

# Children's Daily Prayer

Under the Southern Cross

A Liturgy of the Hours for the classroom:  
an Order of Prayer for each school day that reflects  
the spirit of the Church's Seasons and Feasts

2026

  
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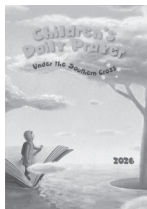
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# Before you use this book

## What is this book and who is it for?

An annual liturgical prayer resource:

- ~ containing day-by-day prayer, Monday to Friday, for the current school year.
- ~ for students in parish schools, in parish religious education/sacramental classes or in religious education classes in government schools

## What are the features of the 2026 edition?

It's an up-to-date resource that:

- ~ provides a single prayer service for each day
- ~ looks ahead to the Sunday gospel each Friday
- ~ contains five short introductions to the psalms:
  - Psalms are Prayers
  - Psalms are Poems
  - Psalms are Shouts
  - Psalms are Cries
  - Psalms are Cosmic Chants

## What is unique about this prayer resource?

It is based on the church's long tradition of praying at different hours of the day. That's why it's called the Liturgy of the Hours or the Prayer of the Church. The pattern of Daily Prayer is based on that of the Hours of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer. It uses:

- ~ hymns
- ~ psalms
- ~ scripture readings
- ~ reflection on the scriptures
- ~ intercessions (At the beginning of the year, encourage children to write in names on their birth dates and names of deceased relatives and friends on anniversary dates.)

## Why use this book?

*Children's Daily Prayer Under the Southern Cross:*

- ~ is 'all there' and hence, user-friendly
- ~ is led by students
- ~ helps students to pray with the scriptures
- ~ builds familiarity with the saints of our tradition, and other people of note
- ~ broadens students' horizons by reference to the important celebrations of other faiths
- ~ enables students to bring together prayer and daily life
- ~ introduces students to a way of praying which might sustain them throughout their lives
- ~ helps students to pray with the mind and heart of the church

## Why a new book each year?

*Children's Daily Prayer Under the Southern Cross* is like a new diary every year. **Right there** on the **right day** and the right date and on the **right page** are the prayers and readings for every day of the school year.

## Why a book for each CLASSROOM?

- ~ students can participate in ritual action
- ~ students can take regular turns in leading class prayer
- ~ students can voice their own individual concerns in prayer
- ~ classes can choose their own hymns

## Who else might use this book?

This book can be used:

- ~ to begin staff prayer and other school-based meetings
- ~ by students in any Christian schools
- ~ to begin parish meetings
- ~ by RCIA groups
- ~ by ministers on their visits to the sick
- ~ as a resource for family prayer

# Organisation and Content

## How is *Children's Daily Prayer Under the Southern Cross 2026* arranged?

The book is organised into sections of two kinds of sections – *Liturgical Seasons* and *Ordinary Time*.

### *Liturgical Seasons*

- Lent
- Eastertime
- Advent



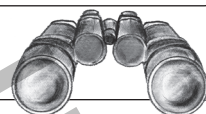
Normally Lent and Eastertime are both sub-divided into Early and Late, but variations in the dates of Easter and holidays can change this.

### *Ordinary Time Months*

Months of the year as they occur during Ordinary Time (does not include the Liturgical Seasons). Each named month (eg June) may include a few days from the month before or after (ie May and July).



**For each month or liturgical season**, there is an introduction called **Looking Ahead** and a psalm for that section of the book.



## How are the Scriptures organised?

Daily Prayer for **Monday to Thursday** has its own schema of readings. This schema:

- is designed to introduce students to the great figures, epic stories and major themes of the bible
- is not linked to the daily mass readings except for feast days
- generally includes a series of readings about the public ministry of Jesus from the featured gospel writer for that year
- spreads longer readings and stories from particular books of the Bible over a number of days or weeks. [Note: To gain maximum benefit and to keep the continuity of these stories, the full sequence needs to be read on the indicated days.]
- uses the same scripture translation as the Lectionary for Masses with Children

**The readings for Friday** will normally anticipate the gospel reading for the following Sunday. This keeps a connection with the whole church hearing the same gospel on the actual Sunday.

