



YEAR OF Prayer 2024

Three prayer sessions for the Year of Prayer
in preparation for the Jubilee Year 2025

“LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY”

FACILITATOR GUIDE

“Where two or three are gathered in my name,
says the Lord; there am I in the midst of them.”

Matthew 18:20

Prayer becomes the bridge between heaven and earth,
a meeting place where the heart of man and the heart of God
intertwine in an unceasing dialogue of love.

May prayer be the compass that guides, the light that illuminates
the path and the strength that sustains us on the pilgrimage that
will lead to entering the Holy Door.

Through prayer, may we arrive at the Holy Door with our hearts ready
to welcome the gifts of grace and forgiveness that the Jubilee offers
as a vivid expression of our relationship with God.

Let us immerse ourselves through prayer in an ongoing dialogue
with the Creator, discovering the joy of silence, the peace of
abandonment and the power of intercession in the communion
of saints.

(From Vatican Document, “Teach us to Pray”)

OVERVIEW

About the Course

Format for each weekly session is

1. Welcome and Introduction
2. Opening Prayer - which could include an Opening Hymn
3. Introduction to the Prayer type
4. A prayer experience
5. Quiet reflection followed by sharing
6. Action for the week ahead with reflective passages to take home.
7. Closing Prayer - which could include a Closing Hymn
8. Social time

It is advised that these prayer sessions are conducted in small faith-sharing groups of not more than ten participants.

For each session there is a facilitator's guide and a participant's leaflet. These are provided in electronic format to parishes who will need to do their own printing.

It is advised that each participant have their own sheet, as the prayer styles do not lend themselves to sharing.

Participants are introduced to a different prayer style at each session.

The sessions are scripture-based.

While these prayer sessions can take place at any time in the liturgical year, these have been written with the Year of Prayer in mind, preparing for the Jubilee Year of 2025.

The closing prayer can be changed to suit other times for these prayer services.

It is suggested that each facilitator build up a focus table for each session. This could include a Bible, a crucifix, a candle (or one candle for each group member), an item from nature and anything else that fits with the scripture reading. The candles would be lit at the start of the session, and participants sit in a circle / semi-circle around the focus.

There are YouTube videos recommended (optional) which can be shown to the group, provided all can see. These would enhance the experience. Links for recommended hymns are also given.



Facilitators Introduction

Please read the introduction in the participants' leaflets in conjunction with this one.

This guide, for the facilitators, was prepared in order to give you additional material, thoughts and ideas in leading your group into new prayer experiences. It contains both the additional material and also what is in the participants' booklets. The Facilitator notes are marked in the left margin with a green (colour) or black bar.

TEACH US TO PRAY: New Experiences in Prayer

The theme Teach us to Pray comes from the Vatican Dicastery for Evangelisation in order to encourage us to widen our prayer experiences. There is a vast rich tradition of different prayer styles and methods in the Church, many of them not well-known. Hopefully we can introduce three new methods to our groups (and more next year).

We are all different and so we all have preferred prayer styles. There is no right or correct way.

If some of your group find a prayer style difficult, encourage them to stay with it for a week or two – but if it is not “speaking” to them, then to move on.

Use of Videos

For all three weeks, there is the option for the inclusion of videos. They are listed to enhance the experience for all.

Some points regarding the videos:

You must view the video before you decide if and how you are going to include it. Please don't show just because it is listed.

After viewing, you can then decide which of the following options are the best for your groups:

- You use the information from the videos to help in the understanding of the prayer style.
- The videos are played for the group as additional knowledge of the prayer style.
- If you decide not to show it, the url is in the participants' leaflet and they can view it at home.
- To view the video simply copy and paste the url into Google search.
- There are other videos in Google. It is suggested not to look at too many as they will contradict each other in some cases.
- The ones suggested are appropriate.
- In each session there are ideas, suggestions and options particular to the listed videos.



