

PRAY ALWAYS

A Catholic Study of Prayer for Inmates

Part 3: Prayer in the Catholic Tradition

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*“Then he told them
a parable about the
necessity for them to
pray always without
becoming weary.”*

Luke 18:1

Nihil Obstat: Reverend Thomas Knoebel
Censor
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Part 3: Prayer in the Catholic Tradition

Study Instructions

This Study contains:

- 1) *Introduction*
- 2) *Study Sections*
- 3) *Review Test* pages

Begin the Study:

- 1) Read *Introduction*.
Do the *Review Test* page at the end of the study booklet.

- 2) Read all *sections* of the study.
Do the *Review Test* pages at the end of the study booklet.

Instructions:

- Tear out carefully only the pages called *Review Test* at the end of the study booklet after you have completed them.
- Send these *Review Test* pages to Dismas Ministry, Be sure to add your name and address on each sheet. If the name/address box isn't big enough, put your name/address on the back of each sheet.
- Your *Review Tests* will be reviewed by Dismas Ministry.
- You will receive a *Certificate* after completing this study.

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Introduction

“The heart is the place of prayer”

Pope Benedict XVI

This study is not a history of prayer or a list of people who prayed. Rather, it is an attempt to invite the heart and soul of the reader to a deeper, stronger friendship with Christ. It is an exploration of how many of his followers—Christians from the early days onward—turned to him in prayer. Christ is the heart and soul of all creation, therefore *through him, with him and in him*, we lift our minds and hearts to God. God alone is the object of our prayer and the real focus of this study.

We explore the examples of Christians through the centuries who opened themselves to the great mystery of God. All of them have been called *saints** which simply means they are holy in the eyes of the Church. There are many other saints, both known and unknown to the Christian community, but always known to God for their faithful witness of the Gospel and their love for Him. This mystery is actually the infinite and everlasting love of God that cannot be explained by the mind but is known by the heart through a journey of faith. As St. Hilary of Poitiers wrote: *“God does not know how to be anything other than love”* (De Trinitate 9,61).

This is a study of God at work in the souls of fellow Christians—a *cloud of witnesses* as the Bible says—who lived before us and left us examples of how they prayed. Through Christ and his example they did not grow weary or lose heart, but found access to the very throne of God who is the joy of all human desire:

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith. For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God. Consider how he endured such opposition from sinners, in order that you may not grow weary and lose heart” (Hebrews 12:1-3).

**Saint* means holy, but the original meaning comes from the Latin word *sanus*, which means whole or healthy. In that sense, we could say that saints are the healthiest people of all because of their relationship with God. The total gift of themselves through *prayer* and *the love of others it inspired* is how they maintained that relationship.

Also, in the Catholic tradition, the day that the saint died usually is kept as their feast day.

The Early Church and Prayer

Teachers of the Early Church

St. Ignatius of Antioch (c. 50-107 A.D.)

Ignatius was born in Syria around 50 A.D. Nothing is known of his life except that he was the third bishop of Antioch. Early Christian authors tell us that Peter himself “laid hands” on him. Along with his friend Polycarp he heard John the apostle preach. During the reign of Emperor Trajan, Ignatius was sentenced to death for refusing to deny the Christian religion. He was being taken under guard as he described it; *“From Syria to Rome by land and sea, by night and day, bound among ‘ten leopards’—a company of soldiers who only grow worse when they are kindly treated.”* In Rome he was to be publicly executed, devoured by wild beasts in the public games. During his journey through several cities he made use of the time to write seven letters of encouragement and instruction to the Christians who lived there. We still have these letters as a great treasure of the Church.

In his role as a bishop his letters focused on organizing the Church and upholding the true Christian faith. It was Ignatius who first person to use the word *“catholic”* to describe the whole Church. These letters reveal to us what the early Church believed as the unbroken teaching of the apostles given to them by Jesus Christ. They also reveal the holiness of Ignatius himself who was willing to shed his blood for Christ as his final act of devotion. In fact, Ignatius wanted to offer himself, like Christ, for the sake of his beloved people, the Church. He was killed by two lions in 107 A.D.

In his letters he thanked his fellow Christians for their concern but he was determined to go through with his death. He wrote: *“At last I am becoming his disciple. May nothing draw me away from it until I happily make my way to Jesus Christ! Fire, cross, fighting with wild animals, twisting of bones, mangling of limbs—let them come to me, provided only I make my way to Jesus Christ. I would rather die and come to Jesus Christ than be king over the entire earth. Him I seek who died for us; him I love who rose again because of us.”* His letters show his dedication to defending the true teaching of the apostles so that early Christians—and we today—would never be fooled by false teaching. He urged them to listen to their bishops always because they were the successors of the apostles. Here are samples from his letters. However, his faith-filled words are more like prayers than letters.

Letter of Ignatius to the Romans:

“I am God's wheat and shall be ground by the teeth of wild animals. I am writing to all the churches to let it be known that I will gladly die for God if only you do not stand in my way. I plead with you: show me no badly timed kindness. Let me be food for the wild beasts, for they are my way to God. I am God's wheat and shall be ground by their teeth so that I may become Christ's pure bread. Pray to Christ for me that the animals will be the means of making me a sacrificial offering for God. No earthly pleasures,



This ancient painting from an early Christian catacomb is used to portray Ignatius of Antioch, since he would have prayed in this way. Raising the arms is an ancient posture of prayer. The catacombs near Rome have several images of the first Christians standing with their arms outstretched in prayer. It is called the “orans” position (Latin for praying). Because it symbolizes lifting our prayers to God. It was a way that Moses prayed for the people before God. In Psalm 140 David described this kind of prayer beautifully, “Let my prayer come before you like incense, the raising of my hands like the evening offering.” This ancient orans position is at least 3,000-4,000 years old. And that’s why Catholic priests use the orans position so often during Mass

no kingdoms of this world can benefit me in any way. I prefer death in Christ Jesus to power over the whole earth. He who died in place of us is the one object of my quest. He who rose for our sakes is my one desire.

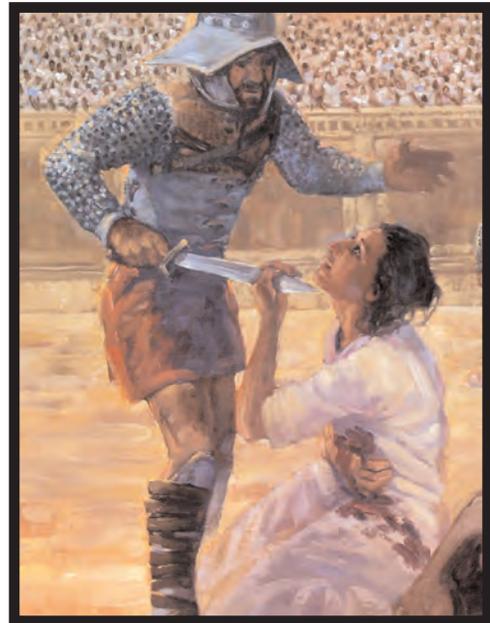
The time for my birth is close at hand. Forgive me, my brothers. Do not stand in the way of my birth to real life. Only on my arrival there can I be fully a human being. Give me the privilege of imitating the passion of my God. If you have him in your heart, you will understand what I wish. You will sympathize with me because you know what urges me on.”

Letter of Ignatius to the Ephesians:

“Pray without ceasing on behalf of others. For in them there is the hope of repentance that they may attain to God. See that they be taught by your deeds if in no other way. Be gentle in response to their anger; humble in opposition to their boasting; to their blasphemies return your prayers; in contrast to their error, be steadfast in the faith; and for their cruelty, manifest your gentleness. While we take care not to imitate their conduct, let us be found their brothers in all true kindness; and let us seek to be followers of the Lord (who was ever more unjustly treated, more destitute, more condemned?), so that no growth of the devil may be found in you, but you may remain in all holiness and moderation in Jesus Christ, both with respect to the flesh and spirit.”

St. Perpetua (181-203 A.D.)

When Perpetua was a 22 year old married woman, the Roman emperor Septimus Severus began arresting and killing citizens of the empire who were Christians. Since Perpetua and eight others (a woman and seven men) were preparing for baptism they were arrested. What we know of her imprisonment is from her own diary. Only a few months before, Perpetua had given birth to a son but Felicitas, the other woman, was still pregnant. At first they were placed under guard in a private house. Eventually all of them were taken to prison, where they waited for the “day of the games” that would be their public torture and death. Until they were executed, Perpetua was allowed to take her baby with her into prison, and during their stay Felicitas gave birth to a baby girl. At one point, Perpetua told her father who was very anxious for her, *“My prison has become a palace to me and I would rather be here than anywhere else.”* The two women and seven men spent their time praying and encouraging one another



until the day of execution arrived. Perpetua said: *“I understood that I was not to fight with beasts, but against the devil. Still I knew that victory was awaiting me.”* They left their cells for the stadium *“joyfully as though they were on their way to heaven”* with Perpetua and the others *singing psalms*. All of them were to be killed by wild animals: leopards and bears for the men, and a wild cow for the women. While the men were being mangled by the animals, Perpetua was so lost in prayer that she did not realize she had been thrown by the cow. Instead, she got up and helped Felicitas to her feet saying, *“When are we to be led to that cow?”* She did not believe she was already thrown until she saw her torn dress and the marks on her body. As the men and women were gathered together to be finished off by the sword, they embraced one other for the last time. Witnesses told how Perpetua helped guide the sword: *“But Perpetua, being pierced between the ribs, cried out loudly and she herself*

placed the wavering right hand of the youthful gladiator to her throat.” This took place in 203 A.D. and her feast day along with that of Felicitas is on March 7. Although none of their prayers have been handed down, we know they sang psalms, and their courageous and joyful suffering was *prayer in action*. Their witness has made a deep impression on Christians then and now.

St. Athanasius of Alexandria (296-373 A.D.)

