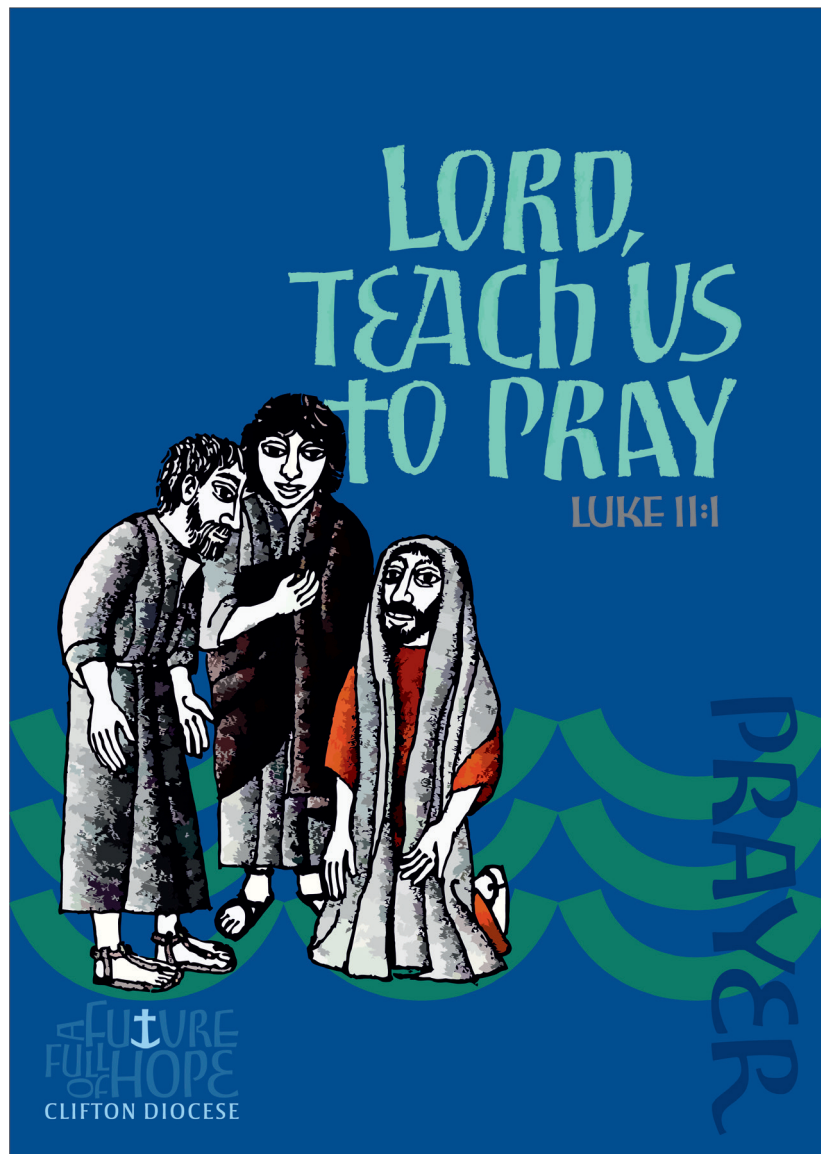
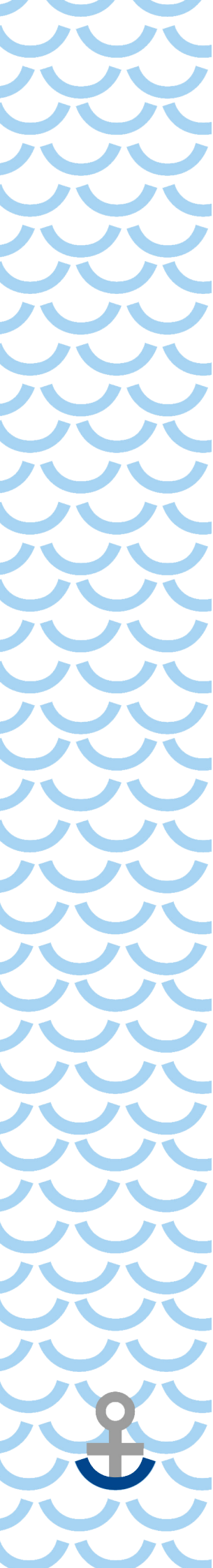


PRAYER

2018-2019



A FUTURE
FULL OF HOPE
CLIFTON DIOCESE



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Acknowledgements

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OUR BISHOP'S VISION

The Church of Clifton
is called to be a people
who believe in Christ,
who celebrate Christ,
and who live the way of Christ.

The Church is created by God
to live, not for itself,
but for others;
to be a people who share
in the mission of Christ,
to proclaim the Kingdom
and to make disciples
so that the world will be transformed
according to God's plan.

Our Parishes and Communities
should be places
where Christ is celebrated,
shared, proclaimed and lived,
where everyone
is welcomed and valued,
and all have a sense of responsibility
for the life of the community and the world.

We are called to be disciples
who not only know about Jesus
but also come to know him in prayer.
Our liturgies
should be celebrated in such a way
that Christ's word is heard,
his presence known,
and which are so connected to our lives
that we joyfully
take up the command
'Go in peace glorifying the Lord by your life'.

MISSION

COMMUNION

PRAYER



CONTENTS

page

INTRODUCTION

- 5 A Future Full of Hope
- 6 The Year of Prayer 2018 -2019

PART ONE: PRAYER

- 9 Lord teach us to pray
- 13 Jesus teaches us to pray
- 15 The witness of the saints
- 21 Encountering Christ in personal prayer
- 26 Encountering Christ in the Liturgy

PART TWO: RESOURCES

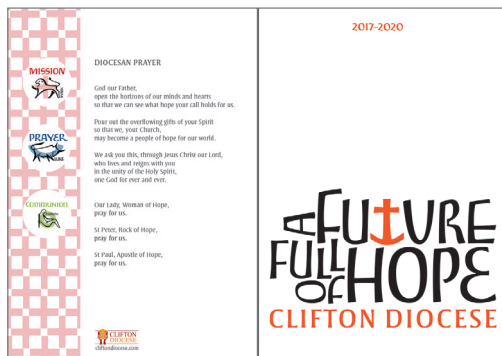
- 33 Resources
- 35 How to use this resource
- 37 Further reading
- back cover Diocesan Prayer



INTRODUCTION

A Future Full of Hope

This booklet should be read in the light of the document 'A Future Full of Hope' which gives us a roadmap for the three years of Mission, Prayer and Communion. It was presented to the people and communities of our diocese by Bishop Declan on 29 November 2017. It can be downloaded from cliftondiocese.com.



It offers an overview of the three years that will enable us to root ourselves once again in the Bishop's threefold vision of

| | |
|------------------|---------|
| Mission | 2017-18 |
| Prayer | 2018-19 |
| Communion | 2019-20 |

The gospels of each liturgical year will accompany us and support us in all that we do so that, Sunday by Sunday, returning to the source, which is Christ and his Gospel, we come to appreciate all that we are being called to be for our world and for others.

St Mark anchors our reflection and our activity in Mission.

St Luke will shape and fashion us in Prayer.

St Matthew will cultivate our sense of Communion.

This second year of these three focuses us on prayer and seeks to unfold the Bishop's vision that we be a people **'who not only know about Jesus, but come to know him in prayer'**.

There are two main parts to this resource:

Part One provides us with reflections on encountering Jesus, encountering him in the Liturgy and encountering him in personal prayer. We have opportunity to reflect upon the prayer of Jesus and the witness of the saints.

Part Two presents some of the events and liturgies that are taking place in our Diocese during this year. There is a guide to how to use this resource and some further reading suggestions.

The Year of Prayer 2018-2019

The Year of Prayer, which we now begin, is not intended to turn us away from mission but to deepen our understanding that it is prayer which gives life and strength to our mission, it is prayer which is the source of our mission.

In the year of mission we were reminded that the source of mission is a renewed personal encounter with Christ. Pope Francis wrote:

‘I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since “no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord”. The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realise that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms’.¹

To encounter Christ is to be caught up in a relationship of prayer. We don’t encounter Christ and then later pray – the encounter with Christ is prayer, it is the beginning of our relationship with Christ, which is the essence of prayer.

This booklet is not a treatise on prayer or an introduction to prayer it is rather a resource to help us to reflect on the rich patterns of prayer that already exist in our parishes and communities and a call to deepen that prayer. This resource is to help us reflect on the many ways we already encounter Christ and an invitation to see the ways in which the Lord invites us to encounter him anew.