Facilitators Introduction

Relax and Release of tensions.

We have bodies. In order to enter into a prayerful experience, we need to relax the body, release the tensions and quieten the mind. We need to do this in all three sessions. Here are some guidelines that you could use or adapt.

How to relax the body in preparation for prayer:
(Don't rush this).

To begin we relax the body.

- Sit upright in the chair, feet on the ground. Now tighten your **leg muscles**, stretch out, hold and then relax. Do this three times.
- Then do the same with **arms and fingers**.
- **The Back:** Tighten the back, and then relax it. Three times.
- **The Neck:** Move the head around gently three times each way. This relaxes the important neck muscles.
- Now tighten and release the **face muscles**.

(This is not the prayer and some may well find it funny or amusing). That is great.

- Ask the group to gently close their eyes and to listen to their **breathing**. A few moments silence. Without forcing, become aware of your breathing. Listen to it. Enjoy it.
- Gently lead into the prayer experience.



Centering Prayer

WEEK ONE

“Be still and know that I am God.
I am exalted among the nations,
exalted on the earth” *Psalm 46:10*



Videos you might like to use for this session: See page 3 for video usage recommendations.

Links to two videos are listed for Centering Prayer.

The first one gives good explanations and a ten minute experience. The group could use this clip as their prayer experience:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hPfU2yJ2II>

The second is Thomas Keating, well known for his involvement and development of centering prayer. In the first 2 or 3 minutes he gives a very good and brief introduction to the prayer style and being with the God within. (After that there is a 20 - minutes silence):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s06mhAKZF2w>

1. Welcome & Introduction

Welcome everyone. Let the group introduce themselves if they do not know each other.

2. Opening Prayer

Before beginning the opening prayer, check if the group can sing the hymn (or another if they prefer).

Create a climate of silence.
Facilitator or a member reads the introduction to the prayer.

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.” As we begin this prayer service today, let us pray in the words Jesus taught us...

Our Father who art in heaven ...

Suggested Hymn

Be still and know / Celebration Hymnal #71
Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AyDr9-Mpc_s



3. Introduction to Centering Prayer

We now look at our prayer style for this session: Centering Prayer.
We read the introduction in the prayer leaflet.

Centering Prayer is a type of prayer that helps us to enter the inner quiet of our being to discover God. It is like allowing a bucket to drop down the well of our inner selves to draw from the waters of God's gracious love. Centering prayer assists us to descend to the core of our being which is the "image of God" point.

We need to select a favourite phrase, or word or mantra. As we are the disciples asking "Jesus to teach us to pray," it might be good to take a word or mantra from the Lord's prayer: ...e.g "Our Father", or "Father", or "Hallowed be your name", or "Your kingdom come".... Select one mantra before you begin the prayer.

And then the leader encourages members to select a mantra, based on the "Our Father".



4. The Prayer Experience

The Prayer Method: The prayer experience has three steps:

1. We relax into silence

2. We pray to be open to the God who loves. The leader will pray that we all be open to the love and peace of God. The prayer will be said slowly, with time for the individuals in the group to repeat it, quietly to themselves.

3. We use the mantra (chosen words) to open ourselves to love and to the peace of God. Then in the silence, we begin to utter the word(s) peacefully and deliberately, to ourselves, with a regular rhythm. We try to experience the image/ background of the word. The word slowly then envelopes us in silence and peace. We continue to repeat the mantra leaving more and more time between each repetition, allowing ourselves to be drawn into God within. If we become distracted GENTLY return to the mantra. We begin:
At the end the leader will invite us back into the room.

The leader can, if appropriate, refer to, or show, one or both of the video clips

Now we begin.
Relaxing exercises. (See page 4)

When relaxed, you lead the group in a prayer: such as the following. (If you would like to change, do so but keep the thoughts of being open to the silent God within us.) Pray it slowly, leaving people time to repeat it after you – but in silence.