St. Athanasius, known as the “champion of the faith,” was born about the year 296 in Alexandria. He received an excellent education, not only in Christian doctrine, but also in Greek literature, philosophy and law. He knew the scriptures thoroughly, and learned theology from teachers who had suffered during the terrible persecutions under Emperor Maximian. Already as a young man he formed friendships with several hermits of the desert, in particular with the hermit Anthony. He wrote *The Life of Anthony* which became a “best seller” in the Christian community. In 318 he became the bishop’s secretary. As in many other periods of the Church, there were disagreements and divisions over doctrine and authority. About the year 323 a priest named Arius began to teach that Jesus, though more than human, was not God. The bishop of Alexandria (and many others) condemned his teaching as heresy. He deposed Arius, together with eleven priests and deacons. Arius left but continued to spread his ideas, enlisting the support of other bishops and important people. Theology deeply occupied people’s minds at that time, so the Arian problem interested all classes of the population. The Arian teachings were even set to popular tunes and sung in public places.



Athanasius, as the bishop’s secretary, took an important part in this great Church struggle against the false teachings of Arius. We know that he was present, as an attendant at the famous Council of Nicaea. This gathering of bishops was called by the Emperor Constantine to decide these matters of faith. At this council the teaching of Arius was declared false, and the bishops gave to the Church the beautiful confession of faith called the *Nicene Creed*. This council made a deep impression on Athanasius, and for the rest of his life he defended the divinity of the Jesus Christ. When the bishop of Alexandria died, Athanasius succeeded him, although he was only thirty years old at the time. Throughout his years as bishop, the struggle with the Arians was not over. They gained enough influence and power to have him removed several times from Alexandria. In all, Athanasius spent seventeen years in exile, but finally the last years spent in his diocese were peaceful ones. He died on May 2, 373.

One of his great written works was *On the Incarnation of the Word* in which he defended the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ. Here are some samples from that work:

(12) *“Yet men, bowed down by the pleasures of the moment and by the frauds and illusions of evil, did not lift up their heads towards the truth. So burdened were they with their wickedness that they seemed rather to be brute beasts than reasonable men, who ought to reflect the very likeness of the Word.”*

(13) *“What was God to do in face of this de-humanizing of mankind? What, then, was God to do? What else could He possibly do, being God, but renew His Image in mankind, so that through it they might once more come to know Him? And how could this be done except by the coming of the very Image*

Himself, our Savior Jesus Christ? Men could not have done it, for they are only made after the Image; nor could angels have done it, for they are not the images of God. The Word of God came in His own Person, because it was He alone, the Image of the Father Who could recreate man made after the Image. In order to effect this re-creation, however, He had first to do away with death and corruption. Therefore He took a human body, in order that in it death might once for all be destroyed, and that men might be renewed according to the Image.”

(14) *“He, the Image of the Father, came and dwelt in our midst, in order that He might renew mankind made after Himself, and seek out His lost sheep, even as He says in the Gospel: “I came to seek and to save that which was lost.”*

[18] *“This also explains His saying: “Except a man be born anew . . .” [19]. He was not referring to a man’s natural birth from his mother, as they thought, but to the re-birth and re-creation of the soul in the Image of God.”*

St. Macrina of Cappadocia (327-379 A.D.)

Macrina was one of ten children born to a wealthy family. Her saintly brothers were Basil and Gregory (who wrote her life). She was educated by her mother who used the *Wisdom* books of the Bible for her reading practice. She was very beautiful and her brother Gregory wrote of her: *“Many men wanted to marry her on account of her reputation for beauty.”* Eventually she was engaged to be married, but her fiancé died suddenly. After that she decided not to marry and live whole-heartedly for Christ and his Gospel. She convinced her mother, sisters, and servants to help her create a community of women on their family estate. There they began to live as equals, sharing a *life of prayer, penance and works of mercy* to the needy of the area. Macrina built a hospital for the poor and, like Mother Teresa of Calcutta, went to the streets and highways to pick up starving, dying women and care for them in her community. Many of these women stayed with her after returning to health. They called her “mother” even if they were older. Inspired by his sister’s example Basil wrote a rule for monks and built a hospital for the poor.



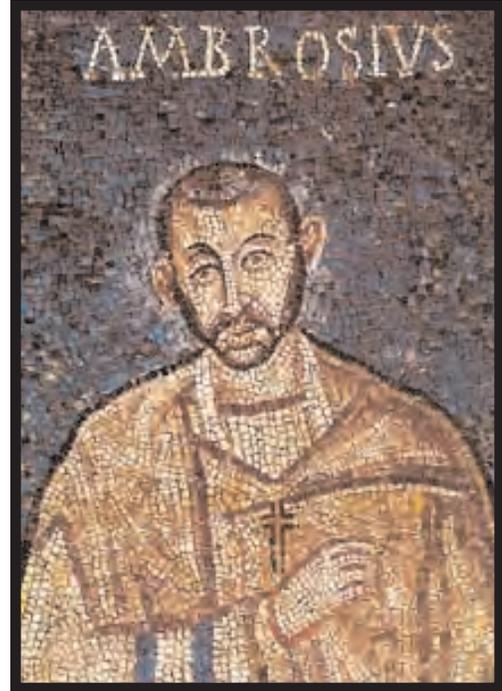
After her mother’s death, Macrina decided to give all her wealth to the poor. She owned only one simple gown and worn sandals. Even after she fell seriously sick and was dying, she continued to sleep on a board on the ground, with another board for her pillow. When her brother Gregory came to visit her, after the death of Basil, she had a long and deep discussion with him about death and resurrection. After she died, Gregory recorded their conversation in the work *“On the Soul and the Resurrection.”* Like the following example, the entire work is a credit to her faith and intelligence:

“Death indeed, as the penalty for breaking the law, necessarily fell upon its transgressors. But God divided the life of man into two parts, namely, this present life, and the hereafter. He placed a limit on the present life of the briefest possible time, while He prolonged the hereafter into eternity. And in His love for man He gave him a choice, to have one or the other, good or evil. By this I mean, whichever of the two parts he chose—either this short and passing life, or those endless ages of infinity.”

St. Ambrose (339-397 A.D.)

Ambrose was born in Trier in what is now Germany. In those days it was part of the Roman empire where his father was an important government official. Ambrose received an excellent education and became a successful lawyer. In 370 he moved to Milan where he was made governor of northern Italy. During that same time he also was preparing for baptism as a Christian. When the bishop of Milan died, Ambrose was so beloved by everyone that he was proclaimed the new bishop immediately. He pleaded that he was not the right choice, especially since he was not even baptized. Nevertheless, in a week he was baptized and soon after that was made bishop.

As a bishop he was available to everyone, poor and powerful alike. In fact, during his lifetime he gave advice to more than one emperor, reminding them that they were not above the Church. For example, on one occasion he convinced the emperor, Theodosius, to do public penance for ordering a massacre of men, women and children.



In his own spiritual life, he especially admired and studied the works of Basil and Origen (who had a famous Christian school in Alexandria). Ambrose learned from him to study and comment on the Bible, and to use a way of meditating on scripture called *lectio divina*. It involved prayerful listening with the heart to the Word of God. (See the special page on **Lectio Divina**). He wrote books on the sacraments and ministry, and even composed hymns that he taught his people to sing. He was a great preacher and his sermons made a deep impression on Augustine of Hippo who came to hear him. As a result, Augustine decided to return to the Christian faith.

Ambrose used to say: “*Christ is everything to us—if you have a wound to heal he is the doctor.*”

The following is a quote from his *Concerning Repentance* (Book 2, Chapter 8). In this passage Ambrose humbles himself, wishing that he could wash the Lord’s feet like the woman in the Gospel. He sees in her a great model of repentance:

“Show, then, your wound to the Physician that He may heal it. Even if you do not show it, He knows it, but waits to hear your voice. Get rid of your scars by tears. Thus did that woman in the Gospel, and wiped out her sin. Thus did she wash away her fault, when washing the feet of Jesus with her tears. Would that you, Lord Jesus, might allow me to wash from your feet the stains you received since you walked with me! O that you might offer me the chance to cleanse the dirt that I have caused on your feet by my deeds! But where can I get living water, that I may wash your feet? If I have no water, I have tears, and while I wash your feet with them I hope to cleanse myself. How is it that you say to me: ‘His sins though many are forgiven, because he loved much.’ I confess that I owe more, and that more has been forgiven to me who have been called to the priesthood. Therefore I fear that you might find me ungrateful, if as someone who has been forgiven more, loves less. But not everyone is able to be like that woman. The Lord preferred her above the one who gave the feast to him. She gave a lesson to all those who wish to receive forgiveness, by kissing the feet of Christ, washing them with her tears, wiping them with her hair, and anointing them with ointment.”

Lectio Divina

Prayerful Reading of the Word of God

The practice of *lectio divina* (Latin for “*divine reading*”) is a very ancient way of praying with the Bible. Already in the early Church it was taught by Origen and taken up by Ambrose. It also was a common practice in the early Christian monasteries of the third and fourth centuries. In the sixth century St. Benedict included it in his *Rule* that governed the life of his monks. In our own day it is being rediscovered and is often used by both individuals and groups. It is an excellent way of growing in our relationship with Christ.

As we slowly and prayerfully read a particular scripture passage, we let go of our own ideas and open ourselves to what God wants to tell us. It is simple enough to be done any time and wherever it is peaceful and quiet. It can last for a few minutes, a half-hour or longer. It can be done by anyone—not just monks or nuns.

The first stage is *lectio* (*reading*). We read the Word of God slowly and carefully so that it sinks into us. Any passage of scripture can be used but it should not be too long. As we read, we watch for a word or phrase that is God’s message for today.

The second stage is *meditatio* (*reflection*) where we think about the meaning of what we have read, so that we take it to heart and gain from it what God wants to say to us.

The third stage is *oratio* (*prayer*) where we speak to God about the Word we have just read, and allow it to go deeply within us and touch our hearts.

