

Liturgical Prayer

PREPARATION – LITURGY OF THE WORD

If beginning with a hymn or song, see previous page for suggestions

First Reading: 1 Pt 2:4-10

Response: Ps 99

Gospel: Lk 22:7-20

PROCLAMATION

God has gathered us as a holy nation and members of Christ's Mystical Body. He accepts our prayer to him as his people. Body and soul, we worship with our entire being, firm in the hope of Jesus' return.

EXPLANATION

The purposes of liturgical prayer: the privilege and dignity of worshipping God as he desires (see 1 Pt 2:4-10)

- ✠ Liturgy is directed to God, the Father, through his Son, by the inspiration and power of the Holy Spirit
- ✠ The Holy Spirit gathers together the Church to pray as a people with one voice, a true participation in the creative work of God, the redemptive work of Jesus' Paschal mystery, and the company of the Heavenly host
- ✠ Liturgical prayer is the work of the common priesthood of the baptized in Christ
- ✠ Liturgical prayer continues the work of our redemption and sanctifies us as the entire People of God
- ✠ Liturgical prayer allows us to pray with our entire beings, involving our bodies, our souls, and our spirits through readings and prayer, hymns and songs, postures and gestures, and engaging all the senses (including the sense of taste in Holy Communion)
- ✠ Liturgical prayer is the authoritative prayed expression of our common belief (we pray what we believe)
- ✠ Liturgical prayer, as designed and authenticated by Mother Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, allows the community to pray in the words of Sacred Scripture and of her sons and daughters who drank most deeply at the well of a life lived in holy communion with God; we worship using the highest expressions of prayer ever written
- ✠ Liturgical prayer ensures that our communal prayer is the most appropriate expression of worship of the Triune God, rooted in Jewish worship and the flower of the centuries of experience of Mother Church

Liturgical seasons and the liturgical year: walking through the life of Christ (see Acts 20:7)

- ✠ The economy of salvation is at work within the framework of time
- ✠ The Church commemorates Jesus' Resurrection and invites us to the Lord's Supper every Sunday
- ✠ The Church celebrates the saving mysteries of Jesus' life and his Paschal mystery in the liturgical year, made up of the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter, and of Ordinary Time
- ✠ Within the seasons of Christmas and Easter are the Church's highest feasts
- ✠ Within the larger theme of walking through the life of Christ each year, the Church calendar also honors certain saintly people, angelic beings, and events to place always before us the call to holiness, and God's ever-present faithfulness in history

The Liturgy of the Hours: sanctifying time (see Acts 3:1)

- ✠ The Church sanctifies the hours of the day through the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours
- ✠ The Liturgy of the Hours is centered on the reading of Scripture and the praying of the Psalms
- ✠ The Liturgy of the Hours promotes union with God from morning until night using God's own words to us, and a deeper understanding of the Word of God

APPLICATION – SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think the Church puts so much emphasis on liturgical prayer?
2. How do you think liturgical prayer would unite you with other Catholics?
3. Do you think liturgical prayer is more important than private prayer?

CELEBRATION – SUGGESTIONS FOR CLOSING PRAYER

1. Pray for an ever greater understanding, appreciation, and love of liturgical worship.
2. Hymn or song (see previous page for suggestions)
3. Pray together the appropriate prayer for the date and time of day from the Liturgy of the Hours

Traditions of Prayer

PREPARATION – LITURGY OF THE WORD

If beginning with a hymn or song, see previous page for suggestions

First Reading: Sir 39:1-8

Response: Ps 63

Gospel: Mt 11:25-30

PROCLAMATION

Prayer is a participation in the life of love. The Church has a vast and rich treasury of traditions of prayer. The means to draw ever nearer to God in prayer exists for everyone in abundance.