The Year of Prayer is intended to call us to a ‘renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ.’ Pope Benedict wrote:

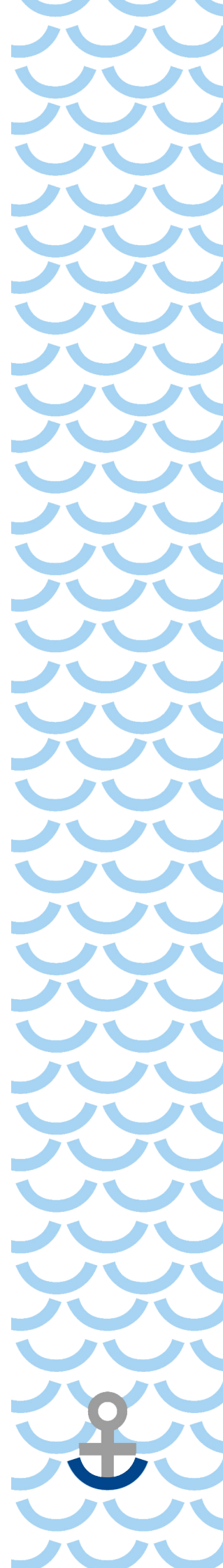
‘Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.’²

There are countless ways in which we can encounter Jesus Christ but in this resource we will focus on encountering Christ in personal prayer and in the Liturgy.



¹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 3

² Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 1



PART ONE

PRAYER



LORD TEACH US TO PRAY

From the Gospel of St Luke

Luke 11:1-13

Once Jesus was in a certain place praying, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said, 'Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.' He said to them, 'Say this when you pray:

*'Father, may your name be held holy,
your kingdom come;
give us each day our daily bread,
and forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive
each one who is in debt to us.
And do not put us to the test.'*

He also said to them, 'Suppose one of you has a friend and goes to him in the middle of the night to say, "My friend, lend me three loaves, because a friend of mine on his travels has just arrived at my house and I have nothing to offer him"; and the man answers from inside the house, "Do not bother me. The door is bolted now, and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up to give it to you." I tell you, if the man does not get up and give it him for friendship's sake, persistence will be enough to make him get up and give his friend all he wants.

'So I say to you: Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For the one who asks always receives; the one who searches always finds; the one who knocks will always have the door opened to him. What father among you would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread? Or hand him a snake instead of a fish? Or hand him a scorpion if he asked for an egg? If you then, who are evil, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!'



Prayer as witness

In her autobiography a young Jewish woman named Edith Stein recounts how she made a journey across Germany when she was 16 years old. She tells how she saw many wonderful sights in all the beautiful places she visited but it was a visit to the Cathedral in Frankfurt that made the deepest impact on her. She writes:

*'We stopped in at the cathedral for a few minutes; and, while we looked around in respectful silence, a woman carrying a market basket came in and knelt down in one of the pews to pray briefly. This was something entirely new to me.... here was someone interrupting her everyday shopping errands to come into this church, although no other person was in it, as though she were here for an intimate conversation. I could never forget that.'*³

A few years later Edith became a Catholic, then a Carmelite nun and eventually in 1942, because of her Jewish origins, she was killed in the concentration camp of Auschwitz. Edith Stein is recognised as one of the great saints and martyrs of the 20th century. She was canonised in 1998, under her religious name of Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, and is now one of the Patron saints of Europe.

That simple incident in the Cathedral had a huge impact upon the young Edith because in it she recognised something essential about prayer. She saw that it is an 'intimate conversation' with the Lord. At that time Edith thought of herself as agnostic but she returned again and again to that woman's example until she realised that she too was called to this 'intimate conversation'. The woman who had been praying in Frankfurt Cathedral all those years before can have had no idea of the influence she was having on Edith but her moment of prayer was a silent witness to the intimate relationship she had with God and was a true moment of evangelisation.

Prayer is an 'intimate conversation' which God initiates but which becomes the 'close sharing of friends' in which God raises us up to be his close companions. Jesus says to us 'I shall not call you servants anymore, because a servant does not know his master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father' (John 15:15).

Jesus the teacher calls all of us to be his friends and to lead us into intimate conversation with himself. It is through Christ's teaching and the witness of others that we learn to pray.



³ Edith Stein: Life in a Jewish Family, ICS Publications, 1999, p.401

The Lord who draws near to us

For most of us it is difficult to sustain a life of prayer. We know we are called to pray and, indeed, we want to pray, but somehow we often fall short. There may be times when all goes well, the sun shines upon us, God feels very close and then prayer comes easily. The challenge, though, is to persevere in prayer, to continue in faith and trust in the face of all the losses and difficulties of life. To learn how to pray we must look to Jesus who is our first teacher in prayer. It is Jesus who reveals the face of the Father to us. In Jesus, God draws close to us, and calls us into an intimate friendship of love and trust.

Prayer often feels as if it is something that we do for God. If that is the case then our prayer will consist in remembering to say grace before meals, in being faithful to our morning and evening prayers, going to Mass on Sundays. It is necessary to pray in all these ways but if the onus in prayer is on what we can do then it runs the risk of being only external and not the prayer of the heart that the Lord desires for us. If our understanding of prayer is first of all what we do for God then we can easily imagine that God is just waiting for our prayers of gratitude and praise. We then turn God into a version of an elderly relative who hasn't received his thank you note for the birthday present he sent. That is to approach prayer from the wrong starting point. God does not sit in heaven waiting to hear from us and being slightly disappointed that we haven't been in touch. God always takes the initiative: 'for us and for our salvation he came down from heaven'. That is true of the incarnation and it is the way that God reaches out to us at every moment. In prayer, God is always the one who takes the initiative. It is unfailingly God who makes the first move. The Catechism teaches us:

'the living and true God tirelessly calls each person to that mysterious encounter known as prayer. In prayer, the faithful God's initiative of love always comes first; our own first step is always a response.' ⁴

Whereas we may think that prayer is our reaching out to God, Jesus teaches us that it is God who reaches out to us. Prayer is what springs up in our hearts when we respond to his call.

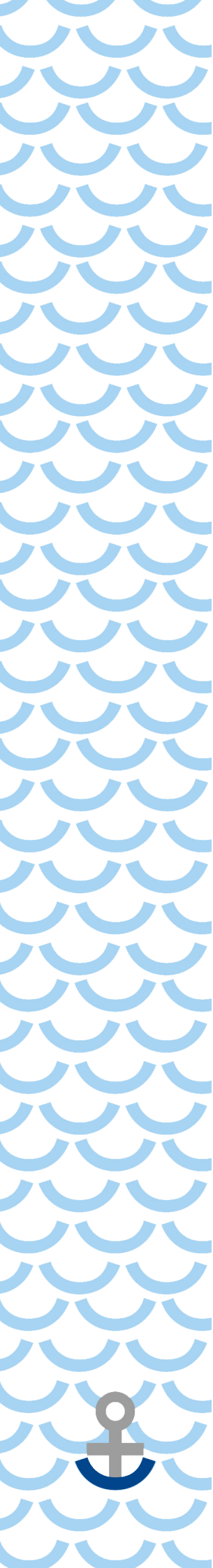
Ruth Burrows writes:

'Prayer, we take the word for granted but ought we to do so? What do we mean by prayer? What does the word mean in the Christian context? Almost always when we talk about prayer we are thinking of something we do and, from that standpoint, questions, problems, confusion, discouragement, illusions multiply. For me, it is of fundamental importance to correct this view. Our Christian knowledge assures us that prayer is essentially what God does, how God addresses us, looks at us. It is not primarily something we are doing for God, something we are giving to God but what God is doing for us. And what God is doing for us is giving us the divine Self in love.' ⁵

⁴ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 256

⁵ Ruth Burrows, *Essence of Prayer*, Burns and Oates, 2006, p.1





During this year of prayer we are accompanied by the Gospel of Luke which is proclaimed at Mass each Sunday. Each of the four gospels is a testimony to the God who reaches out to us but Luke's Gospel does so in a particularly striking way. Luke's Gospel is pre-eminently the gospel of encounter. From the moment that the Angel Gabriel comes to Mary until the Lord walks beside the disciples on the road to Emmaus Luke paints one scene of encounter after another. And each encounter is different, the calling of Levi, the conversion of Zacchaeus, the promise to the good thief as he hung upon the Cross. Jesus calls every person to a personal encounter with him and he approaches each person in a different way, he has a particular word for every person.