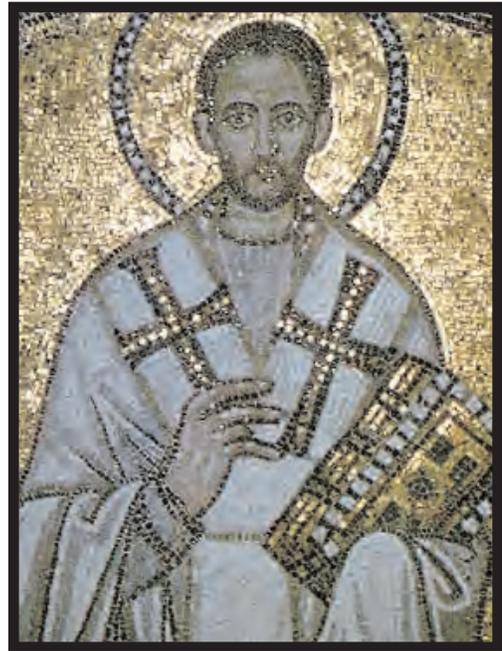
The fourth stage is *contemplatio* (*rest*) where we let go of our own ideas and plans but also of our words and thoughts. We simply rest in the Word of God. We listen at the deepest level of our being to God who speaks within us with a still small voice. As we listen, we gradually are changed from within.

The final stage is *actio* (*action*). Because the Word of God creates a *change of heart*, that in turn causes a *change in the way we live*. And it is the way we live that is the test of how true our prayer has been. It is important to take what we read in the Word of God and put it into action in daily life. We might ask ourselves: how does God’s Word challenge me? What is God asking me to stop doing? What does He want me to start doing?

These stages of *lectio divina* are not unbreakable rules. They are guidelines for the way this prayer normally develops. It gradually becomes simpler, with less talking and more listening. God’s Word is revealed to our heart. How much time should be given to each stage depends on each person. Unlike other reading we do, the Word of God is alive and active, and has the power to change lives. It transforms us if we are open to receive whatever God wants to teach us.

St. John Chrysostom (347-407 A.D.)

John was born in Antioch in 347. His father was an army officer and after he died John was raised by his widowed mother. She saw to it that he received an excellent education and he became an expert in law and public speaking. However, at the age of 26 he became a monk in a monastery outside the city. After 8 years, for health reasons, he returned home, became a deacon and then was ordained a priest in 386. He served the bishop of Antioch as a special assistant to the many poor people of the city. He soon became famous for his preaching which earned him the name “*golden mouth*” (chrysostom). In his preaching he gave practical advice on how to apply the Bible to daily living.



After the archbishop of Constantinople died, the emperor chose John to take his place and he was consecrated in 398. Without waiting, he courageously set out to reform the morals of the emperor’s court, the clergy and the people of this city that was at the heart of the empire. He cut back the lavish spending of his own household in favor of helping the poor and the sick. Eventually he angered the emperor and his wife when he spoke out against the behavior, makeup and clothes of their court. He was banished from the city on charges of treason until an earthquake frightened the empress and he was called back. He returned once more to his preaching and called for reform but in 404 he was sent into exile permanently, even though his people, as well as the pope and many bishops supported him. He was exiled to one place and then to another until he died in bad weather from exhaustion while traveling on foot. The date of his death was September 14, 407 A.D.

His most famous writings are his scripture commentaries and his work on the priesthood. The following are samples of his writings:

(Letter to Theodore after his fall):

“The reason why the devil plunges us into thoughts of despair is that he may cut off the hope that leads to God. This hope is the safe anchor, the foundation of our life, the guide that leads to heaven, and the salvation of perishing souls. ‘For by hope’ it is said, ‘we are saved.’ For like a strong cord suspended from heaven, this is what supports our souls, gradually drawing to the world on high all those who cling firmly to it, lifting them above the evil storms of this life.”

“For such is the loving-kindness of God; He never turns his face away from sincere repentance, but if any one has gone to the very extreme of wickedness, and chooses to return to the path of virtue, God accepts and welcomes, and does everything to restore him.”

(Sermon on the Paralytic Lowered through the Roof):

“Let us not be disturbed or dismayed when trials befall us. For if the gold refiner sees how long he ought to leave gold in the furnace, and when he ought to draw it out, and does not allow it to remain in the fire until it is destroyed and burnt up: much more does God understand this. When He sees that we have become more pure, He releases us from our trials so that we may not be overthrown and cast down by the multiplication of our evils. Let us then not be faint-hearted, when some unexpected thing befalls us; but let us allow Him who knows these things best, to prove our hearts by fire as long as He pleases: for He does this for a useful purpose and with a view to the profit of those who are tried.”

St. Mary of Egypt (344-421 A.D.)

The story of Mary's conversion provides a window into the life of the Church at a time that otherwise was marked by the lives of great philosophers, preachers and teachers. But Mary of Egypt taught the Church by her example, not her words, as Ignatius of Antioch had said: *"See that they be taught by your deeds if no other way."* As a child she was beautiful, spoiled and the center of her family's attention. However, she repaid them by running away at age 12 to Alexandria, Egypt where she lived as a dancer, singer, and prostitute. She stated that often she would not take pay for her sexual favors because she was more interested in seeing how many men she could attract. She said later that she had an insatiable lust.



When she was about 30 years old, there was great excitement in the Christian community over the discovery of the *true cross*. It was announced that it was to be displayed and honored in Jerusalem. Many people were leaving by ship for this event so Mary also made the journey, but it was an anti-pilgrimage. She was hoping to find among the crowds in Jerusalem even more partners to satisfy her. She paid for her trip by offering sexual favors to some young travelers, and once she reached Jerusalem she continued her usual behavior for the time being.

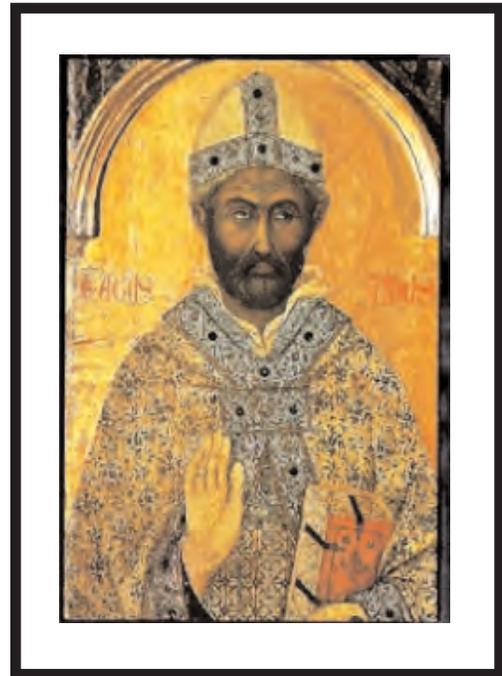
When the day of the Exaltation of the Cross came, Mary went with the crowd to the church to see the precious wood. As the rest entered and prayed, Mary was held back by an unseen force. She tried several times to step through the doorway but was unable. Finally she was exhausted and gave up. In that moment she realized and faced all the misery of her life. Turning to the Mother of Christ whose picture was hanging in the porch of the church, she vowed to do penance from then on, if only she could enter the church and stand like Mary Magdalene beside the cross. After that she was able to enter the church without being held back and went in to honor the cross. As she left the church, she stopped once more before the Virgin Mother's picture. As she knelt there she heard a voice say, *"Cross over the Jordan, and you will find glorious rest."* She immediately left Jerusalem after buying three loaves of bread, and made the day's journey to the Church of St. John the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan River. There she was given absolution of her sins and received Communion. The next day Mary crossed the river, entered into the desert, and began the life of a hermit as penance for her former way of life.

Years later, a monk named Zosima unexpectedly met her in the desert, and she told him the entire story of her sinful life and conversion: *"...of all the dangers which I overcame, and all the violent thoughts which confused me. Believe me, seventeen years I passed in this desert fighting mad desires and passions. When I was about to eat, I would start to miss the meat and fish that I had so much of in Egypt. I regretted also not having wine which I loved so much, for I drank a lot of wine when I lived in the world. The desire for the wild songs also entered me and confused me greatly, edging me on to sing songs I had learned once. But when such desires entered me I struck myself on the breast and reminded myself of the vow which I had made, when going into the desert. In my thoughts I returned to the picture of the Mother of God and to her I cried in prayer. I implored her to chase away the thoughts that my soul was succumbing to. After weeping and beating my breast for a long time I began to see light at last which seemed to shine on me from everywhere. And after the violent storm, lasting calm descended on me."*

At the end of their visit, she asked him to meet her at the Jordan the following year, and bring Communion to her. He did as she wished, and once again she asked him to return a year later. After a year had passed, Zosima returned to the Jordan as planned but Mary did not show up. So he went to the place where they first met and found: *"...the saint lying dead. Her hands were crossed according to custom and her face was turned to the East. Running up he shed tears over the saint's feet and kissed them. And then he saw words traced on the ground by her head: 'Abba Zosima, bury on this spot the body of humble Mary. Return to dust that which is dust and pray to the Lord for me, who departed on the very night of our Lord's Passion, after partaking of the Divine Mysteries.'*" Her feast day is April 2 and to this day there is a chapel in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in her honor.

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D.)

Augustine was born in northern Africa in 354 A.D. His pagan father was a city official and his family was not wealthy. Augustine's mother Monica was a Christian and tried her best to give him a Christian upbringing. But he put off baptism and as young man left for the city of Carthage to pursue his career. Once there he gave himself not only to studies but also to the theaters and public games. He even fathered a child with a mistress. Like many youth he did not realize just how lost he was: *"You were there before me, but I had departed from myself. I could not find even myself, much less you"* (Confessions 5). His studies took him away from Christianity and to a sect called Manicheism which taught that Good and Evil are equal but opposing spiritual powers. Augustine even convinced his friends to join this sect, to the great disappointment and tears of his mother. After a while he rejected their teaching but remained a restless soul. Later, he wrote in his own story: *"You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you"* (Confessions I).