EXPLANATION

The source and goal of prayer (see Matt 11:25-30)

- ✠ Prayer is formed from a deepening desire for the joy of relationship with the Persons of the Trinity
- ✠ Our prayer must come from the heart, and not just be words or thoughts
- ✠ Our goal is to live always in God's presence, as we journey to communion with the Father, Son, and Spirit
- ✠ We pray in communion with Christ, who has died and risen, and his Mystical Body, the Church
- ✠ The great tradition of the Church's prayers exists to call all people to holiness and loving self-sacrifice

Major kinds of vocal (formal) prayers (see Eph 5:18-20)

- ✠ The prayer of the Church is liturgical prayer, especially the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours
- ✠ Basic prayers include the Sign of the Cross, the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and the Glory Be
- ✠ The Psalms are the prayerbook of both Judaism and the Church
- ✠ Litanies are prayers of praise and intercession that alternate between leader and response
- ✠ Various intercessory prayers are addressed to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the saints, and the angels

Examples of habits of daily prayer, using both formal and spontaneous prayer (see Ps 119:164)

- ✠ Starting points are the morning offering, prayer at mealtimes, and night prayer
- ✠ The Angelus sanctifies the beginning, middle, and end of the working day
- ✠ The Liturgy of the Hours is the Church's official daily habitual prayer

Meditative prayer: for all who seek holiness (see Ps 145:1-21)

- ✠ Meditation is not solely an act of the intellect, but is an act of every part of the human soul and spirit, including our senses, emotions, and desires
- ✠ Lectio divina, the Rosary, and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy are forms of meditative prayer

Contemplative prayer: the gaze of love (see Eph 3:14-19)

- ✠ Contemplative prayer transforms our hearts, minds, and souls; it prepares us for total intimacy with the divine
- ✠ Contemplation is a gift from God, not something achieved by the will or called forth by human initiation
- ✠ God gives to a soul the gift of his intimate presence in a way not based in human knowledge
- ✠ This special union is possible for anyone, but this height of prayer is normally reached through careful guidance

Specific practices and devotions in the Church are a sign of the guidance of the Holy Spirit (see 2 Thes 2:13-17)

- ✠ Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction, Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, devotion to the Divine Mercy, the Stations of the Cross, Holy Hours, First Fridays, and First Saturdays are major and well-known devotions
- ✠ Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary has a special, essential place in the Catholic's life of prayer
- ✠ Devotions to other saints are an expression of the reality of the communion of saints
- ✠ Novenas, consecrations, and pilgrimages are additional devotional practices with long histories
- ✠ The saints have bequeathed to the Church a vast treasury of prayer and spirituality

APPLICATION – SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What do you think it means to be a prayerful person?
2. When am I least aware of the presence of God in my life? What can I do to make myself more mindful of God in my daily life through prayer?
3. When I read Sacred Scripture, do I pray and meditate on its meaning? Does my meditation lead me to a deeper interest in or desire for Jesus?
4. Do I ever feel called to contemplation? Could I fit an hour of Eucharistic adoration into my life weekly?

CELEBRATION – SUGGESTIONS FOR CLOSING PRAYER

1. Pray to the Holy Spirit for the graces to desire to pray, to will to pray, and to develop the habit of prayer.
2. Hymn or song (see previous page for suggestions)
3. Pray together Litany of the Sacred Heart (see *Participant's Book*)

The Son of God

PREPARATION – LITURGY OF THE WORD

If beginning with a hymn or song, see previous page for suggestions

First Reading: 2 Cor 5:17-21

Response: Ps 93

Gospel: Mt 1:18-23

PROCLAMATION

The second Person of the Blessed Trinity is begotten of the Father. He is equal to the Father. The Son took on human nature to accomplish our salvation. Faith in him is the path to Heaven.