**Many of the readings are simple excerpts from one of the books of the Bible**, eg Matthew 1:18–21. **Others are made up of verses selected from a longer passage.** In these cases, the scripture reference reads, for example, 'From Acts 1:15–26'. This makes it clear that a number of verses have been omitted for the sake of brevity or clarity.

## Feasts, Saints and other persons

The book celebrates the major feasts of the church's year and honours many of the church's traditional saints.

- Quite often this takes place on a nearby date rather than the official one. The feast of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, for example, might be observed on August 7 or 9 instead of August 8
- The book also remembers a wide range of women and men who have made the world a better place but have not been formally declared 'holy' by the Catholic Church. They come from a range of Christian traditions; some may not have been religious persons, but all have reason to be held in high esteem

# On each daily entry you will find:

- 1. An **Introduction** to help focus the prayer for the day
- 2. A **Hymn** to begin the prayer
- 3. A **Psalm** for the month or season
- 4. A **Scripture Reading**
- 5. A **Reflection** on the scripture reading
- 6. A time for **Prayers of Intercession**
- 7. A **Closing Prayer**

## Wednesday Daily Prayer

January 28, 2026

[Reminder: The Psalm for February is on page 4. Make a copy for each member of the class.]

### 1. Introduction

As we begin a new school year, we want to be friends – with each other and with God. Our Daily Prayer will help us be good friends. Each day we are taught how by a short reading from the Bible. We read today from a letter in the New Testament written by the apostle John. He reminds us that God wants us to love each other as much as he loves us. This isn't always easy. At school we are often in class with others who are not yet our friends. Let's make John's teaching our motto as we begin our new school year!

Often in our Daily Prayer we remember great friends of God from the past. Mary Ward was one of these. Five hundred years ago, she pioneered a new way of life for women combining action (especially girls' education) and prayer. She founded the Loreto Sisters and the Congregation of Jesus. Mary was a woman of great courage, creativity, prayer and holiness, and an inspiring leader.

✠ All make the Sign of the Cross.

### 2. Hymn

### 3. A Psalm for February

[Turn to page 4.]

### 4. Reading

**From 1 John 4:7-21**

Listen to the words of the first letter of John:

My dear friends, we must love each other. Love comes from God, and when we love each other, it shows that we have been given new life. We are now God's children and we know him. God is love, and anyone who doesn't love others has never known him.

God is love. If we keep on loving others, we will stay one in our hearts with God and he will say one with us.

We love because God loves us first. But if we say we love God and don't love each other, we are liars. We cannot see God. So how can we love God, if we don't love the people we can see?

The commandment that God has given us is: 'Love God and love each other!'

The word of the Lord.

### Reflection 5.

How do you feel about being in a new class? Are you ready to be loving to everyone? Are there any new students in the class who might be feeling lonely? How can I love them?

### Closing 6.

Blessed be God, Creator of days and seasons.

Let us all say: Blessed be God for ever!

**Blessed be God for ever!**

Let us bring our hopes and needs to God, as we pray:

**God, our companion, hear our prayer.**

[Pause for students to name their prayer wish. All join in the response each time.]

Let us pray with the words that Jesus taught us:

### Our Father ... 7.

Loving God, you give us this new school year and new friends with whom to share it.

Bless all who pray and work and learn together.

May this year bring peace and harmony throughout the world.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

[Sing 'Alleluia!']

✠ All make the Sign of the Cross.

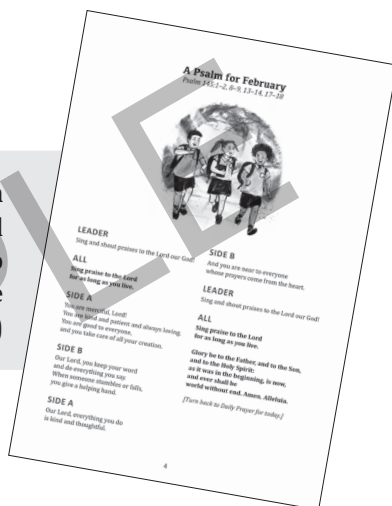
# For the Teacher or Catechist

What is the best way to use this book?



