help me to find the path
that you have laid out for me.
Amen.

When I'm Feeling. . . Tempted

“No trial has come to you but what is human. God is faithful and will not let you be tried beyond your strength; but with the trial he will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to bear it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

“Pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Compete well for the faith.” (1 Timothy 6:11–12)

“Because he himself was tested through what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.” (Hebrews 2:18)

Reflection

Saint Ignatius of Loyola

Saint Ignatius of Loyola is an inspiration to all who have been confused about what they should do with their life or what God calls them to, or perhaps to those who think they are following God but then get turned around.

Ignatius began life as, well, a partier. He was rich and popular and hung out at the royal court with all the other rich and popular people. But he was also a soldier. After being hit by a cannonball in battle, Ignatius was laid up for quite a while. The only books around were those about Christ and the lives of the saints. With nothing else to do, Ignatius began reading. These stories stirred his soul to the point that he committed himself to a life of faith and virtue.

Exactly what that meant, however, wasn't clear. Ignatius decided to travel to the Holy Land, which is modern-day Israel and surrounding areas. After a long and difficult journey, he arrived, only to be told he had to leave. He often suffered from poverty and bad health and was the victim of rumor campaigns. Years after his injury, Ignatius gradually began to understand God's way. Eventually, he founded a religious order called the Society of Jesus, also known as the Jesuits. Ignatius centered the life of his order on a love for Jesus that was lived every moment of the day. He challenged the other Jesuits to become aware of God's calling in the small things. He instructed his followers to stop at moments throughout the day and to be aware of how they were saying yes to God.

7

Prayers for Justice and Peace

The Seven Principles of Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic social teaching outlines principles that summarize seven priorities in society and how we are called to work to bring about God's justice for all.



1. The Life and Dignity of the Human Person

Human life is sacred, and the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of Catholic social teaching.



2. Call to Family, Community, and Participation

The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society—in economics and politics, in law and policy—directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community.



3. Rights and Responsibilities

Human dignity can be protected, and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to the things required for human decency, such as food and housing.



4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are doing. In a society marked by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.



5. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected—the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.



6. Solidarity

We are one human family no matter our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace.



7. Care for God's Creation

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

See chapter 6 for prayers relating to the Care for God's Creation.

Prayers for Humanity

A Prayer for Life

Father and maker of all,
you adorn all creation
with splendor and beauty,
and fashion human lives
in your image and likeness.
Awaken in every heart
reverence for the work of
your hands,
and renew among your people
a readiness to nurture and sustain
your precious gift of life.

Grant this through our Lord
Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God forever and ever.
Amen.

Seeing Dignity

God,
Help me to always see that each
human life has dignity,
and is sacred and priceless
in your eyes,
so that I may honor your
precious gift of love at
all stages,
and in all conditions.
Amen.

A Prayer to Love Like God

O God, source of all life
and goodness,
you have created all life as an
act of love.
Every person exists in your image
and likeness,
even those people I don't
always like.
Give me the courage to love as
you love by
loving all my neighbors,
forgiving those who have
hurt me,
and offering mercy to all,
knowing that each person is
precious in your eyes.
Amen.

You Know Me

Psalms 139:13–14

You formed my inmost being;
you knit me in my
mother's womb.
I praise you, because I am
wonderfully made;
wonderful are your works!
My very self you know.

10

Praying with Saints and Holy People

Prayers of Well-Known Saints

Only One Thing Is Necessary

Saint Alphonsus Liguori

O my God, help me to
remember—
That time is short, eternity is long.
What good is all the greatness
of this world at the hour of
death?
To love You, my God, and
save my soul is the one thing
necessary.
Without You, there is no peace,
no joy.
My God, I need fear nothing
but sin.
For to lose You, my God, is to
lose all.
O my God, help me to
remember—
That to gain all I must leave all,
That in loving You I have all
good things: the infinite riches
of Christ and His Church, the
motherly protection of Mary,
peace beyond understanding,
joy unspeakable!

Eternal Father, your Son has
promised that whatever we ask
in His Name will be given to
us. In His Name I pray: give
me a burning faith, a joyful
hope, a holy love for Jesus
Christ. Give me the grace of
perseverance in doing Your
will in all things. Do with
me what You will. I repent of
having offended You. Grant,
O Lord, that I may love You
always and never let me be
separated from You.
O my God and my All, make me
a saint!

Take Me, Give Me

Saint Catherine of Siena

Lord, take me from myself and
give me to yourself.

Take, O Lord, and Receive

Saint Ignatius of Loyola

Take, O Lord, and receive my
entire liberty, my memory, my
understanding and my whole
will. All that I am and all that
I possess You have given me:
I surrender it all to You to be
disposed of according to Your
will. Give me only Your love
and Your grace; with these I
will be rich enough, and will
desire nothing more. Amen.

**Grant, O Lord,
That My Heart**

Saint Ignatius of Loyola

Grant, O Lord, that my heart
may neither desire nor seek any-
thing but what is necessary for
the fulfillment of Thy holy Will.
May health or sickness, riches
or poverty, honors or contempt,
humiliations, leave my soul
in that state of perfect detach-
ment to which I desire to attain
for Thy greater honor and Thy
greater glory. Amen.

O My God, Teach Me

Saint Ignatius of Loyola

O my God, teach me to be
generous:
to serve you as you deserve
to be served;
to give without counting
the cost;
to fight without fear of being
wounded;
to work without seeking rest;
and to spend myself without
expecting any reward,
but the knowledge that I am
doing your holy will.

All Shall Be Well

Saint Julian of Norwich

All shall be well, and all shall
be well, and all manner of
thing shall be well.

The Fruit of Prayer

Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta

The fruit of silence is prayer;
The fruit of prayer is faith;
The fruit of faith is love;
The fruit of love is service;
The fruit of service is peace.

Reflection

Communion of Saints

Many who lose loved ones still feel very close to those who have died. The Church feels the same way. When a Christian is baptized, they become a member of the Body of Christ. In Baptism, a Christian is intimately bound with Jesus and all other Christians. It is a bond that nothing can break—not even death!

This means that all the holy ones who have gone before us, and those who are still alive, join us. When we pray, God hears our prayers, but many people actually pray for us, multiplying our prayers. This community of prayerfulness is called the Communion of Saints.

Think about the phrases “We’re pulling for you,” “I’ll be thinking of you,” “You’re in my prayers,” and other ways we express our solidarity with, and compassion for, people in our lives. Everyone who has gone before you is pulling for you, all the saints are praying for you, and you are supporting the entire community of faith. Every one of them! Believe it.