

“Lord, teach us to pray ...”



FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT 2024
IN THE WORLDWIDE YEAR OF PRAYER 2024 AND
CELEBRATING 150 YEARS OF THE DIOCESE OF SANDHURST.

From the Readings

God loved us with so much love that he was generous with his mercy; when we were dead through our sins, he brought us to life with Christ – it is through grace that you have been saved – and raised us up with him and gave us a place with him in heaven, in Christ Jesus ... it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith, not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God, not by anything that you have done, so that nobody can claim the credit. We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning he had meant us to live it. *Ephesians 2:4-10*

Jesus said to Nicodemus: 'The Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved ... light has come into the world ... the one who lives by the truth comes out into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that what is done is done in God.' *John 3:14-17, 19-21.*

Teach us to Pray

I: SOLITUDE AND THE JESUS PRAYER

SOLITUDE ... is a form of awareness. It's a way of being present and perceptive within all of life. It's having a dimension of reflectiveness in our daily lives that rings with it a sense of gratitude, appreciation, peacefulness, enjoyment, and prayer. It's the sense within ordinary life, that life is precious, sacred and enough. *Rolheiser, Ronald, Prayer: Our Deepest Longing, 2.*

How do we foster solitude? ... How do we begin to lay a foundation for prayer in our lives? The first step is to "put out into the deep" by remaining quietly in God's presence in solitude, in silence, in prayer. If it is your first time doing this, set aside fifteen minutes for prayer. In time, you might be able to manage thirty minutes. ... Remember: your heart is made to rest in God ... count on your restlessness to lead you into deeper prayer – the kind of prayer that leads to profound transformation, the kind of prayer that will not leave you empty-handed. *Rolheiser, Ronald, Prayer: Our Deepest Longing, 2-3.*

THE JESUS PRAYER makes life Christ-centred. *Sologren, Per-Olof, The Jesus Prayer, 61.*

The Jesus Prayer is short. It can be prayed in a fraction of a second, literally 'in one breath'. ... It can be prayed in the midst of other activity, while you work, whenever you are tempted, even in the middle of a conversation.

Sologren, Per-Olof, The Jesus Prayer, 81.

The Jesus Prayer lets me pray whenever I need to call upon the Lord.

Sologren, Per-Olof, *The Jesus Prayer*, 82.

Praying the Jesus Prayer also helps me to be watchful and open for Christ's presence in the heart of the other person as well, not just in my own.

Sologren, Per-Olof, *The Jesus Prayer*, 87.

THERE ARE MANY FORMS OF THE JESUS PRAYER. Probably the most common one is: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me. Sometimes, after 'have mercy upon me', 'a sinner' is added. Sometimes the words 'Son of God' are omitted. There are also shorter forms of the prayer. It may be limited to the first part, 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God' or again to the second, 'have mercy on me', though in that case often with the opening word, 'Lord'.

Sologren, Per-Olof, *The Jesus Prayer*, 17.

Then picture your heart ... And with your ears listen closely to its beating, beat by beat. When you have got into the way of doing this, begin to fit the words of the Prayer to the beats of the heart one after the other, looking at it all the time. Thus, with the first beat, say or think 'Lord', with the second, 'Jesus', with the third, 'Christ', with the fourth, 'have mercy', and with the fifth, 'on me'. And do it over and over again. ... when you have grown used to what I have just told you about, you must begin bringing the whole Prayer of Jesus into and out of your heart in time with your breathing, as the Fathers taught. Thus, as you draw your breath in, say, or imagine yourself saying, 'Lord Jesus Christ', and as you breathe again, 'have mercy on me'. ... this method is only a means to dispose the whole of our being, body and soul, to prayer. It is a way to practice prayer without ceasing. Sologren, Per-Olof, *The Jesus Prayer*, 54-55.

II: THE OUR FATHER – THE PRAYER THAT JESUS TAUGHT US

- **Give us this day our daily bread: All of this, in the kingdom of God as recounted to us in the Gospel, happens while we are seated at table.** Jesus uses this image often. The kingdom of God is always a celebration; we are at table, so he gives us something to eat ... The power of God's presence in the world today is precisely at table, in the Eucharist with Jesus. This is why we ask that he feed all of us. Feed us with that spiritual food that strengthens us, at table with the Eucharist, but also feed everyone, in this world in which the reign of hunger is so cruel ... linger a bit over this petition – "give us bread today," to me and to all - and to think about how many people do not have this bread. Pope Francis, *Our Father*, 73.
- **Let us not forget the work of mercy that urges us to feed the hungry.** ... Always someone is hungry and thirsty and needs me. I cannot delegate this to someone else. This poor person needs me, my help, my words, my efforts. We are all in this together. Pope Francis, *Our Father*, 74, 77.

FOR THINKING AND TALKING

- What words or phrases stand out for you in the readings and insights on prayer?
- What insights might you take with you on your own journey?

Let Us Pray

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. Amen.