*O Lord we know that you are within us.....
we thank you for your presence in our lives.....*

*we praise and worship you for you are holy
we love you.....
we place this time in your hands..
and we open ourselves to your Spirit within us.....
may your Spirit empower us and fill us.....*

The leader encourages the group to begin the centering prayer.

Now we slowly and gently open ourselves to God and repeat our phrase or mantra. The leader could close the prayer time after about 10 - 15 minutes, by leading the group quietly and slowly in the Lord's Prayer.



5. Quiet Reflection & Sharing

Give time for the group to react to the experience.

Share your experience: Was it a prayerful experience? Was it difficult? Good? etc. We do not discuss questions of theology or scripture etc. It is a prayer.

6. Recommended Action for the week

Encourage the group to try this prayer style in the next week. Try it at home, or wherever. There are no scripture passages needed.

Also mention the two videos. Have a look (again) at the two videos.

To continue our prayer journey, during the coming week we could try it at home, or wherever. There are no scripture passages needed.

There are two videos. Have a look (again) at the two videos.

There are a number of videos on centering prayer available on Google: some better than others, some are guidelines and others are experiences.

Here are the links for two of them.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhPfU2yJ2II>

This gives good explanations and a ten minute experience

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s06mhAKZF2w>

This is Thomas Keating, well known for his involvement and development of centering prayer. The first 2 or 3 minutes he gives a very good and brief intro to the prayer style and being at one with the God within. (After that there is a 20 minute silence.)



Ask some people to read the closing prayers.
And move to the hymn if desired.

7. Closing

Can be prayed as intercessions with further personal prayers added.

With hearts overflowing with hope and faith, and conscious that each of our prayers is a golden thread that is woven into the great tapestry of ecclesial communion, we pray...

Lord, source of all wisdom, guide us during this time of prayer. Open our hearts and enlighten our minds so that we may understand and fully experience the gifts of mercy and forgiveness.

O Father, in Your mercy, hear Your children's pleas. Renew our faith, increase the virtues of hope and charity in us, and help us be witnesses of Your love in the world.

We praise You, Lord, for Your infinite goodness. Open our eyes to the beauty of Your creation so that our hearts may rejoice in the wonder and greatness of Your works.

(Personal prayers)

We thank You, O God, for every blessing and for all the gifts we have received. Teach us to recognize Your hand in every moment of our lives and to welcome each day as a gift of Your mercy and love. Amen.

Suggested Hymn

I watch the sunrise / Celebration Hymnal #288

Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=byEU7ZgIRBY>

8. Social Time





Videos you might like to use for this session - See suggestions in the Introduction.
Page 1

We list four videos, with their urls, for Lectio Divina:

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJpT1pLRcKQ>

This video gives a very good explanation. Unfortunately the background music is loud and a distraction. It is best to turn volume down and just read what is on the screen. If there is no projector available, it would be that people “listen” to this at home. Perhaps you could listen to this before the prayer session and group members after the prayer experience.

2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhwRcg1mHec>

This is a personal sharing of how the Lectio Divina helped her in her spirituality.

3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lt2iGxLlqNY>

A short and easy to listen to explanation.

4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i27FqIyk2qY>

Another example of Lectio Divina. The passage chosen in the video is similar to that which is in our booklet. Note that at the end, he stresses that there are different ways of praying with Lectio Divina.

It is strongly suggested that you have a look at these four videos before the prayer session. They can enhance the experience for all.

1. Welcome & Introduction

Welcome everyone. Introduce anyone who is new to the group



2. Opening Prayer

Before beginning the opening prayer, check if the group can sing the hymn (or another if they prefer).

Create a climate of silence. You or a member reads the introduction to the prayer.

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”
Luke 11:1

As we begin this prayer service today, let us pray in the words Jesus taught us...
Our Father who art in heaven ...