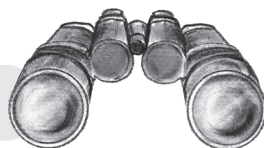
**One book for each classroom**, shared by the leader and reader

**Copies of the Psalm for the month or season for each student.** (Do these copies in seasonal colours and have students insert them into prayer folders, which they might make at the beginning of the year.)



**Student leadership – leader and reader.**

Familiarity with the **Looking Ahead** pages.



**Use regularly!**

# **The Gift of Prayer**

**Prayer is a gift – a gift of grace, gladly shared.  
Prayer teaches, prayer transforms, prayer opens the way!  
Prayer is personal, prayer is shared.**

**Praying together:**

- **helps us discover the goodness of God**
- **opens our eyes to the wonder of creation and to its wounds**
  - **opens our hearts and hands to one another**
    - **fosters forgiveness**
- **deepens our compassion for the struggles of our world**
  - **creates a safe space to name our needs and desires, our disappointments and frustrations**
- **leads us into our Judeo-Christian story, its people of spirit, and its rituals**
  - **makes us a welcoming community of faith**
  - **sheds the light of faith on our daily lives**
- **connects us across time and space with loved ones, living and dead**
  - **shapes our classroom community**
- **enables teachers to share their wisdom and guide their class.**

**Prayer is a springboard for exploring mystery, for becoming our best selves.**

**It's the living stream that waters our mission of social justice,  
our pastoral care, our sacred rites, our solidarity.**

**It's a way of being, of learning, of loving.**

**Prayer is the work of God's great Spirit within us.**

**Prayer brings Jesus to birth with in us.**

**Prayer is a gift of grace.**

# February

Wednesday 28 January to Tuesday 17 February





# Ordinary Time ~ February 2026

## Looking Ahead

### About the Month

For students, families, teachers and all concerned with schooling, the end of January means 'back to school.' While holidays are over, summer continues. Days are hot and daylight hours long. They still call us to beaches, rivers and pools. The weather is still warm enough for us to eat outside and to enjoy barbecues. In some parts of the country, it won't be long before trees start to look tired and begin to lose their leaves. This first term of the school year lasts through to the second month of Autumn.

As this new school year gets under way, children may feel excited or perhaps a little bit anxious. They are in a higher year. Many things will be new for them – new teachers, new classmates, new buildings or classrooms? So many people, especially parents, to thank for all these things.

Going back to school is a time of hard work and preparation for you as teachers. Like the children, you might be a little bit anxious about all that's new – new students, new staff members, perhaps a new curriculum and new responsibilities. In brief, new challenges but much to be thankful for.

The one who deserves thanks for all the good things we enjoy is our loving God. God has blessed us with the wonderful season of summer and the holidays it brings. God has watched over us throughout this time and brought us safely together for this new school year. It is good to give God thanks and praise for all our past and present blessings and for all the promise of this new year.

During February, there is still a feeling of 'New Year' in the air. The church's 'New Year' began in Advent last year. That was followed by the season of Christmas which ended on January 11. From then until Lent begins

we make our way through the season of Ordinary Time. This does not mean that it is 'ordinary', but that it is 'ordered', with each week of prayer being counted in order, one after the other.

There are two parts to Ordinary Time. The first and shorter one is between Christmas and Lent; the second and longer one is between Pentecost and Advent. As school starts we are in Week Three. We will get to Week Six before Lent begins.

Ordinary Time is a gift to us. It provides precious time to explore God's good news for us week after week.

*Children's Daily Prayer under the Southern Cross 2026* is one of our new books. It is a guide for your class's prayer for every day of the school year. Some prayers change each day. Some stay the same. This is the way the church prays.

Directions for using this book of prayer are on pages iv–v of the Introduction. When children take their turn to lead the prayer, it's time to read those instructions again. You can attach ribbons to the book to mark your place, using different colours for the different liturgical seasons.

### Readings

For the very first days of the school term, our readings for Daily Prayer remind us that God has created us and loves us and is always present with us. The readings urge us to keep thanking God in prayer and remind us to show love to one another. After that we will have just over two weeks of readings from the Gospel of Matthew.