EXPLANATION

Incarnation (see Jn 1:1-4, 9-14, 17-18)

- ✠ The Father's plan for our salvation was centered on the second Person of the Blessed Trinity (see Is 53:1-11)
- ✠ The Son of God became a man, Jesus Christ, who is true God and true Man
 - ⊗ He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, the true Mother of God
 - ⊗ He is one divine Person with two natures, human and divine
 - ⊗ He is like us in all things but sin
 - ⊗ He has a human soul, human knowledge, a human will, a human body, a human heart
- ✠ Jesus is a Person; we believe in a Person, not a theorem or a feeling or a symbol
- ✠ The Incarnation is foundational for understanding Jesus' life and the purpose of his redemptive mission, the purpose of his Church, and his Second Coming

Redemption (see 1 Cor 15:3)

- ✠ Jesus took our sins and the consequences of our sins upon himself and paid our debt to the Father
- ✠ He lived a life of complete obedience to the Father
- ✠ By his sacrifice and Death, he saved us from our sins, reconciled us to the Father, and opened the gates of Heaven to us so that we might live forever with God
- ✠ Jesus' bodily return to Heaven is the herald of the coming of the Holy Spirit, to offer adoption as sons and daughters to all who have faith in the Son (see Rom 8:14-17)
- ✠ Through the Church, the Holy Spirit offers the love of Christ in all its fullness, especially in the sacraments
- ✠ The Holy Spirit, beginning at Baptism, works in us to form us in the likeness of the Son (see 1 Cor 15:49)

The Second Coming (see Mt 25:31-46)

- ✠ Jesus will come as King at the end of the world for the final, general judgment

A relationship with Jesus is necessary (see Phil 3:8-11)

- ✠ Jesus loves us, seeks us out, and calls us to know him better
- ✠ He reveals the Father to us, for he is the visible love of the Father among us
- ✠ He wants a relationship with us based on our free love for him
- ✠ He intends that we become holy and partakers of his divine nature (see 2 Pt 1:3-11)
- ✠ He shows us the way to holiness, to become perfect as his Father is perfect

APPLICATION – SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why should God have become man? Why are Christ's divine and human natures both essential for understanding his Paschal mystery and his gift of redemption?
2. Could the Father have accomplished our redemption without sending his Son? Why did he do what he did? Why does he care so much for us? How can we show our appreciation?
3. Does God's initiative of reaching out to us through his Son inspire faith in him?
4. What would it mean in your life to more fully try to follow the Son, and seek to be deeply transformed in him?

CELEBRATION – SUGGESTIONS FOR CLOSING PRAYER

1. Ask for a closer relationship with and deeper commitment to Christ, and ask him to draw each one nearer to him and to help each one to follow him more closely.
2. Hymn or song (see previous page for suggestions)
3. Pray together the canticle from Philipians 2 (see *Participant's Book*)

God the Father

PREPARATION – LITURGY OF THE WORD

If beginning with a hymn or song, see previous page for suggestions

First Reading: 2 Cor 6:16-18

Response: Ps 100

Gospel: Jn 17:1-11

PROCLAMATION

God the Father is the first origin of everything. He lovingly cares for his children. He is the source and goal of our faith.

EXPLANATION

God is the Lord Almighty who is all-powerful and yet all-loving and merciful (see Wis 11:21-23; Is 55:6-9)

- ✠ God does whatever he pleases, for he is the Creator, the strong and mighty Lord, whose ways are above ours
- ✠ God is merciful to all, a caring Father who forgives us our sins, because of his desire for loving union with us

Our relationship with the Father is a relationship made in Heaven (see 2 Cor 6:16-18)

- ✠ The Father's nature is revealed in his works of creation and salvation
- ✠ God is our Creator; he has made all things and each of us as personal acts of love
- ✠ The Father loves us and wants us to participate in his own life, and so he adopts us as his sons and daughters (see Rom 8:15-17)
- ✠ He will not leave us orphaned

Many ask why evil exists in the world if God is all-powerful and providential (see Hb 1 12-13; 3:17-19)