Suggested Hymn
Amazing Grace / Celebration Hymnal #40
Video
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-vt6E9N7AQw&list=RDTvt6E9N7AQw&start_radio=1

3. Introduction to Lectio Divina

This prayer method has four steps to it.

READ.

We read the Scripture passage.

MEDITATE.

We meditate on the word.

PRAY.

We pray to our God in response to our meditation.

CONTEMPLATE.

We sit in silence and listen with heart and mind.

Step by Step

The Reading. Read the passage of Scripture. Maybe several times. Read with the heart.

Meditation: Stop at the first word or phrase which attracts you. We begin. Repeat the word (phrase) repeatedly. Do not reflect so much on the meaning, but savour and relish what we repeat. When we have relished the words sufficiently we move to prayer.

Prayer. We offer a response to what He has spoken to us through the meditation. Our feelings, our desires, our thoughts, etc. are all ways of hearing and responding to God within. How will we change our lives? Adoration, contrition, thanksgiving and supplication are all possible responses.

Contemplation. Once we have said what we needed to say to God, be quiet and listen with your heart and mind because he will have a response for us. Don't rush. God works in his own ways and times.



Below are a few more thoughts and you can use these for further explanation or enrichment.

Read

God reveals himself in many ways, the primary of which is Sacred Scripture. By reading the passage we come to hear that same God talking to us in silence.

We need to be ready to receive the revelation.

Read the passage of Scripture. Maybe several times. Read with the heart.

Meditate

In meditation we welcome the Word of God into our lives and turn it into living Word and presence of God.

Having received God's Word, we need to chew it and ruminate upon it. We discover the beauty and goodness of God's Word. And apply it to our situation.

Pray

We decide how we will incorporate the Word of God into our hearts, our lives, and our work. Our response is expressed through words, thoughts, desires, feelings, resolution and commitments.

Contemplate – Listening in silence.

We seek to effect the union of love that should result from our dialogue with God. This is to be the consummation of the union of our mind with God's truth.

At times we will be aware of God's presence, other times we will perhaps notice that there is an increase of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23, love, joy, peace....) with in us. That is prayer.



4. The Prayer Experience

Before beginning the reading, encourage the group to relax.
(See page 4 in this booklet.)

We relax.

We open ourselves to the Spirit moving with us.

We recall the process.

Read.

Meditate.

Pray.

Contemplate.

We begin.

Somebody will read it for us, slowly. We listen to Scripture (Mt 14: 22-33).

After listening to the reading, absorb the Word and listen to God as we meditate, pray and contemplate.

Matthew 14:22-23

Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

After the reading of the Gospel passage, we don't discuss, or ask questions. We move in silence to meditation, prayer and contemplation.



5. Quiet Reflection & Sharing

Give the group time to react to the experience.
 Share your experience. Was it prayerful experience? Was it difficult?
 Good? Will you try it again? etc.
 We do not discuss questions of theology or scripture, etc. It is a prayer.

6. Recommended Action for the week

Here are a few more Scripture passages which lend themselves to this prayer method. Try some at home.



Mt 13: 1 – 23
 Mt 10: 37 – 42
 Mt 9: 9 – 13
 Luke 10: 21- 24

Here are links for four videos relevant to Lectio Divina

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJpT1pLRcKQ>

This video gives a very good explanation. Unfortunately, the background music is loud and a distraction. It is best to turn volume down and just read what is on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hwRcg1mHec>

This is a personal sharing of how the Lectio Divina helped her in her spirituality.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lt2iGxLIqNY>

A short and easy to listen to explanation.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i27Fqlyk2qY>

Another example. The passage chosen is similar to that which is in our booklet. Note that at the end, he stresses that there are different ways of praying with Lectio Divina.



7. Closing

Can be prayed as intercessions with further personal prayers added.

With hearts overflowing with hope and faith, and conscious that each of our prayers is a golden thread that is woven into the great tapestry of ecclesial communion, we pray...