Then he left for Italy at the age of 29 to start his own school. It soon failed when the students did not pay their tuition. While taking another job in Milan, he met Ambrose the bishop of that city. This holy man attracted Augustine by his kindness and his excellent preaching. But he struggled with his sexual habits and prayed: *"God, give me chastity, but not yet."* Eventually he was joined by his son and his mother Monica. During all these years she never stopped praying for his return to the Christian faith. Finally, after a total conversion brought on by reading *Romans* 13:13-14, Augustine was baptized along with his circle of friends and his son. Later he wrote about his slow conversion: *"Late have I loved you!"* From then on his great intelligence and faith served Christ and his Church. He and his little group returned to Africa to live in prayer, scripture study and solitude. Augustine began selling his possessions and giving the money to the poor. At first he had no plans to become a priest, but was ordained in 391 and soon became known for his preaching. He eventually was made bishop of Hippo where he served God's people for 34 years. He turned the bishop's house into a monastery, where his clergy lived with him in poverty, study and prayer.

As a bishop Augustine fought constantly against the false teachings that caused divisions in the Christian community of his time. He wrote hundreds of letters, Bible commentaries and spiritual books during his lifetime. He gained both admirers and enemies of the Church—some who plotted against his life. At the age of 76 he handed the leadership of his diocese over to a successor. He was hoping to spend his last

years in prayer, study and peace. But due to a serious illness and an 18 month attack on the city by invaders, he spent the last days of his life patiently suffering, and praying as he prepared for his death. In his final days when he had to stay in bed, he placed copies of the *seven penitential psalms* (*Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130 and 143*) on the walls of his room. In this way he could see and pray them at all times of the day. He died at the age of 76 in 430 A.D.

His writings, numbering in the hundreds, have had a huge influence on the Church. His most famous writings are his *Confessions* (a history of his spiritual life), his *Letters* (to friends, opponents, bishops and political leaders), a collection of his *Sermons* and another book called *City of God*. It is a spiritual history of humanity and God's action in the world. The following brief samples reveal Augustine's spirit of devotion and prayer:

How people often pray for what they want:

"They all appeal to you for what they want, but do not always hear what they want to hear. Your best servant is the one who is less focused on hearing what fits with his own will, and more focused on embracing what he has heard from you."

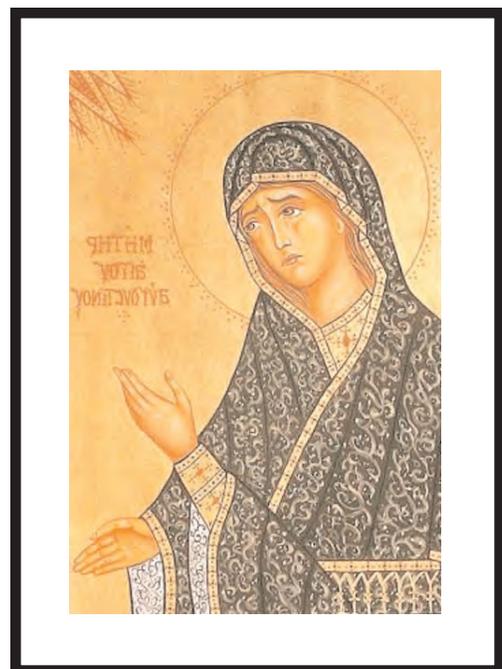
His slowness in turning to God:

"Late have I loved you, Beauty so ancient and so new, late have I loved you! Lo, you were within me, but I was outside, looking for you. I rushed headlong to the attractive things you made. You were with me, but I was not with you. They held me back far from you, those things which would have no being, were they not in you. You called, shouted, broke through my deafness; you flared, blazed, banished my blindness; you lavished your fragrance, I gasped; and now I pant for you; I tasted you, and now I hunger and thirst; you touched me, and I burned for your peace. When at last I cling to you with my whole being there will be no more anguish or labor for me, and my life will be alive indeed, alive because filled with you. But now it is very different. Anyone whom you fill, you also uplift; but I am not full of you, and so I am a burden to myself. I also see in me evil griefs at war with joys that are good, and I do not know which will win the day. This is agony, Lord, have pity on me! See, I do not hide my wounds; you are the physician and I am sick; you are merciful, I in need of mercy." (Confessions X)

St. Monica (332-387 A.D.)

Monica, the mother of St. Augustine, was born in northern Africa. She was a devout Christian but was married to a pagan named Patricius. They had three children, Navigius, Perpetua and Augustine. Monica's married life was not an easy one. Although he did not physically beat her, her husband had a violent temper and was often unfaithful. In addition to that, her mother-in-law lived with them and added to her problems. For a time, Monica had a tendency to heavy drinking, but finally overcame it. She also convinced her husband and mother-in-law to become Christians. Patricius was baptized in 370 and died a year later.

She made every effort to raise her children as good Christians, and as a youth Augustine was enrolled in preparation for baptism. But he did not take it seriously and postponed it. His life style as a young man caused Monica great grief and disappointment. Augustine even told her they would have no problems if she gave up her faith. At one point she did not allow him to live in her house. When she took all this to her



bishop he told her that it would be impossible that a son for whom she prayed and shed so many tears would be lost. He assured her that Augustine would eventually return to the faith, Accepting that her son was not ready to change, she stopped confronting him. Instead, she turned to fasting and prayer, hoping that God would succeed where she had failed. She kept this up for many years, like the persistent widow of the gospel (*Luke 18: 2-6*) who constantly appealed to the judge until he ruled in her favor.

When Augustine left for Italy without telling her she was hurt. But eventually she went to live with him there. She would not give up on her son and continued to pray for him. Finally, in 386 her prayers were answered. Augustine, moved by the powerful preaching of Ambrose, told her his struggle was over. He was giving his life to Christ and Monica was overjoyed at the news. Monica and a few close friends went away with Augustine for a period of time as he prepared for his baptism which took place in 387. After that the little group decided to return home to northern Africa. They did not leave the shores of Italy before Monica became very ill. Before she died at the age of 53 she told her son:

“Nothing in this world now gives me pleasure. I do not know what there is left for me to do or why I am still here. All of my hopes in this world are now fulfilled. All I wished to live for was to see you a Catholic and a child of heaven. God has granted me more than this in making you turn away from earthly pleasure and consecrate yourself to his service.”

Monica died at the seaside city of Ostia where her body was buried. In 1430 A.D. her body was taken to the Church of San Agostino in Rome where it remains to this day. Her feast day is August 27.

In his biography called *Confessions*, Augustine devotes several passages to his mother and how much he owed to her. As was said earlier, he became a priest at the age of 36 and a bishop at the age of 41. He remained Bishop of Hippo for 35 years and became so important to the Church then and now, that in the Catechism of the Catholic Church more quotes are from Augustine than any other author. The Church owes a great deal to the faithful prayers of this great woman, Monica.

The Sign of the Cross

“...in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew. 28:19).

As can be seen from the above passage from the Bible, the sign of the cross has roots in the the *scriptures* and in the *tradition* of the early Christians. The *sign of the cross* is also a statement of faith. In this simple gesture Catholics are not only making a sign of their redemption—the Cross—but also expressing their faith in the Trinity. With this simple action the members of the early Church strengthened themselves in the face of very difficult times. Tertullian, writing in the third century, tells us that Christians made the *sign of the cross* upon rising, as they were dressing, upon entering or leaving their houses, before they bathed, on sitting down at the table, on lighting their lamps, in fact, at the beginning of almost every action.

Saint Augustine tells us: *“It is by the sign of the cross that the Body of the Lord is consecrated, that baptismal fonts are sanctified, that priests and other ranks in the Church are admitted to their respective orders, and everything that is to be made holy is consecrated by the sign of our Lord's cross, with the invocation of the name of Christ” (Sermon LXXXI).* The original sign of the cross most likely was made by tracing a cross on the forehead, lips, or chest with the thumb, much like it is done today before the Gospel is read at Mass. It is difficult to know exactly when the custom of blessing oneself with a large cross, going forehead to chest and then shoulder to shoulder, came about.

Prayer in the Desert

A Biblical Tradition

Being in the desert with God has ancient, biblical roots that are found in both the Old and New Testaments. In fact, it is at the very heart of the Jewish and Christian traditions. Time and again God led his people and prophets to the desert to test their faith and trust. For the Moses and the Israelites it was a special meeting place with God. Moses fled to the desert after killing the Egyptian official, where he met God in the burning bush who told Moses his name. He also made him the leader of his people. Then, after being freed from slavery, Moses and his people wandered for 40 years in the desert. During that time Moses received the ten commandments and the Israelites became a nation with their own laws and rituals of worship. After a period of trial and training they left the desert for the promised land. Throughout the following centuries prophets were called to the desert as a place of testing and change of heart. They learned humility, total reliance on God and obedience to his will. In the New Testament we read how Jesus also was guided by the Spirit of God into the desert where he was tempted by Satan. He was victorious and then returned to begin his public ministry (See Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-13).



The Christian “Eremitic” Tradition

Therefore, in the light of both the Old and New Testaments, it became natural for Christians to regard the desert as a place where their commitment to the gospel could be tested. In response to God’s call some early Christians began to leave regular society in order to live the *eremitic* way of life (from the Latin *eremita* meaning desert). They either lived entirely alone or with a group in a shared dwelling called a monastery. These Christians lived in isolated places—sometimes in a natural cave they found, or in a simple dwelling that either they made or was abandoned. They found in nature what food they could, or raised small gardens for their food. Sometimes they made baskets or mats in exchange for food.

The eremitic calling is a special way of seeking God that continues even to this day. Some hermits are members of religious orders like the *Carthusian* or *Camaldolese Orders*.^{*} Others, both men and women, live alone but under the direction of their bishop. Sometimes they are called “anchorites” (from a Greek word *anchorein* meaning *to live apart or alone*). In the Christian tradition the *hermit’s* way of life developed before the custom of several monks living together in a monastery under a rule. Hermits were sought out by others for spiritual advice and counsel. Sometimes there were so many visitors or disciples living near them that they had very little solitude. In this way, the earliest form of Christian monasticism began to form around the hermits. Whether alone or in groups, it was and still is a life of penance and prayer, spent praising and loving God. This is done in a spirit of service on behalf of all humanity.