The Lord continues to approach each person in an unrepeatable way and so each of us encounters the Lord in a unique way. In his letter on holiness Pope Francis writes:

'The important thing is that each believer discern his or her own path, that they bring out the very best of themselves, the most personal gift that God has placed in their heart, rather than hopelessly trying to imitate something not meant for them. We are all called to be witnesses.' ⁶

Our relationship with the Lord is as unique as our fingerprint. We can learn from the experience of others but we should never think that because we do not pray like someone else we are not praying (or because someone does not pray as I do that they are somehow less authentic). Within the Church there are all sorts of schools of spirituality but there is one thing they all have in common: The Lord chooses us, we do not choose him ⁷ and so every single time we pray we are responding to the Lord's invitation.

God's call is gentle and inviting. St John Paul II once taught:

'Pursued by God, we already sense his presence, already bask in the light on our shoulders and already hearken to the voice calling us from afar. And thus we begin to search for the God who is searching for us: sought out, we begin to seek; loved, we begin to love.' ⁸

The light on our shoulders, the sense of his presence, is the action of the Holy Spirit. Our task is to discern the gentle promptings of God because, when we feel called to pray, that is already the action of the Holy Spirit within us. It is God calling us to respond to him. The catechism teaches that *'Prayer comes from the Holy Spirit and not from ourselves.'* ⁹ The desire to pray is itself God's gift. Even the awareness that we have not prayed is the admission of a spiritual person, it is a sign that the Holy Spirit stirs our hearts. The Holy Spirit who awakens in us the desire for prayer is the one who will work in us to complete us. The Holy Spirit who calls us to prayer will also give us the strength to persevere.

⁶ Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exultate*, 11

⁷ John 15:16

⁸ St John Paul II, General Audience, 5 July 2000

⁹ CCC, 2726

In the letter to the Romans St Paul writes:

'The spirit too comes to us in our weakness. For when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit himself expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words, and God who knows everything in our hearts knows perfectly well what he means, and that the pleas of the saints expressed by the Spirit are according to the mind of God.' ¹⁰

Each time we feel called to prayer we can be confident that God is tapping us on the shoulder. If we do not respond he never gives up on us but the more we seek out the one who seeks us the more attuned we become to his call. To pray is to respond to him and to place ourselves in his presence.

Jesus teaches us to pray

When the disciples asked Jesus 'Lord, teach us to pray' they had been with Jesus for several years; they had seen him preaching and working miracles and now they were on the final journey to Jerusalem. When they ask Jesus how to pray it is not because they want to sit in silence in a corner or to find ways to escape the demands of Christ's call but because they can see that it is prayer which sustains and motivates Jesus on his mission. They want some of that, they want to learn how to pray as he does, not just going off to a corner to have a little 'me-time' but because they could see that Jesus' power and strength came from his prayer. His mission is rooted in his relationship with the Father. They could see that it was his prayer that allowed him to communicate the tender mercy of God. They could sense that this was the source of his graciousness, his ability to forgive and to love rich and poor alike.

When the disciples say to the Lord, 'teach us to pray', they are not saying to him 'teach us a prayer' – they are asking 'teach us to pray so that we may live as you do'.

When the disciples say to Jesus 'teach us to pray' they sense in him two things that they want to share. They see that in his prayer Jesus is having an intimate conversation with God the Father and they understand that this is the source of his mission.

Throughout the gospels we catch glimpses of Jesus' conversation with the Father. Jesus prays:

'I bless you Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes Father, for that is what it has pleased you to do. Everything has been entrusted to me by the Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.' ¹¹

We are listening to the conversation between the Father and the Son, it is as if we eavesdrop on the language of the Trinity. But more than that we

¹⁰ Romans 8:26-27

¹¹ Matthew 11:25-27



are invited into that conversation: we are ‘those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him’.

The conversation between Father and Son did not end with Christ’s death, it continues after his Resurrection and Ascension. St Paul writes that Jesus ‘not only died for us – he rose from the dead, and there at God’s right hand he stands and pleads for us.’¹² Jesus’ intimate conversation with the Father is eternal and his prayer for us is constant. Jesus invites us into his conversation and promises us that it is in this relationship with him and the Father that we will find rest and refreshment. When we pray we are not initiating something; we are joining in the conversation between the Father and the Son.

The first place to learn about prayer is in the life of Jesus because it his birth, his teaching, his death and Resurrection which draws us into relationship with the Father. The best place to learn of Jesus is in the gospels and during this Year of Prayer we are accompanied by the Gospel of Luke which is proclaimed throughout the year. Luke’s Gospel is the gospel of prayer more than any of the gospels. In Luke we see Jesus praying in all sorts of situations. Jesus prays when he is full of joy and when he is in agony, he prays when he is surrounded by people and when he is alone, he prays on the top of the mountain and when he is on a level plane. The Catechism tells us: ‘When Jesus prays he is already teaching us how to pray.’¹³ We learn to pray by observing the way Jesus is portrayed in the gospels and by simply placing ourselves in his presence. To read the gospels and see Jesus at prayer is to learn to pray. If we turn to the Lord in trust and, with the disciples, say to him ‘Lord, teach us to pray’ he will do so.

Everything about Jesus can teach us to pray. The Catechism teaches us that every detail of Christ’s life leads us to the ‘invisible mystery’ of God:

‘From the swaddling clothes of his birth to the vinegar of his passion and the shroud of his Resurrection everything in Jesus’ life reveals who he is. His deeds, miracles and words all revealed that ‘in him the whole fullness of God dwells bodily.’ His humanity is ‘sacrament’, that is, the sign and instrument, of his divinity and of the salvation he brings: what was visible in his earthly life leads to the invisible mystery of his divine sonship and redemptive mission.’¹⁴

To read the gospels is to encounter Jesus Christ and, having met the Lord we have already begun to pray. God not only draws near to us he also gives us the words to pray:

*‘Say this when you pray:
Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth, as it is 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.’¹⁵*

¹² Romans 8:34

¹³ CCC, 2607

¹⁴ CCC, 515

¹⁵ Matt 6:9-13 and cf. Luke 11:2-4

The Catechism says this prayer is ‘the summary of the whole gospel’. But Jesus is not just teaching them a set of words because he knows it is not just a formula of words that the disciples need. He draws them into his own prayer and he begins not with ‘my’ Father or ‘your Father’ but ‘Our’ Father. The catechism says:

‘But Jesus does not just give us a formula to repeat mechanically. As in every vocal prayer, it is through the Word of God that the Holy Spirit teaches the children of God to pray to their Father. Jesus not only gives us the words of our filial prayer; at the same time he gives us the Spirit by whom these words become in us ‘spirit and life.’ ¹⁶

In prayer Jesus draws us into the life of the Trinity, we pray to the Father, taught by Christ, strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The witness of the saints

Jesus is the first and only true teacher of prayer but we can also learn how to pray from the witness of the saints. When we observe the lives of the saints we can see how they responded to the Lord’s call and they show us how they were drawn into intimate friendship with God. The Catechism says:

‘The witnesses who have preceded us into the Kingdom, especially those whom the Church recognises as saints, share in the living tradition of prayer by the example of their lives, the transmission of their writings and their prayer today.’ ¹⁷

We could look to any of the thousands of the saints throughout the centuries or to our own contemporaries and we will discover true Christian disciples and so learn how to pray. Here we will look briefly at just three of the great saints whose powerful writings might help us. In their prayer we see we see that these great saints had the same difficulties that we have when we are invited to an ‘intimate conversation’ with the Lord. The saints all testify to the fact that God does not wait until we are perfect before he calls us to be ‘his friends’. If you feel that holiness is for others and not for you they have something to say to you. If you feel too ordinary or even sinful to draw close to the Lord they have a word for you too.

Any number of other saints could have been chosen but the three who will be our guides are **St Teresa of Avila, St Thérèse of Lisieux and St Edith Stein.**

¹⁶ CCC, 2766

¹⁷ CCC, 2683



St Teresa of Avila

St Teresa of Avila was the 16th Century reformer of the Carmelite order. Her writings on prayer are some of the greatest in the history of the Church and in the Catechism of the Catholic Church her description of prayer is quoted:

*‘prayer in my opinion is nothing else than the close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us’.*¹⁸

She is a witness to the fact that prayer is very simple, it is the ‘intimate sharing of friends’. Her spirituality is deeply attractive and very human response to God’s love.