Lord, source of all wisdom, guide us during this time of prayer. Open our hearts and enlighten our minds so that we may understand and fully experience the gifts of mercy and forgiveness.

O Father, in Your mercy, hear Your children's pleas. Renew our faith, increase the virtues of hope and charity in us, and help us be witnesses of Your love in the world.

We praise You, Lord, for Your infinite goodness. Open our eyes to the beauty of Your creation so that our hearts may rejoice in the wonder and greatness of Your works.

(Personal prayers)

We thank You, O God, for every blessing and for all the gifts we have received. Teach us to recognize Your hand in every moment of our lives and to welcome each day as a gift of Your mercy and love. Amen.

Suggested Hymn

Do not be afraid / Celebration Hymnal #147

Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOcyrnqXGLO>

8. Social Time



Franciscan Prayer

WEEK THREE

“Look at the birds on the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them” *Matthew 6:26*



Videos you might like to use for this session:
See suggestions in the introduction, Page 3.

There is one video which is most appropriate for the Franciscan Style of Prayer:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-kVMcvMWcg>
NEW! Version 2.0 (with Lyrics): "Creation Calls"

It is suggested for Part 4 – The Prayer Experience. Try to show it to everyone.

1. Welcome & Introduction

Welcome everyone. Introduce anyone new to the group.

2. Opening Prayer

Before beginning the opening prayer, check if the group can sing the hymn (or another, if they prefer). Create a climate of silence. The leader or a group member reads the prayer.

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

As we begin this prayer service today,
let us pray in the words Jesus taught us...
Our Father who art in heaven ...

Suggested Hymn
Morning has Broken / Celebration Hymnal
#490
Video
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5D3LEjGF8A>



3. Introduction to Franciscan Prayer

This prayer style is often based on God's creation – be it mountains, seas, animals and humans.

Typically one would suggest doing this prayer in a beautiful outside setting with a great view.

This prayer is flexible and free flowing. The prayer is a “spirit-filled” prayer open to the presence of the Holy Spirit in everyone, often centering on the events rather than the teaching of Jesus, e.g. His birth, hidden life, death, miracles, etc. It calls upon the 5 senses to encourage our praise and worship of God.





4. The Prayer Experience

The challenge is to get “Creation” and our group to meet.

Here are four variations depending on your resources, people and space. Choose which you think will be appropriate to your group and have it planned before the group meets. Your opening words will depend on what option you have chosen.

If the group is smallish, you might like to use two of these options, e.g. Option 1 and Option 2, etc.

Option 1: At the end of the previous prayer time (the previous week) ask the group to bring something of nature with them: a leaf, stone, flower, a piece of bark...

Option 2: Reading of the New Psalm of Creation (attached on page 22).

Option 3: Read and reflect on either psalm 33 or 23 or 104.

Option 4. Showing of the video Creation Calls.



4. The Prayer Experience (Continued)

At night, this becomes difficult. (If it is a cloudless night and not too cold, looking at the stars is a possibility – but the group must not be disturbed by street noise, the cold, etc.) If the group meeting is during the day, then perhaps the group might like to go to a quiet spot in nature.

Option 1: The group could each share what they have brought and why they chose it. And then when all have shared, ask the group to reflect on what they have heard and let the Spirit guide them in their mediation.

Option 2: Have a person read the psalm slowly, New Psalm of Creation. It is in their booklet. Then give them time in silence to re-read it and to let it “speak” to them. Finish off with each member of the group sharing which line(s) they found powerful, spoke to them. No comment, just read their own line. If others have said that line, no matter read yours too.

Option 3: Psalm 33: If you do not have enough bibles for everyone, have one person read it slowly, then after a short period silence, have another person read it again. Followed by silence, and then ask people to share what the psalm “said” to them.

Option 4: The video “Creation Calls” is a powerful presentation about the beauty of nature and the God who made it all. There are a number of versions on YouTube but the one with lyrics is the best. If you can show it, ask the group that at the end they would sit in silence. NO comments, no verbal reactions. Let us just absorb the beauty.