^{*}The *Carthusian Order* was founded by St. Bruno in 1084 at Chartreuse, France. Its own rule called *Statutes* governs its community of hermits living individually except for prayer and recreation. The *Camaldolese Order* was established by St. Romuald in Camaldoli, Italy in 1012. It is both a community of hermits but also of monks who live, work and pray in common.

Desert Fathers and Mothers

St. Paul of Thebes - First Hermit (d. 345 A.D.)

What we know of this first hermit is from St. Jerome (341-420 A.D.) who wrote his biography:

“During the persecutions of Decius and Valerian (249–260 A.D.), when Cornelius at Rome and Cyprian at Carthage shed their blood in martyrdom, many churches in Egypt and Thebaid were laid waste by the fury. While such enormities were being perpetrated, Paul and his newly married sister were bereaved of both their parents, he being about sixteen years of age. He was heir to a rich inheritance, highly skilled in Greek and Egyptian learning, gifted with a gentle disposition and a deep love for God. Amid the thunders of persecution he retired to a house at a considerable distance and more secluded spot. His brother-in-law thought of betraying the youth whom he was supposed to conceal. The young man (Paul)...fled to the wilds to wait for the end of the persecution. He began to advance into the desert. At length he found a rocky mountain, at the foot of which, was a cave. He saw within a large area open to the sky, but shaded by the branches of a palm...and a spring. There were in the mountain, which was full of caves, many places, in which were seen, now rough with rust, anvils and hammers for stamping money. The place was a secret mint at the time of Antony and Cleopatra. Regarding his abode as a gift from God and there in prayer and solitude spent all the rest of his life.”

After some years, a younger hermit named Anthony set out to find Paul: *“In the stillness of the night it was revealed to him that there was farther in the desert a much better man than he, and that he ought to go and visit him. So then at break of day he started, but what direction to choose he knew not. Scorching noontide came, with a broiling sun overhead, but still he did not turn from the journey. He traversed the region, seeing only the tracks of wild animals, and the wide waste of the desert. What to do, where to make his way, he knew not. At length through the fearful midnight darkness a light appeared in the distance.”*

When the two finally met, *“Paul spoke to Antony: ‘I knew long since, brother, that you were dwelling in those parts. Long ago God promised you to me for a fellow-servant; but the time of my falling asleep now draws near. I have always longed to be dissolved and to be with Christ. Therefore you have been sent by the Lord to lay my poor body in the ground, to return earth to earth.’ Hearing this Antony with tears and groans began to pray that he would not leave him, but would take him as a companion on that journey. Paul replied: ‘You ought not to seek your own, but another man's good. It is necessary for the rest of the brothers to be trained by your example.’ ”*

After Paul died Anthony *“bent his shoulders beneath the burden of the saint's body, laid it in the grave, covered it with the soil. Another day dawned, and then—that he might not be without something belonging to the dead hermit—took for himself the tunic the saint had woven out of palm-leaves. Returning to the monastery, he unfolded it for his disciples, and on Easter and Pentecost he always wore Paul's tunic.”*



St Anthony of Egypt (251-356 A.D.)

What we know about *abba* (father) Anthony is from the *Life of Anthony* written by Athanasius of Alexandria who knew him personally. Anthony was born in Egypt in 251 AD of wealthy Christian parents. He was educated at home but otherwise did not enjoy being a student. Even so, he was very intelligent: “*For he had given such heed to what was read that none of the things that were written fell from him to the ground, but he remembered all, and afterwards his memory served him for books.*” Some time after his parents died he gave away his inheritance, settled his sister in a convent and became a hermit in an abandoned tomb. He lived a life of prayer and penance, taking only bread and water once a day. He struggled against temptations of every kind. There also were other Christians living in the desert, totally dedicated to God. Athanasius described Anthony’s relationship with them:

“Thus conducting himself, Antony was beloved by all. He subjected himself in sincerity to the good people he visited, and learned thoroughly where each surpassed him in zeal and discipline. He observed the graciousness of one; the constant prayer of another; another’s freedom from anger and another’s loving-kindness; one he admired for his endurance, another for his fasting and sleeping on the ground; the meekness of one and the long-suffering of another he watched with care, while he took note of the piety towards Christ and the mutual love that animated all. Thus filled, he returned to his own place, and would strive to unite the qualities of each, and was eager to have in himself the virtues of all. With others of the same age he had no rivalry; but this only—that he not be second to them in higher things. And he did this in a way that would not hurt the feelings of anyone, but made them rejoice over him. So everyone of that village and the good people he lived near, when they saw what kind of person he was, used to call him ‘God-beloved.’ Some welcomed him as a son, others as a brother.”



In 285, he left this place looking for more solitude and went to live in an old, abandoned fort. After 20 years several monks once again gathered near him, so he organized their lives with a common rule. Each monk, however, lived alone except to gather for teachings and worship. This may have been the first Christian monastery. Athanasius tells us that Anthony did make a few trips away from the desert. On one occasion he went to Alexandria to encourage Christians who were being persecuted under Emperor Maximian. Later he returned to combat the heresy of Arius who taught that Christ was not God. At one point, as described earlier, he spent time with Paul the Hermit until his death. Otherwise he remained at his cave where he received visitors and gave advice until his own death at the age of 105 on January 17, 356 AD. Even during his lifetime he was known among Christians for his holiness and wisdom. He was consulted by people of all walks of life, from Emperor Constantine to the humblest person.

The following are some of Anthony’s sayings:

“The whole earth is very small compared with all of heaven. It is like someone turning down a copper coin to get a hundred coins of gold. But if the whole earth is not even equal in value to heaven, then he who has given up a few acres leaves nothing.” And as if referring to himself, “*And even if he has given up a house or much gold he should not boast. Let the desire of possessions take hold of no one, for what gain is there in these things which we cannot take with us? Why not get those things which we can take with us— prudence, justice, temperance, courage, understanding, love, freedom from anger, kindness to the poor, hospitality, faith in Christ?”* (17)

“Let us hold on to our discipline, and let us not be careless. For in it, the Lord is our fellow-worker, as it is written, “to all that choose the good, God works with them for good .” (19)

“If demons see Christians, and monks especially, laboring cheerfully and advancing, first make an attack by temptation and place obstacles to block our way, by evil thoughts. But we need not fear them, for by prayer, fasting, and faith in the Lord their attack immediately fails. But even when it does they come on again in more subtle ways. For when they cannot deceive the heart openly they approach in different ways, attempting to cause fear. But not even then need you fear their deceits. They are nothing and quickly disappear, especially if a man fortify himself beforehand with faith and the sign of the cross.” (23)

St. Syncletica (316-400 A.D.)

Syncletica was born in Alexandria, Egypt in 316 AD of wealthy Christian parents. She had two brothers who died young and a sister who was blind. She was well educated and while living in her parent’s home was attracted to a life of simplicity and prayer. As she grew to marrying age she attracted many suitors because of her beauty. She rejected them all since she had chosen not to marry but to dedicate herself to God.

After her parents died she gave her inheritance to the poor:
“Those who have amassed material riches, even when they have gained much, desire to gain yet more. They consider that they have at present as nothing and reach out for what they have not got. We who have nothing wish to acquire everything through reverence toward God.” After that she cut her hair as a sign of her consecration to God and went with her blind sister to a section of the family cemetery outside the city in a deserted area where they lived alone.



For many years Amma (mother) Syncletica devoted herself to prayer, while giving aid to the poor and needy. Eventually, other women began coming to her for spiritual advice. Some even decided to live near her. If such a life seemed like a prison that is how she described it: *“In the world, if we commit an offense, even an involuntary one, we are thrown into prison. Let us likewise cast ourselves into prison because of our sins so that willingly remembering them may offset the justice that is to come.”* She taught the need to grow in self-knowledge, to understand human passions and desires, to purify them and to direct the heart and mind to God. Here are a few examples of her wise words:

“It is dangerous for anyone to teach others who has not first been trained in the practical life. For if someone who owns a ruined house receives a guest there, harm is done because of the dilapidation of the dwelling. It is the same in the case of someone who has not first built an interior dwelling. Loss is caused to those who come. By words one may convert them to salvation, but by evil behavior, one injures them.”

If her quiet life seemed easy she was very honest about its trials:

“In the beginning there are a great many battles and a good deal of suffering for those who are advancing towards God, but afterwards, ineffable joy. It is like those who wish to light a fire. At first

they are choked by the smoke and cry, and by this means obtain what they seek. So we also must kindle the divine fire in ourselves through tears and hard work.”

Like so many others living in solitude, temptations came along like spiritual storms: *“When we are driven by the spirits who are against us, we hold to the cross as our sail and so we can set a safe course.”*

Patience in the spiritual struggle brought growth and life: *“You will find your heart which is a rock changed into a spring of water.”*

When she was 80 years old she was stricken with cancer and during the last four years of her life suffered with great patience: *“If illness weighs us down let us not be sorrowful as though we could not sing. For all these things purify our desires. For this is the great asceticism: to control oneself in illness and to sing hymns of thanksgiving to God.”* She died in 400 AD at the age of 84.



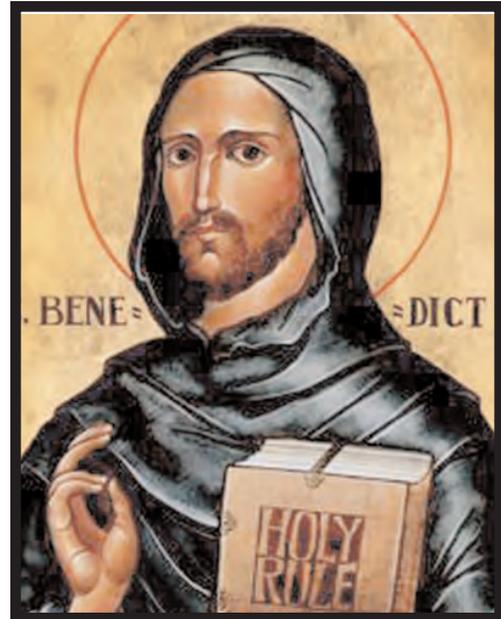
Christianity spread quickly to all parts of the Roman Empire

Benedictine Prayer

Life of St. Benedict (480-547 A.D.)