- ✠ The Christian faith answers this question by calling us to recognize that the Father's plan of love is based in our freedom (see Gal 5:1-6)
- ✠ The apparent "weakness of God" is a mystery of his almighty power — our faith asks us to trust that his purpose will be accomplished (see 1 Cor 1:25)
- ✠ God created us as free persons; because love must be free to be authentic, we can choose to turn away from him
- ✠ Our relationship with God the Father is made possible through his Son, Jesus Christ
- ✠ This relationship is revealed by his Son, Jesus Christ, and made possible by his sacrifice (see Lk 10:22)
- ✠ Jesus teaches us to pray to his Father (see Mt 6:9-13)
- ✠ We must be obedient to the Father, submitting ourselves to his will in all things (see Jer 16:10-12)
- ✠ Jesus calls us to perfection, as his Father is perfect (see Mt 5:48)
- ✠ The Holy Spirit teaches us in prayer and forms us in the sacraments, so that we desire to know the Father above all things in this life (see Jn 14:24-26)
- ✠ The Father's Kingdom is to come; he is our king and we belong to and look forward to the fullness of the Kingdom of God

APPLICATION – SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How has God's revelation of his name to Moses become more intimate and profound through Jesus' teaching of the Lord's Prayer?
2. How is Jesus (as true God and true Man) uniquely suited to unite us to God the Father? How does Jesus provide an example for obedience to the Father? How does this apply to our relationship with the Father?
3. How does the presence of evil in the world challenge our faith?
4. Why is faith necessary for living as adopted children of God?

CELEBRATION – SUGGESTIONS FOR CLOSING PRAYER

1. Ask the Father to pour out his grace abundantly upon us, to provide for the needs of the group, to help us to be obedient to his will for each of us.
2. Hymn or song (see previous page for suggestions)
3. Pray together Psalm 28 (see *Participant's Book*)

The Holy Spirit

PREPARATION – LITURGY OF THE WORD

If beginning with a hymn or song, see previous page for suggestions

First Reading: Acts 2:1-11

Response: Ps 104:24, 27-34 (Ps 104B in *Participant's Book*)

Gospel: Jn 16:7-14

PROCLAMATION

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Blessed Trinity. He is coequal with the Father and the Son, in an eternal exchange of love. He is the Lord and Giver of life and the Sanctifier.

EXPLANATION

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Blessed Trinity

- ☒ He is a Person, not an "it" (see Jn 14:16-17, 25)
- ☒ He is God (see Acts 5:3-4)
- ☒ He is the Lord and Giver of Life (see Gal 6:8)
- ☒ Fire, wind, a cloud, a dove, and anointing with oil are among the symbols of the Holy Spirit in Scripture

The Holy Spirit in salvation history

- ☒ He is present at creation (see Gn 1:2)
- ☒ He appears to the Israelites as a cloud, a pillar of fire, and fire falling from Heaven
- ☒ He spoke through the prophets
- ☒ By his power, Jesus is conceived of the Virgin Mary and is anointed for his mission (see Lk 3:21-22)

He completes God the Father's providential plan (see Jn 16:7-15)

- ☒ Jesus Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would come and remain forever with his Church
- ☒ On the first Pentecost, he was poured out upon the apostles
- ☒ Through the Church, he makes Jesus' salvific work on the cross effective in our lives
- ☒ As Sanctifier, he completes God's plan of calling all people to the Father's love (Rom 1:1-6)
- ☒ He guides, protects, and sanctifies the Church
- ☒ Through his indwelling grace, he makes us holy

Roles of the Holy Spirit

- ☒ He stands with us, consoles us, leads us into all truth, convicts us of sin, and draws us to Christ
- ☒ Through the sacraments —
 - ☉ He bestows his sevenfold gifts (see Is 11:1-4)
 - ☉ He heals the wounds of sin, turning us instead to his fruits of Christ-like holiness (see Gal 5:19-25)
 - ☉ He strengthens us, enlightens us, and prompts us to charity
- ☒ He indwells in us and sanctifies us as his temple (see 1 Cor 3:16)
- ☒ He is our instructor in prayer
- ☒ He is the source of our hope (see Eph 1:13-14)
- ☒ He is the Protector and Guarantor of the Church and the Guardian of the Deposit of Faith

A relationship with the Holy Spirit is necessary for all believers (see Jude vv. 17-21; 1 Jn 4:1-5)

APPLICATION – SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How might the Holy Spirit act in each of our lives?
2. Why might the Holy Spirit be pivotal in our spiritual life?
3. How can we cultivate a more personal relationship with the Holy Spirit?
4. How will the Holy Spirit work in and through us when our faith is challenged? Will his help be visible?

