

God's gifts to us Week 1

Each week we offer a theme, some scripture text to pray with and prayer ideas to try. None of these are compulsory, please use or not as works for you.

The only thing we encourage you to commit to is:

Prayer time once a day

A chat with your prayer partner once a week, so remember each week to arrange a time to speak.

Week 1: God's gift of Piety.

This gift reminds us that God invites us into relationship, always waiting for when we are ready, to listen and to speak if we're willing to hear.

God's gift of piety helps us to begin to pray and, just as importantly, to notice how God is working in our lives.

Wherever you are in your relationship with God, this retreat in daily life is an invitation to go deeper with God. This week, as we begin our retreat and commit to praying daily, we are asking God to walk with us, guiding our prayer and reflection and noticing God's presence in our daily lives.

Scripture suggestions:

Jeremiah 29: 12 – 14 I know the plans I have for you

Acts 2: 42-47 The early Christian Community

James 5: 13-17 If any of you is in trouble you should pray

Matthew 7: 7-11 Effective prayer

Prayer ideas:

- **Journaling**

Meditative writing. This is different to keeping a diary. When we journal we put aside preconceived ideas and control and release our true selves. It is like writing a letter to the one we love. We recall memories, clarify convictions and might notice and heal hidden emotions such as anger, fear or resentment.

- We can write a letter to God; write a conversation between ourselves and another, or an event; write an answer to a question such as "why are you weeping?" (John 20:15); allow Jesus or another scriptural person to speak to us through the pen.

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The Examen

A great way to pray is to look for God's presence in your life. The Examen is a prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God's presence and to discern his direction for us.

Become aware of God's presence. Look back on the events of the day. The day may seem confusing to you—a blur, a jumble. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.

Review the day with gratitude. Look first at those moments you enjoyed. Relive them, relish them and thank God for them. Avoid self-judgement, they are God's gift to you.

Pay attention to your emotions. Look at your emotions and inner feelings throughout the day, without judging them. Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the day. Boredom? Elation? Compassion? Anger? What is God saying through these feelings?

Express sorrow for not responding to God in the events of the day, and ask forgiveness. Thank God for the times you did respond.

Ask for guidance for tomorrow entrusting yourself to God's care.

Lectio Divina. Fr Basil has produced a good resource about this which we have reattached.

God's gifts to us Week 2

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Week 2: God's gift of Wisdom.

This gift helps us to recognise the importance of others in our lives and those we connect to throughout our world without even realising.

In this second week of our retreat, we ask God to help us notice the webs of relationships we exist in, holding those we care for in prayer. We might ask God to give us the wisdom to be more aware of how our lives connect with others, and how to notice the essence of God in each person we connect with.

Scripture:

Wisdom 7: 7-8; 10-12 "And so I prayed, and understanding was given to me"

Colossians 4:5-6 Act in wisdom towards others

Matthew 25: 31 – 46 The Last Judgement

James 3: 17-18 Real wisdom and the opposite

Prayer ideas

1. *Praying the rosary with scripture.*

If you already pray the rosary regularly, can you incorporate a scripture reading too? Maybe start a Decade then include a bible passage half way through, or at the start? Or include prayers for people you know at the start and end of each decade, asking God to bring to our minds the many people whose lives connect with ours without us knowing.

2. *Imaginative Contemplation : a way of praying scripture with your imagination*

- a. Read your scripture passage several times until it's familiar to you
- b. Imagine the event is happening now and that you are a participant ACTIVE IN THE SCENE. Don't worry if you can't imagine vividly. If you find it difficult to enter the scene imagine you're describing it to a child, making it as vivid as possible.

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- c. Ask God for what you desire.
- d. It helps attentiveness in any scene to ask yourself "who is present, what are they saying, what are they doing?" Now join in with them.
- e. If distractions come let them enter the scripture scene. As long as they don't divert your attention totally from prayer, they will probably lead you deeper into it.
- f. Talk with the characters in the scene, talk to Jesus, to the Father. Always speak from the heart, simply and honestly.
- g. Don't worry if you're attention keeps straying from the scene. When conscious of inattention bring yourself gently back into the scene.