Yet she says that, for the first 20 years of her life as a nun, she longed for the time of prayer to be over and she would tap the hourglass to make the sand run through more quickly. She writes in her autobiography:

*‘I don't know what heavy penance I would gladly have undertaken rather than recollect myself in the practice of prayer. ... I had to muster up all my courage and in the end the Lord helped’.*¹⁹

She tells us there are many things that stopped her praying but one of the chief ones is that she did not feel worthy of the Lord’s friendship. Teresa tells us that she learnt that we must not let our sins stop us praying,

*‘it is in spite of any wrong you do, you must not abandon prayer since it is the means by which you remedy the situation.’*²⁰

What comes through in all Teresa’s teaching is the absolute abundance of God’s love. We don’t have to be perfect to be Christ’s friend. If your sin or your faults stop you coming close to the Lord then look to the saints who teach us that it is precisely then that the Lord reaches out to show us his merciful love and calls us to himself.

St Thérèse of Lisieux

St Thérèse of Lisieux is the most quoted saint in the Catechism and her words are used at the beginning of the section on prayer:

*‘For me, prayer is an aspiration of the heart, it is a simple glance directed to heaven, it is a cry of gratitude and love in the midst of trial as well as joy; finally it is something great, supernatural, which expands my soul and unites me to Jesus.’*²¹

Thérèse writes many beautiful words about prayer but she is also a witness to the difficulties she experienced. In her autobiography she writes of the conflict that she had within herself because she felt called to be a saint and

¹⁸ CCC, 2709

¹⁹ Teresa of Avila: The Book of my Life, Chapter 8:7

²⁰ ibid, Chapter 8:5

²¹ Thérèse of Lisieux: The Story of a Soul, Manuscript C, 25

yet knew herself to be completely ordinary. She wasn't the stuff out of which saints were made. After searching the scriptures she found a way of squaring the circle. If she couldn't raise herself up to greatness of soul, Jesus would have to do it for her.

'I have always wanted to be a saint. Alas! I have always noticed that when I compare myself to the saints there is between them and me the difference that exists between a mountain whose summit is lost in the clouds and the obscure grain of sand trampled underfoot by passers-by. Instead of becoming discouraged, I said to myself: God cannot inspire unrealisable desires. I can, then, in spite of my littleness aspire to holiness. It is impossible for me to grow up, and so I must bear with myself such as I am with all my imperfections. But I want to seek out a means of going to heaven by a little way, a way which is very straight, very short, and totally new. We are living now in an age of inventions, and we no longer have to take the trouble of climbing stairs, for, in the homes of the rich, a lift has replaced these very successfully. I wanted to find an elevator which would raise me to Jesus, for I am too small to climb the ladder of perfection. I searched the Scripture and there succeeded in finding the answer.... The elevator which must raise me to heaven is Your arms O Jesus! And for this I had no need to grow up, but rather I had to remain little and become this more and more.' ²²

In other words she realised that it is Christ who would lift her up. She had simply to stand in his presence and he would do the work. Thérèse has a similar insight into her problem with tiredness. She would often be distracted and even fall asleep during the time of prayer. She wrote:

'I ought to be extremely sorry at sleeping (for seven years) during my prayers and my times of thanksgiving. Well, I'm not sorry.... I think that little children please their parents as much when they're asleep as when they're awake. I think that in order to perform operations, doctors put their patients to sleep.' ²³

The life and witness of St Thérèse demonstrates to us that we do not have to rely on our own strength to draw close to God because he will lift us up. In fact our weakness, our failures and even our sins are the means by which God will transform us. Thérèse teaches us that if we place ourselves trustfully in God's presence he will share himself with us, even if we fall asleep. Thérèse witnesses to the central truth of the gospel, that we must entrust ourselves to the Lord. If we abandon ourselves into his arms then he will do everything for our salvation. We do not have to earn our salvation, as Jesus says 'it has pleased the Father to give you the Kingdom'. (Luke 12:32)

St Edith Stein (St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross)

Perhaps the greatest difficulty in prayer is learning to persevere in the face of suffering and loss. The experience of pain can turn us to God but equally it can turn us away from him and even when the experience of suffering does turn us to prayer it can still be a challenge to continue to put our faith in God's love and goodness. It is when our prayer is challenged in this way that we turn our attention to the Cross because it is contemplating the

²² Soul, Manuscript C

²³ Soul, Manuscript A



passion of Jesus Christ that can give us the strength to persevere. We can look to the saints for examples of how the power of the Cross gave them the grace to continue even in the midst of great suffering.

Edith Stein was a distinguished Jewish philosopher who converted to Christianity in 1922 and became a Carmelite nun in 1933. When she entered the Carmel in Cologne she took the Religious name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, a name which literally means 'Teresa who is blessed by the Cross'.

Her conversion is entwined with her ever-deeper growth in understanding of the meaning of Christ's crucifixion. One important moment in her life was the Christian witness of a friend who had been bereaved. Edith's colleague, Adolf Reinach, was killed during the First World War on Flanders Field and Edith was distraught at this loss and wondered how she would be able to face Reinach's widow Anna. Edith was astonished to find a woman who not only was not crushed by her loss but who was able to offer comfort to others. Twenty years later she was able to tell a priest that it was in this encounter that her unbelief 'collapsed':

'This was my first encounter with the Cross and the divine power it imparts to those who bear it ... it was the moment when my unbelief collapsed and Christ began to shine his light on me - Christ in the mystery of the Cross.' ²⁴

The meaning of Christ's redemptive suffering became the centre of her teaching. One of her final books was called 'The Science of the Cross.' In that book she taught that suffering and death do not have the last word, that because God entered into our world and shared in our death so the way of the cross becomes the way to life. Edith teaches that our suffering need not be wasted when it is joined to the suffering of the Saviour. She understood that Christ's Passion and death is a mystery of atonement, of reconciliation, a bringing together of God and humanity. As Edith grew in friendship with Christ she began to see that Christ does not only suffer for our salvation but raises up our own suffering so that they too are fruitful and are a part of the work of salvation. She understood the words of St Peter, 'If you can have some share in the sufferings of Christ, be glad'. (1Peter 4:13).

She wrote in 1939 that she knew that she, too, would suffer and that this suffering would have meaning:

'Even now I accept the death that God has prepared for me in complete submission and with joy as being his most holy will for me. I ask the Lord to accept my life and my death ... so that the Lord will be accepted by His people and that His Kingdom may come in glory, for the salvation of Germany and the peace of the world.' ²⁵

She saw that her suffering had meaning and salvific value:

'It makes me happy to suffer for you, as I am suffering now, and in my own body to do what I can to make up all that has still to be undergone for the sake of his body the Church.' ²⁶

²⁴ Edith Stein, translated by Cecily Hastings and Donald Nicholl, Sheed and Ward, 1952, p.59

²⁵ Romaeus Leuven OCD, The Life of St Edith Stein, Herder, 1983, p.148-9

²⁶ Colossians 1:24

Edith's witness is not only in words but also in her deeds. She was arrested by the Gestapo on 2 August 1942, while she was in the chapel with the other sisters. She was to report within five minutes, together with her sister Rosa, who had also converted and was serving at the Convent. Her last words to be heard were addressed to Rosa: 'Come, we are going for our people.'

She understood that her suffering was joined to the suffering of Christ and she saw her suffering as her share in carrying the Cross. Together with many other Jewish Christians, the two women were taken to a transit camp in Amersfoort and then to Westerbork. This was an act of retaliation against the letter of protest written by the Dutch Roman Catholic Bishops against the pogroms and deportations of Jews. Edith commented:

'I never knew that people could be like this, neither did I know that my brothers and sisters would have to suffer like this. ... I pray for them every hour. Will God hear my prayers? He will certainly hear them in their distress.' ²⁷

On 7 August, early in the morning, 987 Jews were deported to Auschwitz. It was probably on 9 August that Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, her sister Rosa, and many other of her people were sent to the gas chambers. When Edith Stein was beatified in Cologne on 1 May 1987, the Church honoured 'a daughter of Israel', as Pope John Paul II reflected, 'who, as a Catholic during Nazi persecution, remained faithful to the crucified Lord Jesus Christ and, as a Jew, to her people in loving faithfulness.' ²⁸

All of the saints can teach us about the meaning of suffering in their own way because prayer in Christ is always made under the sign of the Cross. Edith Stein saw her whole life as blessed by the Cross and so is able to teach us in a particular way that Christ not only suffers for us but when our sufferings are joined to his they are transformed and become the bridge to life for ourselves and for others.