CELEBRATION – SUGGESTIONS FOR CLOSING PRAYER

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to come and pour out his graces upon everyone, to guide each one in prayer, to guide each one into the truth, to convict everyone of sin, and to draw all souls to Christ.
2. Hymn or song (see previous page for suggestions)
3. Pray together Come, Holy Spirit (see handout on Well-Known Catholic Prayers from *Participant's Book*) or Litany of the Holy Spirit (see handout from *Participant's Book*)

The Universal Call to Holiness

PREPARATION – LITURGY OF THE WORD

If beginning with a hymn or song, see previous page for suggestions

First Reading: Eph 4:22-5:2

Response: Ps 24

Gospel: Mt 11:29-30

PROCLAMATION

Jesus has called us to the perfection of his Father, perfection in love. Holiness is the call of all the baptized. Our wholehearted response to God's grace will fill us with joy surpassing human understanding.

EXPLANATION

Human nature and the nature of our call (see 1 Pt 1:6-9)

- ✠ Within each of us is a God-implanted desire for happiness that only he can fulfill
- ✠ Holiness is not optional; on earth, authentic happiness is achieved only through sanctity: the joy of holiness
- ✠ In Heaven, happiness is participation in Trinitarian love, joy beyond measure

The nature of holiness: forming ourselves into “other Christs” (see Rom 13:8-14)

- ✠ Jesus Christ, Son of God become Son of Mary for the salvation of all humankind, came among us as the visible image of his invisible Father
- ✠ Holiness is being like Christ, conforming ourselves to him as our model of holiness
- ✠ The more clearly our intellects grasp Jesus, the more powerful will be the action of our will (see Phil 1:9-11)
- ✠ The Holy Spirit is our source of strength to be like Christ; holiness manifests the Spirit's fruits (see Gal 5:22-25)

The pursuit of holiness in this world (see Rom 12:2)

- ✠ The lifeblood of holiness is charity: the more we die to self and lay down our lives in love to others, and the more vigorously we work to sanctify the world, the more we attain holiness and the easier it becomes for others to become holy (see Col 3:9-17)
- ✠ We offer up life's sufferings, which Jesus sanctified and made redemptive for ourselves and others
- ✠ God asks us to do only what he gives us sufficient grace to do (see 1 Cor 10:13)

The obstacles to our call

- ✠ Salvation is the responsibility of each person, but for good or ill, others influence our efforts and we influence theirs
- ✠ All Christians discover that the world is hostile to our efforts to attain holiness (see Jn 15:18-20)
- ✠ The flesh, that is, our own disordered desires make us prone to sin (see Rom 7:18-20)
- ✠ The Devil ceaselessly tempts us to pursue counterfeit pleasure and happiness (see 2 Thes 2:9-12)

The resources to answer God's call (see Eph 1:5-23 and Eph 3:8-12)

- ✠ Mother Mary has been given to us as a model of holiness and our prime intercessor with her Son
- ✠ The Church gives us all that we need for salvation, including the truths God intends us to know, the graces of the sacraments, and the witness of holiness of the saints
- ✠ Frequent reception of Jesus in the Eucharist and of the sacrament of Reconciliation fill us with supernatural life and strengthen us against sin
- ✠ The Christian family is the school of holiness, the most basic unit of the Body of Christ
- ✠ The Christian fellowship of the faithful offers example, support, encouragement, and inspiration
- ✠ A relationship with God developed through prayer intensifies our yearning for him and desire to please him
- ✠ The heart of holiness is to will what God wills, for the sake of love

APPLICATION – SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Does God expect too much of me? Is it really possible for me to be holy in this world?
2. What are some concrete ways that I can follow Jesus?
3. What can I learn about holiness by focusing on Jesus on the cross?
4. What ways would the world be worse without the Church?