Benedict (his name means *blessing* in Latin) was born in Nursia (Italy) in 480 AD. Other than that, very little is known about his early life except that he began his education in Rome. He became disgusted with the sin and corruption he saw around him, so when he was about 20 years old he left the city. He went to the mountains to live as a hermit in a cave at a place called Subiaco. Despite his wish to live in solitude, his holiness became known and a group of monks asked him to become their spiritual leader or *abbot* (from *abba* meaning father). When they decided they did not like his strict way of life he returned to his cave.

Soon however he attracted even greater numbers of disciples. He organized them into monasteries with a rule that centered on *prayer* and *work*. This became the Benedictine motto: *ora et labora*. Later on he settled in Monte Cassino where he built a monastery. It became known as the birthplace of *European* monasticism.



However, Benedict was not the founder of *Christian* monasticism because there were monks and monasteries long before his time. In fact, he took parts of his rule from earlier rules written by St. John Cassian (360-433 A.D.) and St. Basil (330-379 A.D.). Benedict's version of monastic life is known for its common sense approach to prayer, study and work. The *Liturgy of the Hours* along with the *Liturgy of the Eucharist* were the center of the monastic daily life. The Liturgy of the Hours created a daily routine of prayer that followed the biblical praise of God seven times a day and the ancient Roman division of time into hours. Each of the hours had special arrangements of scripture, other readings, hymns and psalms (see the section in this book on *The Liturgy of the Hours*). In this way the entire day began and ended in praise of God. Benedict set up 14 monasteries during his lifetime, and influenced monastic life in Europe for centuries to come. His monks ministered to rulers and popes, as well as the poor and needy. Benedict died at Monte Cassino on March 21, 547 AD.

From his first monastery literally hundreds of monasteries sprang up throughout Europe in the centuries that followed. In a way that Benedict would never have imagined, these monasteries became important centers of spirituality, learning, medicine, farming and hospitality. They had a major impact on the history of Europe and beyond, through the monasteries established throughout the world.

The Rule of St. Benedict

Prologue

"Listen carefully, my child, to your master's precepts, and incline the ear of your heart (Proverbs 4:20). Receive willingly and carry out effectively your loving father's advice, that by the labor of obedience you may return to Him from whom you had departed by the sloth of disobedience. To you, therefore, my words are now addressed, whoever you may be, who are renouncing your own will to do battle under the Lord Christ, the true King, and are taking up the strong, bright weapons of obedience."

Chapter 16: How the Work of God Is to Be Performed During the Day

“Seven times in the day,” says the Prophet, “I have rendered praise to You” Psalm 119:164). Now that sacred number of seven will be fulfilled by us if we perform the Offices of our service at the time of the Morning Office, of Prime, of Terce, of Sext, of None, of Vespers and of Compline, since it was of these day Hours that he said, “Seven times in the day I have rendered praise to You” (Psalm 119:164). For as to the Night Office the same Prophet says, “In the middle of the night I arose to glorify You” (Psalm 119:62). Let us therefore bring our tribute of praise to our Creator “for the judgments of His justice” at these times.

Chapter 19: On the Manner of Saying the Divine Office

We believe that the divine presence is everywhere and that “the eyes of the Lord are looking on the good and the evil in every place” (Prov. 15:3). But we should believe this especially without any doubt when we are assisting at the Work of God. To that end let us be mindful always of the Prophet’s words, “Serve the Lord in fear” (Psalm 2: 11) and again “Sing praises wisely” (Psalm 46: 8) and “In the sight of the angels I will sing praise to You” (Psalm 138: 1). Let us therefore consider how we ought to conduct ourselves in sight of the Godhead and of His angels, and let us take part in singing psalms in such a way that our mind may be in harmony with our voice.

Chapter 20: On Reverence in Prayer

When we wish to suggest our wants to persons of high station, we do not presume to do so except with humility and reverence. How much the more, then, are complete humility and pure devotion necessary in supplication of the Lord who is God of the universe! And let us be assured that it is not in saying a great deal that we shall be heard (Matthew 6: 7), but in purity of heart and in tears of compunction. Our prayer, therefore, ought to be short and pure, unless it happens to be prolonged by an inspiration of divine grace. In community, however, let prayer be very short,

The Goal of the Rule:

The goal of those who follow this *Rule* of St. Benedict and strive to live in the spirit of the Gospel is to be always alert to God. The opening word of the *Rule*, “listen” points to the heart of this matter. They listen first of all to the words of Scripture which teaches them about God’s way. The Work of God helps those who pray to allow the Word to speak within them in surroundings of silence and solitude. Since its beginning, the Benedictine way of life has guided the lives of many people beyond those who live in monasteries. Benedict encouraged his followers to live apart from society for the sake of quiet and contemplation. He encouraged a life that was well-ordered. It included study, work and prayer. In that balance the rule made sure that there was plenty of time set aside for spiritual growth. But this was not meant to be an escape from a world that was regarded as “hopelessly evil.” On the contrary, it was designed to be like a family with its own customs and privacy, that is still in contact with its neighbors.

Life of St. Scholastica (480-543 A.D.)

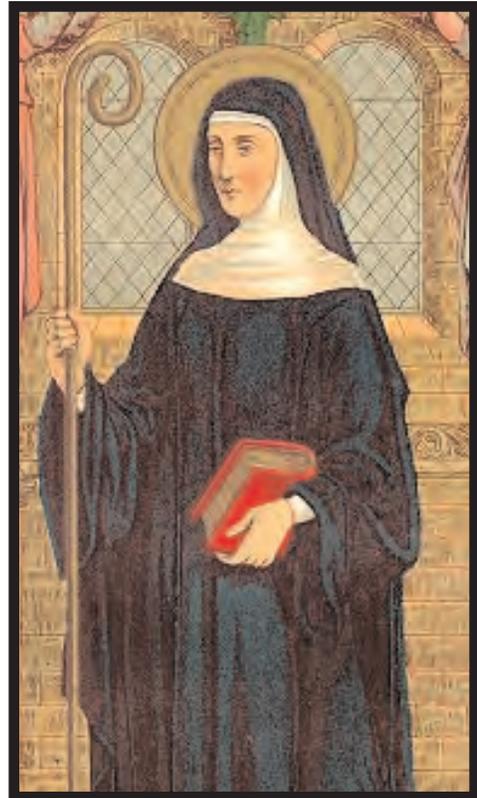
Like her twin brother, Benedict, little is known about the early life of Scholastica. She was born of wealthy parents in Nursia (located near Spoleto, Italy). Their mother died in childbirth, and as a result Scholastica and Benedict developed a close bond that lasted throughout their entire lives. When she learned of Benedict's new monastery, she and a group of pious virgins set up a convent nearby. Since he became their spiritual director it seems likely that they lived by his same *Rule*. Scholastica's convent was located about five miles from her brother's monastery at Monte Cassino.

What is known about the rest of her life is taken from the *Dialogues* of Pope St. Gregory the Great. He briefly describes how she and her brother Benedict would visit together just once a year. Benedict would travel with a few monks to see her at a place that was between their two communities. The day was spent discussing spiritual things and praying together.

During what was to be their last visit, Benedict got up and was preparing to leave, but Scholastica begged him to stay longer. She was hoping to talk more about the "joys of heaven." Benedict told her that it was time for him and his companions to return to their monastery. When he refused to stay, Scholastica bowed her head in prayer and asked God for help. Very quickly the clear sky filled with clouds, and there were flashes of lightning and loud thunder. As she finished praying it began to rain so heavily that Benedict and his fellow monks could not leave. Then he said to her: "*Sister, why have you done this?*" and she answered: "*When I appealed to you, you would not listen. So I turned to God, and he heard my prayer.*" After that they spent the entire night in spiritual discussion and prayer until morning. Three days later Scholastica died as the *Dialogues* describe:

"The next day the venerable woman went back to her own cell, and the man of God to his monastery. Three days later while in his cell, he looked up at the sky and saw the soul of his sister after it had gone forth from her body...and he saw it penetrate the hidden mysteries of heaven. Rejoicing because such glory was hers, he gave thanks to the omnipotent God with hymns and praises, and he announced her death to his brothers. He sent people at once to bring her body back to the monastery and to put it in a tomb which he had prepared for himself. And so it happened that even the tomb did not separate the bodies of these two who were always of one mind in God."

There are no examples of St. Scholastica's writings but the account of her prayer is a powerful example of the friendship that she enjoyed with God and the way that her prayer was answered. The feast day of St. Scholastica is February 10.



Abbots and abbesses were often shown holding a crosier (staff) as a symbol of their spiritual leadership.

The Liturgy of the Hours

History of the Hours

When and where did praying the idea of praying the “hours” begin? Did the Catholic Church invent this way of praying? Is it in the Bible? Scripture says: “*Seven times in the day,*” says the Prophet, “*I have rendered praise to You*” (Psalm 119:164).

On Easter night, Jesus said to his apostles: “*These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled*” (Luke 24:44). In Christ the full meaning of the songs of Israel are revealed; they announce the Word of life. Jesus personally applied them to himself on the cross. For example, when he prayed Psalm 22:2: “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” (Matthew 27:46). Christians can truthfully say that the words of the psalmist are the words of Christ himself. They were his prayers, therefore they are our prayers too.