These three saints, all called Theresa, do not add anything that has not already been revealed by Jesus Christ but they can teach us how to pray. In their lives we see how they had the same difficulties, the same shortcomings, that we have and yet God made them into great saints. The saints teach us to pray – because they can teach us the authentic way to encounter the Lord and respond to him. They teach us that you may fall asleep, you may be distracted, you may be unworthy but none of that is an obstacle to the God who can do all things for you. They teach us that prayer is the action of God working in us and all we have to do is place ourselves in his presence and open our hearts to his grace.

If you make time to pray and intend to pray then you are praying.

²⁷ Vatican News Services, vatican.va

²⁸ St John Paul II, Homily, Beatification of St Teresa of the Cross, Cologne, 1 May 1987



PRAYER

When you pray call on the Holy Spirit to help you.
Prayer is of the heart rather than the lips.
God listens to the heart of him who prays,
rather than to the words uttered by the lips.

And so when you would pray,
enter alone into the solitude of your heart,
and with your spirit and mind recollected
and emptied of cares, go into the place of prayer.
Stand in the Presence of God...

Gather together all the restlessness of your soul
and all the distractions of your heart,
and in God alone fix your whole desire.

When the love of Christ absorbs the whole
affection of someone in this way, he forgets himself,
for his heart is afire with desire for Christ...

...the Beloved is brought to the inmost core
of the heart, where He is given pride of place
because He is loved above all things
from the very depths of your being.

Happy the soul which is rooted in the Peace of Christ
and grounded in God's love...

XII Century, Anonymous Cistercian monk



ENCOUNTERING CHRIST IN PERSONAL PRAYER

From the Gospel of St Luke

Luke 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?' 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you' the angel answered 'and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.' 'I am the handmaid of the Lord,' said Mary 'let what you have said be done to me.' And the angel left her.

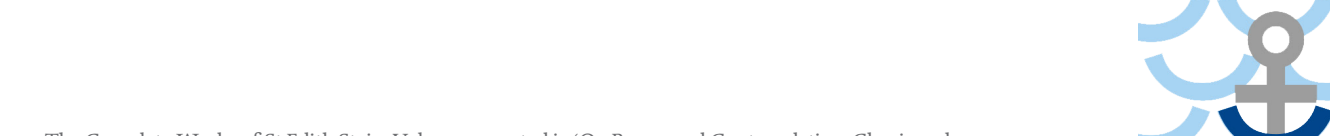
Mary is unique and she has a singular mission as mother of the Lord and yet her experience of encounter at the Annunciation can teach us about the ways of prayer. There is a process of call and response that always seems to be present in the encounter with God that we call prayer.

Call

Throughout the Scriptures it is always God who takes the initiative in calling the prophets and the saints. It is clear that it is God who takes the initiative when he sends the angel to Mary. St Edith Stein writes that the decision for the redemption is made in the heart of God:

'The decision for the redemption was conceived in the eternal silence of the inner divine life. The power of the Holy Spirit came over the virgin praying alone in the hidden, silent room in Nazareth and brought about the Incarnation of the Saviour... The Virgin, who kept every word sent from God in her heart, is the model for such attentive souls.' ²⁹

The decision for the redemption is made in the heart of God and yet Mary is still free. God never imposes himself upon us. The word of God is always an invitation and never a coercion: we remain free to say yes or no. Mary remains free in her response.



²⁹ The Complete Works of St Edith Stein, Volume 4, quoted in 'On Prayer and Contemplation: Classic and Contemporary Texts.' Ed. Matthew Levering, Sheed and Ward, 2005

Response

The Angel sent by God waits for Mary's answer. St Bernard of Clairvaux imagines the whole of creation awaiting Mary's response. And it is worth quoting a good portion of his homily:

'You have heard, O Virgin, that you will conceive and bear a son; you have heard that it will not be by man but by the Holy Spirit. The angel awaits an answer; it is time for him to return to God who sent him. We too are waiting, O Lady, for your word of compassion; the sentence of condemnation weighs heavily upon us. The price of our salvation is offered to you. We shall be set free at once if you consent. In the eternal Word of God we all came to be, and behold, we die. In your brief response we are to be remade in order to be recalled to life. Tearful Adam with his sorrowing family begs this of you, O loving Virgin, in their exile from Paradise. Abraham begs it, David begs it. All the other holy patriarchs, your ancestors, ask it of you, as they dwell in the country of the shadow of death. This is what the whole earth waits for, prostrate at your feet. It is right in doing so, for on your word depends comfort for the wretched, ransom for the captive, freedom for the condemned, indeed, salvation for all the sons of Adam, the whole of your race. Answer quickly, O Virgin. Reply in haste to the angel, or rather through the angel to the Lord. Answer with a word, receive the Word of God. Speak your own word, conceive the divine Word. Breathe a passing word, embrace the eternal Word.' ³⁰

Mary says, 'Let what you have said be done to me', and the Angel leaves her. In St Bernard's terms the whole of creation breathes a sigh of relief because God's plan of redemption is made possible by the simple yes of this young Jewish girl.

God has a plan, a mission for each of us which he has made in the silence of his heart. Our response remains crucial because whatever plan God has for each of us, the God who is rich in mercy and in love makes himself poor in that he waits upon our 'yes' to the mission he proposes for us.

Mission

From the Gospel of St Luke

Luke 1:39-45

Mary set out and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, 'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.'



Immediately after the Annunciation Mary goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth. After the overwhelming invitation to be the mother of the Saviour it would be understandable if Mary were to focus upon herself and her own well-being but Mary's first thought is not for herself. Her first reaction is to go and be of service to someone else. Mary sets out and went 'as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah', to visit her cousin Elizabeth and she remains there for three months.

Mary can teach us about the effects of true prayer. When we encounter the Lord in prayer whether in solitude and silence or during the Liturgy, if it is genuine prayer, a genuine encounter with the Lord, then it will inspire us to serve others. In Christian prayer our first reaction is not mindfulness of ourselves but of the needs of others. If we have truly encountered the Lord then we will be turned outward from our own concerns. Once we have encountered Christ we begin to see the world as he sees it, to look at situations as he does. The priorities of the gospel become ours. Personal prayer will always propel us outward because we are given a share in the mission of Christ.

In his final address to the gathering of young people in 1982 St John Paul II said:

*'It is my hope today, as I return to Rome, that you will remember why I came among you. And as long as the memory of this visit lasts, may it be recorded that I, John Paul II, came to Britain to call you to Christ, to invite you to pray!'*³¹

John Paul spoke at some length about prayer and one of the things he told the young people was that it is in prayer that they would find the meaning, the purpose, the direction of their lives. He continued:

*'Through contact with Jesus in prayer, you gain a sense of mission that nothing can dull. Your Christian identity is reaffirmed, and the meaning of your lives is forever linked to Christ's saving mission. Through prayer, the commitments of your Baptism and Confirmation take on an urgency for you. You realise that you are called to spread Christ's message of salvation. In union with Jesus, in prayer, you will discover more fully the needs of your brothers and sisters. You will appreciate more keenly the pain and suffering that burden the hearts of countless people.'*³²

The wonder of meeting Christ is that he makes us a part of his mission. We are not relegated to a passive role, he does not merely bear with us; rather he bears us up; he identifies himself with us to such an extent that our sins belong to him and his being to us: he truly accepts us and takes us up, so that we ourselves become active with his support and alongside him. So our own life and suffering, our own hoping and loving, can also become fruitful, in the new heart he has given us.

³¹ St John Paul II, Address to Young People, Ninian Park, 11 June 1982

³² *ibid*



Every person will encounter Christ in a different way and so prayer will be different for each person. Pope Francis writes:

'The important thing is that each believer discern his or her own path, that they bring out the very best of themselves, the most personal gift that God has placed in their heart, rather than hopelessly trying to imitate something not meant for them. We are all called to be witnesses.' ³³

Each person's encounter with Christ is as unique as our fingerprint. What does seem to be common to all Christian prayer is that God approaches us and, in the wonder of that encounter, the Lord raises us up and entrusts each of us with a mission. Christian prayer always begins with Christ's call and our response. In responding to the Lord he gathers us into his life of God and makes us part of his mission. Christ entrusts each of us with a share in his mission and, if our prayer has truly become an 'intimate conversation' with the Lord, a part of that mission is a desire to draw others into that life-giving conversation.