Each year in Ordinary Time we read from one of three gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke. The church reads each one in turn over three years, Years A, B and C. This year we will read a lot from Matthew because 2026 is the Year of Matthew (Year A). We will hear

his story of the life and work of Jesus. The Gospel of Mark will be read in 2027 (Year A) and Luke will be read in 2028 (Year B).

Our readings for each Friday will normally look ahead to the following Sunday's gospel. This keeps us connected with the whole church who will hear the same gospel on the Sunday. Sometimes the Friday reading is from a feast day.

Teach the correct responses to the readings. After a gospel reading, the reader says, 'The gospel of the Lord', and everyone responds, 'Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ'. If the reading is not from one of the gospel writers, then the reader says, 'The word of the Lord', and everyone responds, 'Thanks be to God'.

## Feasts

### February 2

The feast of the **Presentation of the Lord** occurs on this day. Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple 40 days after he was born. The child Jesus was greeted there by the prophets Simeon and Anna. They saw that he was the Messiah, the light of the world.

## Commemorations

### February 6

**Waitangi Day** (*WHY-tung-ee*) in New Zealand commemorates the treaty made with the Maori people in 1840. There is a special prayer for Waitangi Day on pages 13–14.

### February 11

The **World Day of Prayer for the Sick**. On this day we will remember and offer prayer especially for all who are sick.

### February 17

**The Lunar (or Chinese) New Year** begins on February 17. It is the year of the horse. This sign suggests action, adventure and courage.

**Ramadan**. Muslim people around the world begin a month of fasting from the evening of February 17. They call this very special and holy time Ramadan.

## Preparation for February

*Children's Daily Prayer Under the Southern Cross* includes a Psalm to be prayed each day. Psalms are very ancient songs from the Bible. To learn more about them, turn to the pages that explain how psalms are prayers, poems, shouts, cries and cosmic chants (see the Table of Contents or the Subject Index). Many psalms are prayers of praise or thanksgiving but others help us bring our worries to God. The Psalm will change each month or season.

The Psalm for February, Psalm 145, is on page 4. We praise God who is patient and loving and who cares for all of creation. Students will need their own copies for each day. Make special 2026 prayer folders in which to keep them. You can add to these as the year goes on.

The Closing for Daily Prayer includes prayer for special intentions. Intentions are things we wish to pray for. These can be happy things like the birth of a student's new brother or sister, or their own and other students' birthdays. They can also be sad things like the sickness or death of a family member, student or teacher, or some trouble happening in the world. It is good for children to remember and pray for the people they love and people in need.

Encourage children to simply name the person or group for whom they wish to pray rather than enter into long stories. Examples might be: 'For Sam on his birthday,' 'For people who have died in the earthquake,' 'For N. who is sick.'

The next section in *Children's Daily Prayer Under the Southern Cross* is Early Lent. There is a prayer for the Preparation of Ashes on page 27. Preparations for this would need to be made in advance. Ask students to bring the palms from last year's Palm Sunday service to make the ashes.

## Suggested Hymns

See pages vii–ix of the hymn chart. Throughout the year, sing a hymn to begin Daily Prayer.

In February, Daily Prayer concludes with an 'Alleluia'. Sing this until Ash Wednesday.

For the feast of the Presentation, 'Praise to you, O Christ' or 'Christ be our light' would be good choices.

# A Psalm for February

*Psalm 145:1-2, 8-9, 13-14, 17-18*



## LEADER

Sing and shout praises to the Lord our God!

## ALL

**Sing praise to the Lord  
for as long as you live.**

## SIDE A

You are merciful, Lord!  
You are kind and patient and always loving.  
You are good to everyone,  
and you take care of all your creation.

## SIDE B

Our Lord, you keep your word  
and do everything you say.  
When someone stumbles or falls,  
you give a helping hand.

## SIDE A

Our Lord, everything you do  
is kind and thoughtful.

## SIDE B

And you are near to everyone  
whose prayers come from the heart.

## LEADER

Sing and shout praises to the Lord our God!