The Official Prayer of the Church

With the help of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the apostles understood that Christ is revealed in these inspired psalms. In their preaching Peter and Paul used these familiar texts to show that what they pointed to was fulfilled in the risen Christ: “*My brothers, one can confidently say to you about the patriarch David that...he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah...*” (Acts 2:29-31). (Also read Acts 13:22 and Ephesians 4:8). The successors to the apostles gave the psalms the same privileged place in their preaching of the Gospel. It is not surprising therefore that Christ’s Church should have found in the psalms its favorite prayer. All of its liturgies take the Psalms as the source for passages to celebrate the mysteries of the Lord—his birth “*You are my son; today I am your father*” (Psalm 2:7); his sufferings and death: “*So wasted are my hands and feet...*” (Psalm 22:17); his resurrection “*...for the sake of your promise give me life*” (Psalm 119:154), his ascension: “*God mounts the throne amid shouts of joy*” (Psalm 47:6); and his second coming: “*...rejoice before the LORD who comes...*” (Psalm 96: 12-13). These inspired verses are found in the Mass, the Liturgy of Hours and in various ceremonies including the sacraments. For the Church is the New Israel and the new people of God. Through the words and images of the *old* covenant the Church expresses the *new* covenant.

Praying with the Psalms

No one who who prays or sings the psalms and takes their meaning to heart, can possibly remain unmoved by them. They may amaze or shock us, bring peace or joy, but eventually they take us beyond ourselves and transform us. They invite us to encounter God without whom we cannot live. In so many ways, the psalms draw us to greater faith and hope.

It may seem like some passages contradict the command of love that Jesus taught. But we only need to understand their words as fulfilling his life, death and resurrection. For example, if we ask ourselves what the psalmist loves and hates, we realize that it is no longer about those ancient friends and enemies, but the forces of evil and the power of God’s goodness.

Praying with the World-wide Church

The prayers we use in the Liturgy are not just our own prayers. We also stand before God in the company of all humanity. Our prayer is the prayer of the whole Church as it reaches the Father through Christ our mediator. Through the psalms we express all the prayers of the people of God and of Christ their Head.

They invite us to widen our hearts to receive the fullness of God's redemption. They help us see what is unseen except to the eyes of faith. They help us realize what we will become one day.

All over the world, God's people are praying 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, all year round: "At dawn you will hear my voice..." (Psalm 5:4) and "At midnight I rise to praise you..." (Psalm 119:62). This world-wide prayer represents the sacred relationship between God and his creatures. In the Catholic Church, one form these prayers take is the Liturgy of the Hours.

The Liturgy of the Hours follows natural times of the day and seasons of the year. The Old Testament often described sunrise, noon, sunset, and night as special times when prayers were offered. Christians also looked to the psalms as the source of their daily prayers. The Liturgy of the Hours follows the custom found in the Bible that divided the day into seven times of prayer: "Seven times a day I praise you..." (Psalm 119:164). Early Christians followed this ancient tradition as a way of living the Bible's command to "pray always."

This liturgy, along with daily celebration of Mass, is the official prayer of the Church. This means that the Church prays it everyday. Ordained leaders in the Church are expected to participate in the Liturgy of the Hours daily. In monasteries and convents this prayer is chanted in community according to its designated hours.

The Liturgy of the Hours is composed of *hymns, psalms, scripture readings and prayers*. The seven traditional hours and their spiritual character follow:

Vigils (from the Latin *vigere* means *stay awake*) is the time of watching in the night. This prayer is celebrated at the midnight hour with its darkness and silence. In prayer and meditation we wait for the coming of morning light.

Lauds (from the Latin *laus* for *praise*) is the prayer of daybreak. We thank God for dawn that reminds us of the beginning of creation, and the light of Christ's resurrection. New beginnings, innocence, joy, and a hopeful outlook are expressed in these prayers.

Terce (Latin for *third*) is said at mid-morning. The prayers call for strength as work begins and the day goes on. This hour is a reminder of Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit, who strengthened the apostles.

Sext (Latin for *sixth*) is prayed at noon when the sun burns directly overhead. As we get tired it might be harder to be mindful of God. This prayer calls for perseverance and reminds us that the crucifixion of Christ began at this hour.

None (Latin for *ninth*) is prayed at mid-afternoon. It calls for more perseverance and strength to keep going whether we are facing life's trials or the end of life. By recalling this hour when Christ died, we realize we also will die some day.

Vespers (from the Latin *vespera* meaning *evening*) is celebrated toward the end of the day. The setting sun shed its light on the earth. This is the hour of wisdom as we look beyond the struggles of the day. We rest in thanksgiving after the work of the day.

Compline (from the Latin *completus* meaning *complete*) is the last prayer before going to sleep. It reminds us of life's end. The darkness of night reminds us of the deep mystery of God. This prayer is a gentle, daily exercise in the art of dying.

episto o ra pro populo interueni pro clero intercede pro deuoto famulo
 ad p'dictas orationes facietas. In uespis. V. Ora
 pro nobis. r. c. In laudibus. Elegit cam. A fido tuca
 seu alleluia alleluia. tis usq; ad aduentu. ad m. ul' ad axiu a; Alma
 redemptoris. V. Ora pro nobis. ad
 V. ul' ad axiu. a. Lucifera. V. Elegit. **S**
 Ducta res a. cantu ad libit p' apl. Sal ue re gi na misere
 ricor di e ui ta dulce do et spes nostra sal
 ue ad te clamamus crucis filij e ue ad te supua mus
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Hand-written page of the Liturgy of the Hours - in Latin and Gregorian chant.

Franciscan Prayer

St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226 A.D.)

Francis was born in Assisi, Italy in 1181 A.D. His parents were wealthy silk merchants. He was a handsome, charming and educated young man. He had time and money to host lavish parties for young nobles who called him the “king of feasts.” Parties and selling cloth left Francis little time for God. He also dreamed of being a knight and longed for the adventure of the battlefield. In pursuit of that dream, he joined the war between Assisi and Perugia at the age of 20. Eventually, Francis was wounded and taken prisoner. While spending the next year in prison he also contracted malaria. When he was ransomed by his father, Francis returned to Assisi a more serious person.



Nevertheless, the military victories of a famous count once more revived the desire of Francis to be a knight. While he was on his way to join him, Francis got the shocking news of the count’s death. As depression set in, his malaria also returned. One night a mysterious voice asked him, “*Who do you think can best reward you, the Master or the servant?*” Francis answered, “*The Master.*” The voice continued, “*Why do you leave the Master for the servant?*” Francis understood that the count he had planned to join was the servant and God was the Master. In that moment he was convinced God had spoken to him.

During the next two years Francis sensed that a huge change was taking place in his heart and soul. For example, the sight of lepers usually disgusted him. But one day while riding his horse, he met a leper along the road. His first thought was to throw him a coin and ride away. Instead, he got off his horse, went up to the leper and embraced him. Years later, as Francis was dying, he called it the *crowning moment* of his conversion: “*What seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body.*”

Later, while he prayed in the abandoned church of San Damiano, he heard a voice coming from the crucifix which said to him: “*Francis, rebuild my Church!*” At first he thought it meant he should rebuild San Damiano. Gradually, Francis realized that God was asking him to “rebuild” the Catholic Church. Soon Francis discovered that following Christ placed him against the values of society and set him apart from his family and friends.

After going on a pilgrimage to Rome he returned to devote himself to a life of poverty and care for the sick and poor. His father disowned him as a madman and publicly denied his inheritance before the local bishop and the whole city. In response Francis took off everything that belonged to his father and placed himself under the protection and guidance of the bishop. Then Francis went to live near the little chapel he had repaired, and devoted his life to poverty and preaching. He soon attracted many followers, including several of his friends and some leading citizens of Assisi.

Francis was known for acting out of the ordinary. During one of the crusades he decided to go to Egypt to preach the gospel to the Muslims. After he was captured by their soldiers, he was taken before the Sultan who was battling with the Crusaders. The Sultan was so impressed with the charity and humility of Francis that he released him. Also, in 1223 Francis recreated the Christmas scene in a

local cave, inviting followers and friends to join him. Thus he began the custom of the “Christmas crib” that is observed all over the world to this day.

Two years before he died, Francis was alone in deep prayer and fasting on Mount Alverna, when an amazing thing happened. This is how his followers described it later: *“He saw what appeared as a seraph with six bright wings gleaming like a fire descending from the heights of heaven. As this figure approached in swift flight and came near the man of God it appeared not only winged but also crucified. The sight of it amazed Francis and his soul experienced joy mingled with pain. He was delighted with the sight of Christ appearing to him so graciously and intimately and yet the awe-inspiring vision of Christ nailed to the cross aroused in his soul a joy of compassionate love. When the vision vanished after a mysterious conversation it left Francis aglow with love in his soul. Outwardly, however, it left marks on his body like those of the Crucified. The figures of the nails appeared immediately on his hands and feet. The heads of the nails were inside his hands but on top of his feet with their points extending through to the opposite side. His right side too showed a blood-red wound as if it had been pierced by a lance, and blood flowed frequently from it. Because of this new and astounding miracle unheard of in times past, Francis came down from the mountain a new man adorned with the sacred stigmata, bearing in his body the image of the Crucified.”* Stigmata is a Greek word that means a mark, scar or opening. Two years later Francis died at the age of 45 in Assisi on October 2, 1226. Although he was never ordained a priest, his impact on the spiritual lives of many people then and now has been enormous. He was known for his simplicity, poverty, love for the poor and sick, and his delight in God’s beauty and goodness revealed in nature. *“You gave your servant great love for each of your creatures”* Francis wrote of himself.

There are many beautiful prayers composed by Francis. Some of the most well-known are as follows:

Peace Prayer (This is probably the most famous prayer of St. Francis)

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is error, truth;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,

Grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled, as to console;

To be understood, as to understand;

To be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Prayer Before the Crucifix

Most High and glorious God,

enlighten the darkness of my heart

and give me true faith, certain hope, and perfect charity,

wisdom and understanding, Lord, that I may carry out

Your holy and true command.