If we feel we have little to offer we can remember Mary's response when she says, 'the Lord has looked upon his servant in her nothingness.' Out of that nothingness God did wonderful things and he can do the same for us. In the Annunciation and the Visitation we can see the pattern of all personal prayer. The Lord draws near to us, he calls us and waits for our response and when we do respond he fills us with his grace and gives us our mission. There is a poem by Jessica Powers that calls us to imitate Mary did and to offer up our emptiness to God:

*'If you have nothing
the gesture of a gift is adequate.
If you have nothing: laurel leaf or bay,
no flower, no seed, no apple gathered late,
do not in desperation lay
the beauty of your tears upon the clay.*

*No gift is proper to a Deity;
no fruit is worthy for such power to bless.
If you have nothing, gather back your sigh,
and with your hands held high, your heart held high,
lift up your emptiness.'* ³⁴



³³ Gaudete et Exultate, 11

³⁴ Jessica Powers, Selected Poetry, ICS Publications, 1999

Questions for Reflection

How do we listen to the call of God?

Do we hear the voice of God in the Scriptures, in Christ, or in others?

Do we feel our prayer is a response to God's call and his initiative or do we feel prayer is something we start?

What would help you discern God's call in your life?

What might help you deepen your prayer?

How do we develop our prayer so that it grows to become an intimate conversation with God?

Do we share the secrets of our hearts with God?

How do we listen to the voice of Christ, so that we are part of his mission?

Additionally, you may wish to consider:

What are we already doing well?

What could we do better?

What are we not doing that God might be calling us to?

Look at the resources available in Part Two and consider ways you might use them or participate in the events so that you might be more engaged in a deeper life of prayer.



ENCOUNTERING CHRIST IN THE LITURGY

From the Gospel of St Luke

Luke 21:1-4

As Jesus looked up he saw rich people putting their offerings into the treasury; then he happened to notice a poverty-stricken widow putting in two small coins, and he said, 'I tell you truly, this poor widow has put in more than any of them; for these have all contributed money they had over, but she from the little she had has put in all she had to live on.'

Jesus is in the Temple and he observes how people behave in God's house. He sees people making their offerings. He notices that the rich give from what they have left over and so there is no sacrifice, they give without giving because they won't miss what they have offered. So, in fact, they give up nothing. Then Jesus notices the woman who gives 'two small coins'. This is a turning point in St Luke's Gospel. It is the last event before Jesus' words about the destruction of the Temple and the Passion narrative begins.

Here Jesus sees his teaching put into action. For years he has been teaching his disciples that they must leave everything and follow him, that they must place all their trust in the love and mercy of the Father. Again and again the disciples fail to understand what Jesus is saying, that they must give all to God who gives everything to them. This event is so much more than a story of what we put into the collection basket at Mass. It is Jesus pointing out to his disciples the response he requires of them.

Hans Urs von Balthasar writes:

*'When the widow tosses in her two tiny coins in the box she is throwing in all she had to live on. She does it of her own free will and without attracting the attention of anyone except God. ... No words were exchanged, not even between Jesus and her. At his point in his ministry Jesus points to her as an example: perhaps without recognising him, she has understood better than anyone else the meaning of all his words.'*³⁵

It is more than an example of how we are to follow Jesus, the event is also a parable of all that God is about to do for us. Immediately after this happens Jesus is arrested and faces his death on the Cross. Jesus is about to give everything, to sacrifice his life for the salvation of the world. And behind it we see the self-offering of the Father. It is God the Father who is about to give all that he has, all that he holds most dear. Von Balthasar says:

*'And behind Jesus' self-giving we glimpse the Father's sacrifice, which is fully comparable to that of the widow in the gospel. For the Father tosses everything he has – not merely what is dearest to him but what he needs most – into the offering box: 'for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son' (John 3:16).'*³⁶



³⁵ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Light of the World*, Ignatius Press, 1933, p.252

³⁶ *ibid*

The work of our redemption

'The Liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the font from which all her power flows.' ³⁷

The Liturgy is the greatest prayer we can make, it is the place where we truly encounter the living presence of Jesus Christ. Like all prayer the Liturgy can easily become something that we do for God rather than what he does for us. If prayer becomes more about what we do than what God does then we experience the same difficulties as in all prayer and it can easily become contingent on our temperament, our talents and our attention span. We do not make the Liturgy, the Liturgy makes us and we see the same pattern of God's initiative and our response in liturgical prayer that we see in our personal prayer. The Catechism teaches that:

'In the Liturgy of the Church, it is principally his own Paschal Mystery that Christ signifies and makes present.' ³⁸

In other words when we celebrate the Liturgy the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ is made actively present amongst us. God draws near to us, he becomes incarnate and shares fully in our lives so that the whole of human nature will be saved.

The Liturgy is not just an historical event but today we celebrate the fact that God the Father continues to give, not just what is left over, but that which is most dear to him, his beloved Son. The offering that God makes is not just an historical event: it is happening today in the celebration of the Liturgy. Teresa of Avila wrote:

'The Father gave us his Son once and for all to die for us, and thus he is our own; yet he does not want the gift to be taken from us until the end of the world but would have it left to be a help to us every day'. ³⁹

We see this truth perhaps most clearly in the Eucharist where Christ continues to pour himself out before us in humility and love. A little wine and some fragile bread are transformed into the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is always Christ who is the true celebrant at every liturgy. As the second Vatican Council taught:

'Christ is always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass,...by His power He is present in the sacraments, so that when anybody baptises it is really Christ Himself who baptises. He is present in His word, since it is He Himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church. He is present, lastly, when the Church prays and sings, for He promised: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20)'. ⁴⁰

³⁷ Vatican Council II, Sacrosanctum Concilium, 1

³⁸ CCC, 1085

³⁹ St Teresa of Avila, The Way of Perfection, Chapter 33

⁴⁰ SC, 7



All liturgy is an encounter with the Lord who reaches out to us. As the Catechism states:

‘The sacraments are special means, instituted by Christ, by which God reaches down to us and shares his divine life’.⁴¹

In Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Marriage, Anointing and Holy Orders it is always Christ who is the protagonist. We are called to hold at the front of our minds that the life, death and Resurrection is made present at each celebration of the sacraments.

St Edith Stein says that in every liturgical celebration we should see the Paschal Mystery at work, the blood of Christ washing us clean:

‘In Baptism and in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, his blood cleanses us of our sins, opens our eyes to eternal light, our ears to hearing God’s word. It opens our lips to sing his praise, to pray in expiation, in petition, in thanksgiving, all of which are but varying forms of adoration.... In the Sacrament of Confirmation, Christ’s blood marks and strengthens the soldiers of Christ so that they candidly profess their allegiance. However, above all, we are made members of the Body of Christ by virtue of the sacrament in which Christ himself is present. When we partake of the sacrifice and receive Holy Communion and are nourished by the flesh and blood of Jesus, we ourselves become his flesh and blood.’⁴²

In the Liturgy, Christ’s self-giving continues for our salvation, and we are invited into his obedient self-giving. It is when our offering is joined to the sacrifice of Christ that the Liturgy truly becomes prayer.

Liturgy as Prayer

Liturgy becomes prayer when we join in the offering of Christ to the Father and we are drawn into the very life of the Trinity. When the Vatican Council called us to ‘full, conscious, active participation’ in the Liturgy this is what is meant – that everyone present should be actively engaged in what Christ is doing. The Liturgy is not first of all a place for individual prayer, but a joining in with the saving work of Jesus Christ. Our part in the Liturgy is to celebrate and open ourselves to that which God is doing.

If our individual prayer is an intimate friendship with Christ, then the Liturgy deepens that friendship and draws us ever more deeply into conversation with Christ, who speaks his word to us. The Liturgy which is the work of our redemption draws us into the active work of the Trinity and makes us sharers in the work of God. Jesus does not just bear our salvation – he bears us up so that we may join him in the work of salvation.

He does that by joining us to himself because in the sacraments we are truly made part of Christ’s Body. It is in Baptism that we truly become one with Christ, he the head and we the Body. In Baptism we are plunged into Christ’s death so that we may share in his Resurrection and this is true of all the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.

⁴¹ CCC, 1131

⁴² Collected Works of Edith Stein, Volume IV, ICS Publications, 1992, p.15-17

Mission

The celebration of the Liturgy is part of the work of evangelisation. The joy of the gospel enters us anew when the Liturgy is celebrated in such a way that all may know that Christ is present and that the work of our redemption is being accomplished.