The link on YouTube is:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-kVMcvMWcg>

NEW! Version 2.0 (with Lyrics):
"Creation Calls"

Afterwards, let the people sit in silence for some time before sharing.

To use this option, all members of the group must be able to see the screen. (Cast to TV set or use data projector, if available.)

If you can't show it to all, give them the link or the name Version 2 Creation Calls and they can enjoy it at home. It can be opened on a cell phone – but loses its impact.



5. Quiet Reflection & Sharing

Share your experience. Was it prayerful experience? Was it difficult? Good? Will you try it again? etc.

We do not discuss questions of theology or scripture, etc. It is a prayer.

6. Recommended Action for the week

Here are a few more Scripture passages which lend themselves to this prayer method. Try some at home.



Psalm 104
Psalm 96
Col 1:16
John 1: 1-3
Lead Kindly Light (by Cardinal Newman)

Psalm 33
Psalm 23
Rev 4:11

The video "Creation Calls" is a powerful presentation about the beauty of nature and the God who made it all. There are a number of versions on the Internet (search in Google) but the one with lyrics is the best. If you watch it at home, with friends, at the end of the video just sit and absorb the beauty.

The link on YouTube is:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-kVMcvMWcg>
NEW! Version 2.0 (with Lyrics): "Creation Calls"



7. Closing

Can be prayed as intercessions with further personal prayers added.

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Lord, source of all wisdom, guide us during this time of prayer. Open our hearts and enlighten our minds so that we may understand and fully experience the gifts of mercy and forgiveness.

O Father, in Your mercy, hear Your children's pleas. Renew our faith, increase the virtues of hope and charity in us, and help us be witnesses of Your love in the world.

We praise You, Lord, for Your infinite goodness. Open our eyes to the beauty of Your creation so that our hearts may rejoice in the wonder and greatness of Your works.

(Personal prayers)

We thank You, O God, for every blessing and for all the gifts we have received. Teach us to recognize Your hand in every moment of our lives and to welcome each day as a gift of Your mercy and love. Amen.

Suggested Hymn

Sing to the Mountains/ Celebration Hymnal # 657
Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zacE5ZlkSE>

8. Social Time





New Psalm of Creation

Allow us to praise you, oh God,
In all the worlds you have created
Allow us to praise you
on the heights where angels abide

Allow us to praise you
in the depths of the glistening stars.
Allow us to praise you, our God
at the foot of the angel
Who closes the gates of hell.

Allow us to praise you, oh God,
with the twittering,
noisy and multi-coloured birds
that delight our eyes and ears.

Allow us to praise you, oh God,
for nests in the trees,
where fledglings lift their bare necks
toward their mother who brings them
food.

Allow us to praise you, oh God,
for the animals of the earth,
big and small, full of tenderness
or overflowing with indomitable force.
Do not allow them to be extinguished
but let them live.

And may new generations arrive
to praise you.
Allow us to praise you
in the roundness of the earth,
for everything that flies and runs,
swims and arises from the deep.
Your love is unfathomable and
impenetrable everywhere.

Blessed are you for cascades
and might rivers for calm waters,
deep and silent.
Receive praise, with much affection,
for small springs
that provide water so that fish may live.

Allow us to praise you, my God
for storms on earth and seas,
for sandstorms in the deserts

Wonderful and eternal is your holy
desire
to edify people and more.
And even if they fail,
if they kneel before you
like prodigal children
you bend over them
with patience and kindness,
telling them: Come, children,
return to original innocence
and I shall welcome you
as a father greets his children.

Be glorified and praised,
most holy God,
in each heart you created for your
glory.
You want to be with us eternally
most holy God.
You, three times holy, praiseworthy;
you, our beatitude.
Oh, three times holy,
three times admirable,
three times divine, ineffable God.
Amen