CELEBRATION – SUGGESTIONS FOR CLOSING PRAYER

1. Pray for an ever-stronger desire for holiness in the world and to see God's face forever.
2. Hymn or song (see previous page for suggestions)
3. Pray together Psalm 33 or Psalm 34 (see *Participant's Book*)

Vocations: God's Call

PREPARATION – LITURGY OF THE WORD

If beginning with a hymn or song, see previous page for suggestions

First Reading: Jer 1:4-8

Response: Ps 95:1-9

Gospel: Mt 19:16-29

PROCLAMATION

All are called to love and serve God in this world. This call to love is our vocation. It is the path that God has set out for each soul to find the abundant joy of Christ and to most fully please him.

EXPLANATION

The Father's special call (see Is 6:8 and Eph 2:10)

- ✠ Our vocation is how God the Father desires each of us to reach our goal of holiness and salvation
- ✠ Each of us is called to a major state in life: marriage, Holy Orders, religious life, or single life
- ✠ Our vocation is how God the Father intends to fashion us by grace in the image of his beloved Son
- ✠ Seeking holiness within the ordinariness of daily life, within even our smallest duties, is always part of his call
- ✠ The work of discerning one's vocation, and then faithfully living it out, takes priority over all other pursuits in life
- ✠ Through the Holy Spirit, grace is given to live out one's vocation; no matter the difficulty, God's grace is sufficient (see 1 Cor 10:13)

The call to Holy Orders (see Mt 19:11-12)

- ✠ Some men are called to be deacons or priests
- ✠ The Church determines if the call is genuine, and summons some priests to become bishops
- ✠ In the Latin Rite, religious order priests make vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience to God in the presence of their religious superior; diocesan and secular priests make promises, not vows, of celibacy and obedience to their bishop, as well as a promise of prayer
- ✠ Men in Holy Orders are called to build up the Kingdom of God in complete service, most importantly in bringing the sacraments to the faithful

The call to Religious Life (see Mt 19:27-29)

- ✠ Some men, both laymen and those in Holy Orders, and some women are called to serve the Kingdom of God through taking public vows to keep the Evangelical Counsels (poverty, chastity, and obedience)
- ✠ Religious life is lived within a religious order under a rule of life with a specific spirituality and apostolate
 - ⊙ The contemplative apostolate is one of prayer for the world's salvation
 - ⊙ Active apostolates include missionary work, preaching, teaching, and works of mercy
- ✠ Religious orders have been indispensable in the life of the Church in many ways through the centuries

The call to Marriage (see Eph 5:21-23)

- ✠ Most people are called to marriage; it is a vocation that stands at the service of building up the Kingdom of God
- ✠ The husband and wife are called to be the instruments of each other's sanctification
- ✠ Parents are called to the service of life through the procreation and education of their children
- ✠ Parents must understand that their principal duty to their children is to lead them to God

The call to the single state in the world (see 1 Cor 7:32-35)

- ✠ Some are called to the consecrated life of a hermit: solitude, silence, prayer, and penance
- ✠ Some are called to be virgins or widows, publicly consecrated to Christ while living in the world
- ✠ Some are called to live a consecrated life of a secular institute dedicated to sanctifying the world
- ✠ Some are called to join societies of apostolic life whose constitutions do not call for the Evangelical Counsels but who seek the perfection of charity

All vocations call those within them to a life of sacrificing, dying to self, striving for holiness, all for the sake of a loving response to Jesus' self-gift on the cross (see 1 Jn 4:7-18)

APPLICATION – SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the difference between a vocation and a job?
2. Is the call to marriage any less of a vocation than the call to the priesthood or religious life?
3. How does a good marriage and devout family life contribute to the origin and nurturing of other kinds of vocations?
4. Why is it so important to pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life?
5. Have you experienced a sense of calling in your life? If so, what have you done about it?

CELEBRATION – SUGGESTIONS FOR CLOSING PRAYER

1. Ask for enlightenment as to one's vocation in life and the courage to hear and respond to God's call.
2. Hymn or song (see previous page for suggestions)
3. Pray together Psalm 16 or Psalm 27 (see *Participant's Book*)