Pope Francis reminds us that the Liturgy is one way in which we evangelise and are evangelised. We don't encounter Christ in the Liturgy and then go out and evangelise: the Liturgy itself evangelises. He writes:

'Evangelisation with joy becomes beauty in the Liturgy, as part of our daily concern to spread goodness. The Church evangelises and is herself evangelised through the beauty of the Liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelisation and the source of her renewed self-giving.' ⁴³

We are evangelised by the Liturgy when it is celebrated in such a way that the active power of God is clearly working among us. That is achieved when the Word of God is proclaimed clearly and the sacramental signs are celebrated in such a way that their inner reality shines through. The prayer of the Liturgy is deepened when the music gathers the community together in order to enter into the sacrament that is celebrated. Then the Liturgy will be a living a true encounter with the living Lord.

Finally, and most importantly, when the entire gathered community is actively engaged in offering themselves to the Father with the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, then the saving death and Resurrection of the Lord will transform and renew us.

Once we have encountered the Lord, the Lord entrusts us with a mission. In the most recent translation of The Roman Missal, Pope Benedict wrote two new dismissals. They are 'Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord' and 'Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life'. Pope Benedict was emphasising that when the ritual of the Mass is completed the Eucharistic action is never over but is to be carried over into our daily lives. Once we have been evangelised ourselves by the Liturgy then the Lord us sends us out on a mission. A prayerful parish is more joyful and therefore will be more mission orientated. When the Liturgy is truly an encounter with the Lord, if it is truly prayerful, we will be propelled outward to share what we have experienced.



Questions for Reflection

Is the Liturgy what God does for us or what we do for God?

Are our parish liturgies and celebration of the sacraments moments of encounter with Christ?

Are we drawn into the saving mission of Christ through the Liturgy?

Are our liturgies celebrated in such a way that they send us out?

Do we see the Liturgy as the 'source and summit' of our lives of prayer?

Can our liturgies be seen as reflecting something of the beauty of God?
How can they be more so?

Additionally, you may wish to consider:

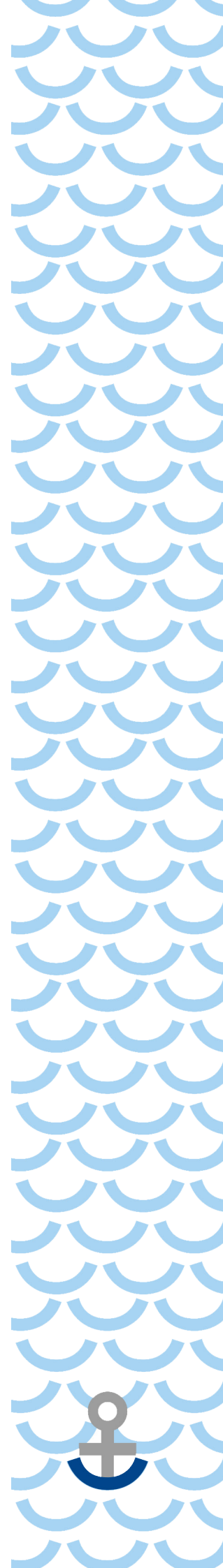
What are we already doing well?

What could we do better?

What are we not doing that God might be calling us to?

Look at the resources available in Part Two and consider ways you might use them or participate in the events so that you might be more engaged in a deeper life of prayer.





PART TWO

PRAYER



RESOURCES

A Future Full of Hope: Prayer - a resource for parish conversation

This resource has been designed to enable parishes, communities and individuals to reflect upon the call to evangelise through our own encounter with the Lord in prayer. Reflecting on Jesus' own prayer and how he draws us into relationship with the Father, we explore how we encounter the Lord through our own personal prayer and through the prayer of the Liturgy. This booklet offers our diocesan community a real resource upon which to build, allowing communities and parishes to deepen their own prayerfulness and to draw others into that encounter with the Lord.

Resources for the prayerful reading and study of Luke's Gospel

Available at the start of 2019, a series of reflections will be available online to enable parishes, groups and individuals to journey into a refreshed and prayerful reading of St Luke's Gospel. We grow in prayer at the school of St Luke, encountering the Jesus who leads us into intimacy with the Father of mercy and compassion.

Catechists' Course

This diocesan formation course for existing and new catechists seeks to nurture and enrich those with the ministry and responsibility of handing on faith to others with skill, ability and insight to enable them to evangelise through their work of catechesis. This ten session course draws catechists together in conversation, reflection, formation and prayer.

Understanding and Praying the Liturgy

Helping our diocesan community to deepen its understanding of both liturgy and prayer, this course facilitated by our diocesan Liturgy Office allows us to see all that we do within the tradition of the Church's liturgical prayer as an encounter with Christ. Details from cliftondiocese.com.

Newsletter Inserts across the Year of Prayer

Continuing the practice of the Year of Mission, these monthly newsletter inserts will allow parishes to anchor themselves firmly into this Year of Prayer. This will begin at the start of December and will be sent, by email, to each parish to use in a way that is most useful.

Year of Prayer Posters

Using the beautiful and vibrant artwork of Fr Jan Rossey OCSO from Caldey Abbey, crafted especially for our diocesan resources, a set of seven posters radiating the life of encounter is available to each parish, school, and community.

Advent Art

Using resources produced at the National Gallery, London, Fr James Hanvey SJ and Fr Christopher Whitehead invite us to encounter something of the God who comes to visit us through the Advent and Christmas narrative. This series of short reflections will be available during December at cliftondiocese.com.

Schools of Prayer

Drawing on the wisdom and tradition of the religious communities, this series of videos draws us into exploring different ways of praying, allowing us to deepen our prayer at the school of the saints.



LITURGIES

Evening Liturgy & Presentation of the 'Year of Prayer' (27 November 2018)

Called together by our bishop, we will gather in our Cathedral to embark upon our Year of Prayer. We will celebrate Evening Prayer with Bishop Declan, and representatives of each parish and community in the diocese, and be presented with the resource for the Year ahead.

Rite of Election (9 March 2019)

At the start of the Season of Lent our diocese gathers with those from the parishes of our diocese who are seeking Baptism or reception into the life of our communities at Easter. The Rite of Election is a cry, not simply to them, but to the whole Church to continual conversion. Do come and join those who present themselves to the bishop to be welcomed and to be encouraged on their journey into deeper faith in Christ.

Liturgies of Reconciliation (Lent 2019)

Bishop Declan will once again celebrate Liturgies of Reconciliation in several venues across the diocese during Lent 2019. We gather to celebrate the mercy of God each week of Lent in a different area of the diocese - 13, 21, 28 March and 4, 11 April.

Mass for Newly Baptised and Newly Received (8 June 2019)

Bishop Declan invites those who are baptised at Easter and those who are received into full communion with the Church to join him (along with their parishes, their sponsors and their families) at a celebration of Mass in thanksgiving for the gift of faith and the call to 'go, glorifying the Lord by our lives'. We gather in our Cathedral.

Celebrating Marriage (13 July 2019)

Each year Bishop Declan invites our diocesan community to gather with him in our Cathedral in celebration of Marriage. He invites married couples to join him and, most especially, those celebrating significant wedding anniversaries across 2019. It is always a great gathering of people and couples from across the Clifton diocese and a tremendous celebration of God's love revealed in the commitment and living out of married love.

EVENTS

Annual Diocesan Day (6 July 2019)

St Brendan's Sixth Form College hosts this diocesan gathering for another year and allows us a day of formation, reflection and insight around this Year of Prayer. With keynote speaker, workshops, something for the children, and a time just to gather from across four counties with our bishop, this day allows us to ponder our prayerfulness as the Church in Clifton.

Glastonbury Pilgrimage (14 July 2019)

Gathering as a diocesan family at the Shrine of Our Lady of Glastonbury, this annual pilgrimage invites us to place all that we are and all we are called to be, as the Church in this place, under the watchful care and prayerful intercession of the Mother of God.



Lourdes Pilgrimage (August 2019)

This annual pilgrimage to Lourdes invites us to keep our eyes fixed on the one who leads us to Christ, her Son, drawing us into a prayerful encounter with him.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This booklet can be used in any way that supports the prayer life of your parish. It can be used individually or as part of a parish or school group.

Our parishes are busy places where much is already happening to further and deepen the prayer of the Church. This process does not necessarily seek to add to that work by adding another layer of activity or forming another group which will be responsible for the 'Year of Prayer'. The purpose is to look at all that we already do and ask ourselves if our activity furthers the challenge to be 'missionary disciples' and deepens our prayer.