## ALL

**Sing praise to the Lord  
for as long as you live.**

**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. Alleluia.**

*[Turn back to Daily Prayer for today.]*

# Wednesday Daily Prayer

*[Reminder: The Psalm for February is on page 4. Make a copy for each member of the class.]*

## Introduction

As we begin a new school year, we want to be friends – with each other and with God. Our Daily Prayer will help us be good friends. Each day we are taught how by a short reading from the Bible. We read today from a letter in the New Testament written by the apostle John. He reminds us that God wants us to love each other as much as he loves us. This isn't always easy. At school we are often in class with others who are not yet our friends. Let's make John's teaching our motto as we begin our new school year!

Often in our Daily Prayer we remember great friends of God from the past. Mary Ward was one of these. Five hundred years ago, she pioneered a new way of life for women combining action (especially girls' education) and prayer. She founded the Loreto Sisters and the Congregation of Jesus. Mary was a woman of great courage, creativity, prayer and holiness, and an inspiring leader.

✠ **All make the Sign of the Cross.**



**Hymn**

## A Psalm for February

*[Turn to page 4.]*



**Reading**

**From 1 John 4:7-21**

Listen to the words of the first letter of John:

My dear friends, we must love each other. Love comes from God, and when we love each other, it shows that we have been given new life. We are now God's children and we know him. God is love, and anyone who doesn't love others has never known him.

God is love. If we keep on loving others, we will stay one in our hearts with God and he will say one with us.

We love because God loves us first. But if we say we love God and don't love each other, we are liars. We cannot see God. So how can we love God, if we don't love the people we can see?

The commandment that God has given us is: 'Love God and love each other!'

The word of the Lord.

## Reflection

How do you feel about being in a new class? Are you ready to be loving to everyone? Are there any new students in the class who might be feeling lonely? How can I love them?

## Closing

Blessed be God, Creator of days and seasons.

Let us all say: Blessed be God for ever!

**Blessed be God for ever!**

Let us bring our hopes and needs to God, as we pray:

**God, our companion, hear our prayer.**

*[Pause for students to name their prayer wish. All join in the response each time.]*

Let us pray with the words that Jesus taught us:

**Our Father ...**

Loving God, you give us this new school year and new friends with whom to share it.

Bless all who pray  
and work and learn together.

May this year bring peace and harmony  
throughout the world.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*[Sing 'Alleluia']*

✠ **All make the Sign of the Cross.**

# Thursday Daily Prayer

## Introduction

As we begin a new school year, we think about our friendship with one another and with God, our best friend. God loves us and wants us to be friends with one another. Today we hear about the apostle Paul's great love for his Christian friends at Philippi. He prays that they will grow more and more loving and will live good lives.

One person who was a friend of God was an American monk named Thomas Merton. He was born around this time 110 years ago. Soon after becoming a Catholic in his early twenties, he chose a life of prayer and love for others. He wrote many books on prayer and holiness, as well as on war and peace, racism, economics and world religions. They are still inspiring. Sadly he died of an accident in Bangkok in 1968 at the age of 57.

† **All make the Sign of the Cross.**



**Hymn**

## A Psalm for February

[Turn to page 4.]



**Reading**

**From Philippians 1:3-11**

Listen to the words of the apostle Paul:

Every time I think of you, I thank my God. And whenever I mention you in my prayers, it makes me happy. You have a special place in my heart. So it is only natural for me to feel the way I do.

I pray that your love will keep on growing and you will fully know and understand how to make the right choices. Then you will still be pure and innocent when Christ returns. And until that day, Jesus Christ will keep you

busy doing good deeds that bring glory and praise to God.

The word of the Lord.

## Reflection

As we begin this year together, we think about what we want for ourselves and for one another. How can we become more loving? How will we learn to make right choices?

## Closing

Blessed be God, Creator of days and seasons.  
Let us all say: Blessed be God for ever!

**Blessed be God for ever!**

Let us bring our hopes and needs to **God, as we pray: God, our companion, hear our prayer.**

*[Pause for students to name their prayer wish. All join in the response each time.]*

Let us pray with the words that Jesus taught us:

**Our Father ...**

Loving God, you give us this new school year and new friends with whom to share it.

Bless all who pray

and work and learn together.

May this year bring peace and harmony throughout the world.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*[Sing 'Alleluia']*

† **All make the Sign of the Cross.**