God's gifts to us Week 3

Each week we offer a theme, some scripture text to pray with and prayer ideas to try. None of these are compulsory, please use or not as works for you.

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Week 3: God's gift of Awe and Wonder.

This gift is the feeling we have when we feel amazed before God, and long to connect.

This is sometimes described as "Fear" of the Lord, but is much more positive than this. It can sometimes be what we feel in those moments of unexpected joy and delight, in prayer, at the side of someone we love, and sometimes even as we are left breathless by the gift of God's creation in nature.

This week we invite you to take a moment every day to notice the vastness and beauty of nature and allow yourself to experience a sense of awe and wonder before God's gift to us.

Try to notice also, your place and part in this creation, recognising again the web of relationships and connections between you and each creature, each atom that God has made.

Scripture:

Psalms 104	The glories of creation
Wisdom 11: 23-27	God loves all that exists
Matthew 6: 26 – 30	Do not worry
Revelation 15: 3-4	How great and wonderful are all your works

Prayer ideas:

- Prayer walk (Video)
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- Pray As You Go: Online prayer, to do inside or as you walk. Download the app or find it here <https://pray-as-you-go.org/>
- Pray with your imagination:
Invite God to emerge through your imagination. How can you allow your creativity to be a prayer with God today?

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OUR LADY OF LORETTO & ST MICHAEL AND ST MARTIN'S PARISHES
RETREAT IN DAILY LIFE

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You might try writing your own psalm of thanksgiving for nature, or create a painting or drawing to reflect how you feel about God's world. Use, fabric, clay or natural found objects. Whatever works for you. There is no right or wrong answer, invite God into this prayer and allow the gifts God has given you to emerge.

God's gifts to us Week 4

Each week we offer a theme, some scripture text to pray with and prayer ideas to try. None of these are compulsory, please use or not as works for you.

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Week 4: God's gift of Good Counsel.

This gift helps us to see the best way to follow God's plan for us when we have choices.

In this final week of retreat we're building on our noticing of God working in our lives.

This week as we carry on our pattern of daily prayer, and awareness of our connection with others we invite God to be with us in our choices. Take some time to recognise how each decision we make can ripple out to the lives of others and our wider world.

Take some time also to reflect on what you will take away from these few weeks of retreat in daily life. Are there any habits or ways of praying you will commit to continuing or perhaps you've come to a decision? Bring this to God in prayer this week.

Scripture:

Proverbs 3: 1 - 6 Trust wholeheartedly in Yahweh

Luke 6: 36 – 38 Compassion and generosity

Philippians 1: 9 -10 "Never stop improving your knowledge and deepening your perception"

1 John 4: 1 - 3 It is not every spirit that you can trust [...] test them

Prayer ideas:

Meditation/ Centring prayer

Centering Prayer is a receptive method of silent prayer that prepares us to receive the gift of contemplative prayer, prayer in which we experience God's presence within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than consciousness itself.

It is usually done by taking a word, sacred phrase or mantra. To say the word to focus our consciousness, to still the mind, to take attention of our busy, active minds. When we do get

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distracted come back to the saying of your word. It is best to take a sacred word from your own tradition, ideally not from your own language to avoid you thinking about the word and being drawn into thought. One recommended word is "ma-ra-na-tha" (come Lord.)

Position: sit upright, still and quiet, allowing yourself to be with God, and saying your sacred word gently when thoughts come into your mind.

Intercessory prayer

Intercessory prayer is a form of prayer well known in the Catholic Church as "bidding prayers" at Mass. It is generally a way of praying to God on behalf of others. While often done in Mass or as part of a service intercessory prayer can also be a good way of praying alone.

At times of crisis or struggle, when it can be hard to let go, or to still our minds, intercessory prayer can be a valuable way to empty everything that is worrying us out of minds and present it to God to deal with!

Make a note of worries and people as they come to mind through the day, then present them to God, asking for blessing and care for those being remembered.

The Jesus Prayer

A short, simple prayer that can put us in the right frame of mind to get closer to God. And only one sentence long:

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

It can be prayed repeatedly as an aid to meditation, or just as a simple way for anyone to "check in" with our Lord during a busy day, to help us be aware of God's presence