The Parish Council or Parish Team could look at the material and resources and find ways to direct existing groups to use them to reflect on what they do. Perhaps a few members of the Parish Council could form a working party to direct the various parish groups toward this booklet and the resources it points to.

If there is no Parish Council at this time the parish priest might want to call three or four parishioners together to look at the resources and then consider ways to help parish groups to use it as might be appropriate for them.

Parish Council/ Parish Team

In addition, the Parish Council could use the reflections to consider how their own work is truly rooted in prayer.

Parish Finance Group

Is the work of administration a functional task or part of our relationship with the Lord?

Parish Catechists

In our preparation for Baptism, the Eucharist, Confirmation, and Marriage are we preparing people for prayerful encounter with Christ?

Saint Vincent de Paul

How is what we do founded on prayer?

Parish Youth Group

How are we, as young people, growing in our prayer and in our relationship with Christ?

Parish Prayer Group

How does our prayer engage us in the mission of Christ and his Church?

Religious Community

Is our community prayer contributing to the mission of the Church? Are we praying for the Church?



Parish School

How do we foster prayerfulness in our school community?

Justice and Peace

How is what we do shaped by our prayerful reading of the gospel?

Ecumenism

What can we learn from other churches in their ways of praying?

This list is obviously not exhaustive and groups such as the Knights of St Columba, the Catenian Association, The Legion of Mary, Union of Catholic Mothers, the Catholic Women's League, might all use this resource to reflect upon their own particular roles as missionary disciples and upon their lives of prayer.

It is intended that using this resource will lead to a deepening of our prayer and our encountering of the Lord. You will see that there are opportunities throughout to consider these three questions:

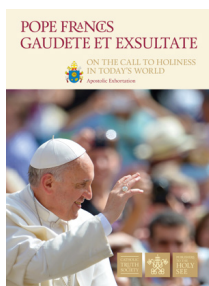
What are we already doing well?

What could we do better?

What are we not doing that God might be calling us to?



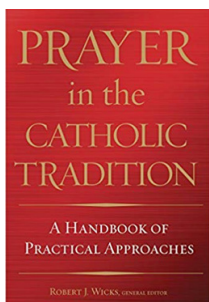
FURTHER READING



Gaudete et Exsultate

Pope Francis draws us back to the 'call to holiness' that is found in the Second Vatican Council and he helps us reflect upon what it means to be holy and how to live holy and prayer-filled lives so as to be enthused for mission.

Available from CTS or vatican.va

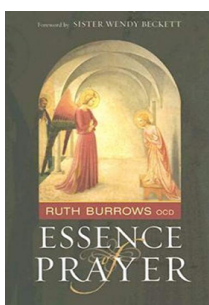


Prayer in the Catholic Tradition

Ed. Robert J. Wicks, Franciscan Media, 2016

This superb volume immerses us in the Church's treasury of prayer and draws on so many different 'schools' of prayer. There is no one way to pray and this handbook allows us to listen to forty different voices shaping our ways of praying.

ISBN: 9781632530325

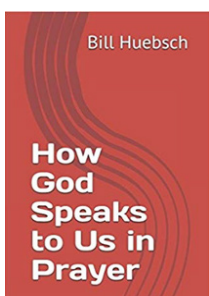


Essence of Prayer

Ruth Burrows, Burns and Oates, 2006

Drawing on the wisdom and practice of the Carmelite Tradition, Ruth Burrows grounds the reader in an understanding of prayer as a real part of the life of the disciple of Jesus.

ISBN: 9780860124252

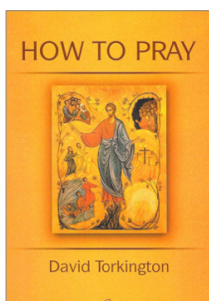


How God speaks to us in Prayer

Bill Huebsch, Sanctus Press, 2017

Rather than being a mechanical transaction, Bill allows us to ponder our prayer as an entering into the very love of God which calls us and draws us deeper into relationship with him.

ISBN: 9781521816110

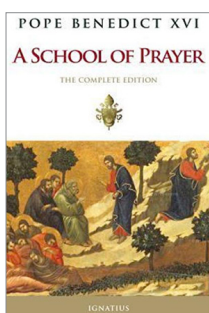


How to Pray

David Torkington, McCrimmon, 2004

David's book seeks to allow us to discover new pathways in prayer that lead us to experience the presence of God at every moment of our lives. This little volume seeks to accompany us into good spiritual health.

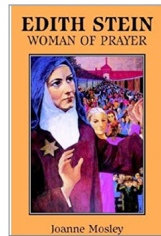
ISBN: 9786818909214



A School of Prayer

This series of Pope Benedict's weekly audiences draw on the wisdom and prayer of the saints, of patriarchs and matriarchs, on the teaching and witness of Jesus, and the example of Mary. Pope Benedict draws us into contemplating Jesus as the one who allows us to come close to God and experience his tremendous love in prayer.

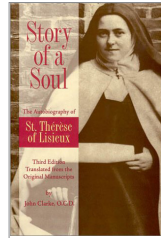
ISBN: 9781480182486



Edith Stein: Woman of Prayer

Joanne Morley, Gracewing, 2004

ISBN: 9780852445969

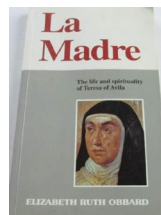


Story of a Soul:

The autobiography of St Therese of Lisieux

ICS publications

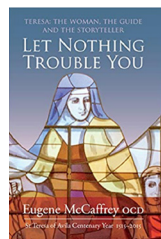
ISBN: 9782950883711



La Madre: The Life and Spirituality of Teresa of Avila

Elizabeth Ruth Obbard, St Pauls, 1994

ISBN: 9780854394685

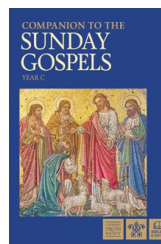


Let Nothing Trouble you: the life of Teresa of Avila

Eugene McCaffery OCD, 2015

ISBN: 9781782182191

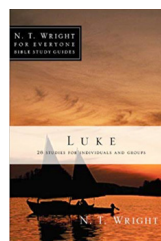
St Luke's Gospel



Luke's Gospel and

Companion to the Sunday Gospels

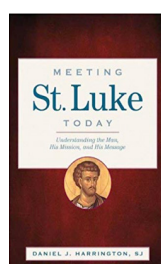
are available from the CTS



Luke for Everyone

Tom Wright, SPCK, 2014

ISBN: 9780281053001



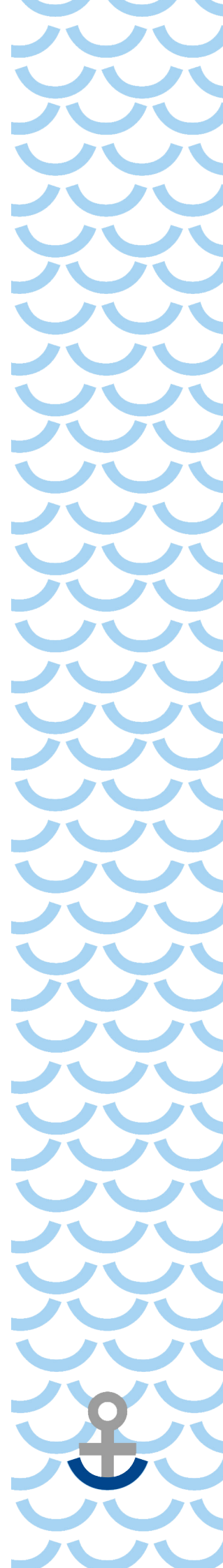
Meeting St Luke Today

Daniel Harrington, Loyola Press, 2009

In addition to a brief but complete narrative analysis of the Gospel of Luke and essential background information on the Evangelist himself, this book includes suggestions for ways we might "pray" Luke's Gospel and live out its transforming message in our daily lives.

ISBN: 9780829429169





DIOCESAN PRAYER

God our Father,
open the horizons of our minds and hearts
so that we can see what hope your call holds for us.

Pour out the overflowing gifts of your Spirit
so that we, your Church,
may become a people of hope for our world.

We ask you this through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever.

Our Lady, Woman of Hope,
pray for us.

St Peter, Rock of Hope,
pray for us.

St Paul, Apostle of Hope,
pray for us.