Canticle of All Creatures (In praise of God and all His creatures)

*Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord,
All praise is yours, all glory, all honor and all blessings.
To you alone, Most High, do they belong,
and no mortal lips are worthy to pronounce Your Name.*

*Praised be you my Lord with all your creatures,
especially Brother Sun,
Who is the day through whom you give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor,
Of you Most High, he bears the likeness.*

*Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
In the heavens you have made them bright, precious and fair.*

*Praised be you, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,
And fair and stormy, all weather's moods,
by which you cherish all that you have made.*

*Praised be you my Lord through Sister Water,
So useful, humble, precious and pure.*

*Praised be you my Lord through Brother Fire,
through whom you light the night
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.*

*Praised be you my Lord through our Sister,
Mother Earth who sustains and governs us,
producing varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.*

*Praise be you my Lord through those who grant pardon
for love of you and bear sickness and trial.
Blessed are those who endure in peace,
By you Most High, they will be crowned.*

*Praised be you, my Lord through Sister Death,
from whom no-one living can escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin!
Blessed are they she finds doing Your Will.
No second death can do them harm.*

*Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks,
And serve Him with great humility.*

*Heavenly Father,
You gave your servant Francis
great love for each of your creatures.
Teach us to see your design in all of creation.
We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

A Frequent Prayer of St. Francis *My God and my All!*

The Favorite Blessing of St. Francis

(From Numbers 6:24-26)

*The Lord bless you and keep you.
May He show His face to you and have mercy.
May He turn His countenance to you and give you peace.
The Lord bless you.*

St. Clare of Assisi (1194-1253 A.D.)

Clare also was born in Assisi, Italy, on 16 July, 1194. She was the oldest daughter of wealthy parents who owned a large palace in Assisi and a castle on a nearby mountain. Even as a child she was devoted to prayer. And as a young woman was not interested in wealth and social life. She longed for a more spiritual life. When she was eighteen years old Francis came to preach in the church at Assisi. The inspired words of the *poverello* (*little poor man*) started a flame in the heart of Clare. She went to see him quietly and begged him to help her to live “*after the manner of the holy Gospel.*” Francis quickly recognized in her a soul chosen by God for great things, and that many would follow her example. He promised to help her.



On Palm Sunday, 1212, Clare attended Mass at the cathedral in all her finery, but when the others went forward to receive a palm branch, she stayed in her place as if she was in a dream. All eyes were on her as the bishop went to her and placed a palm in her hand. That was the last time Clare would be seen in public. That same night she secretly left her father's house, with her aunt Bianca and another companion. They went to the little chapel of San Damiano below the city of Assisi. There Francis and his followers met them with lights in their hands. Clare put aside her rich dress, and Francis cut off her hair and gave her in simple dress and veil. Finally, Clare vowed herself totally to the service of Jesus Christ.

Clare was placed by Francis for a time with the Benedictine nuns near a neighboring city. But her father, who expected her to get married was furious with her for leaving. When he discovered where she was, he did his utmost to change Clare's decision. He even tried to drag her home by force. But Clare held her own with firmness above her years, so he finally left her in peace. A few days later Francis, in order to give Clare the greater solitude she desired, took her to another convent. Sixteen days after her own flight, Clare was joined by her younger sister Agnes, after helping her escape from their angry relatives. Clare and her sister remained with the nuns until they and the other women who followed them were set up by Francis in a simple dwelling next to the chapel of San Damiano. Francis had rebuilt it with his own hands, and now gave it as a permanent home for his spiritual daughters. Clare and her companions wore no shoes, ate no meat, dedicated themselves to prayer and silence. Yet they were very happy in their closeness to God. Thus the first convent of Poor Clares began, as this second order of St. Francis came to be called. Clare was 59 years old when she died on August 11, 1253. She lived for 27 years after the death of Francis. Her feast day is August 11.

Fortunately, we have examples of the prayerful spirit of Clare. In September of 1240 Clare and her community were saved from great danger in answer to her prayer. An army of rough soldiers came to attack Assisi and planned to raid the convent first. Although very sick, Clare had herself carried to the wall and there, where the enemies could see it, she held up the Blessed Sacrament. Then on her knees, she begged God to save her convent and Assisi, realizing that otherwise she was powerless:

“O Lord, protect these sisters whom I cannot protect now,” A voice seemed to answer: “I will keep them always in My care.” At the same time a sudden fright struck the attackers and they fled as fast as they could.

Clare was sick and suffered great pains for many years, but she said that no pain could trouble her devotion to God. So great was her joy in serving God that she once exclaimed: *“They say that we are too poor, but can a heart which possesses the infinite God be truly called poor?”*

Clare also wrote four letters to Agnes the Queen of Prague. In 1225 the first Friars of St. Francis arrived in Prague. Through them Agnes came to know all about Clare and the “Poor Ladies” in Assisi. In a letter to Agnes, Clare wrote about looking into the spiritual mirror of Christ’s face:

“Look into this mirror every day, O queen, spouse of Jesus Christ, and continually examine your face in it, so that in this way you may adorn yourself completely, inwardly and outwardly, clothed and covered in multicolored apparel, adorned in the same manner with flowers and garments made of all the virtues as is proper, dearest daughter and spouse of the most high King. Moreover, in this mirror shine blessed poverty, holy humility, and charity beyond words, as you will be able, with God's grace, to contemplate throughout the entire mirror.

Look closely, I say, to the beginning of the life of this admired one, indeed at the poverty of him who was wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger. O marvelous humility! O astonishing poverty! The King of the angels, the Lord of heaven and earth is laid to rest in a manger! Consider also the midst of his life, his humility, or at least his blessed poverty, the countless hardships, and the punishments that he endured for the redemption of the human race. Indeed, ponder the final days of this mirrored one, contemplate the ineffable love with which he was willing to suffer on the tree of the cross and to die there a kind of death that is more shameful than any other.

That mirror suspended upon the wood of the cross from there kept urging those passing by of what must be considered, saying: O all you who pass by this way, look and see if there is any suffering like my suffering. In response let us with one voice and in one spirit answer him who is crying out and lamenting: I will remember this over and over and my soul will sink within me. Therefore, seeing this, O queen of the heavenly King, you must burn ever more strongly with the fervor of charity!”

Clare also wrote two letters to a woman named Ermentrude who lived in a hermitage in Bruges (Belgium). After learning about Clare, Ermentrude turned her hermitage into a convent of Poor Clares. The following is from one of Clare’s letters to this spiritual friend:

“O dearest, look on heaven that invites us, and bear the cross and follow Christ who preceded us. Indeed, after various and many tribulations we shall enter through him into his glory. Love with your whole heart God and Jesus, his Son, crucified for our sins, and never let his memory escape your mind. Make yourself meditate continually on the mysteries of the cross and the anguish of the mother standing beneath the cross.

Pray and be always vigilant. And the work that you began well, finish and the ministry you assumed, fulfill in holy poverty and sincere humility. Do not fear, daughter, God is faithful in all his words and holy in all his works. He will pour out his blessing on you and your daughters. He will be your helper and your best consoler. He is our redeemer and our eternal reward.”

Dominican Prayer

St. Dominic (1170-1221 A.D.)

Dominic Guzman was born in 1170 in Spain. He was the youngest of four children. While he studied at the university from 1184 to 1194 he was ordained a priest. For a time his life was uneventful, but he lived a life of fasting and prayer. On three different occasions he was invited to become a bishop but refused. Eventually he became known for his gift of preaching, especially against heretics whom he convinced with both gentleness and the example of his simple life. He refused to take part in any violence toward them.

In 1215 Dominic founded his own Order of Preachers, but instead of quiet monasteries in the countryside, he set up houses called “priors” in the cities. From there, the friars went out to preach and returned to be renewed by prayer and encouraged by the brothers. Dominic understood that their preaching had to be rooted in a deep knowledge and love of the Gospel. He saw the importance of study for his friars, so with his first followers, he studied theology. He wanted his houses to be centers of prayer and learning, so that what his members learned in prayer they would present in preaching. He wanted them to live in poverty, but not as extreme as the St. Francis of Assisi (whom he met while traveling to Italy and greatly respected).



Wherever he went he attracted new followers, both men and women. Both Dominic and his followers were very successful in their work of conversion. They applied Dominic’s approach of explaining Catholic teaching in a popular way. He spent the last seven years of his life traveling and establishing his order in Spain, France and Italy. Dominic died in 1221 on August 6 at the age of 51. He truly lived the words of scripture: “How can they hear without someone to preach? And how can they preach unless they are sent?” (Romans 10:14).

The Ways of Prayer

The Ways of Prayer of St. Dominic was written after his death sometime between 1260 and 1288. The source of this information was Sister Cecilia of the Monastery of St. Agnes at Bologna (who was received into the order by St. Dominic himself) and others who lived and prayed with Dominic. This wonderful document testifies to his great holiness of his life and his intense love for God. The early copies of this work had miniature drawings to show the various postures that Dominic took while he was at prayer.

The First Way of Prayer

Dominic’s first way of prayer was to humble himself before the altar as if Christ, signified by the altar, were truly and personally present and not in symbol alone. In this way our holy father, standing erect, bowed his head and humbly considering Christ, his Head, compared his lowliness with the excellence of Christ. He then gave himself completely in showing his veneration. The brethren were taught to do this whenever they passed before the humiliation of the Crucified One in order that



Christ, so greatly humbled for us, might see us humbled before his majesty. And he commanded the friars to humble themselves in this way before the entire Trinity whenever they chanted solemnly: “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.” In this manner of profoundly inclining his head, as shown in the drawing, Saint Dominic began his prayer.

The Second Way of Prayer

Dominic used to pray by throwing himself outstretched upon the ground, lying on his face. He would feel great remorse in his heart and call to mind those words of the Gospel, saying: “O God, be merciful to me, a sinner” (Luke 18: 13). Wishing to teach the brethren to pray reverently, he would sometimes say to them: When the Magi entered the dwelling they found the child with Mary, his mother, and falling down they worshiped him. There is no doubt, we too have found the God-Man with Mary. “Come, let us adore and fall down before God, and let us weep before God, and before the Lord that made us” (Psalm 94: 61).



The Third Way of Prayer

*At the end of the prayer just described, Dominic would rise and give himself the discipline saying, “Your discipline has corrected me unto the end” (Psalm 17:36). This is why the Order decreed that all the brethren should take the discipline on their shoulders while bowing in worship and reciting Psalm 51 or Psalm 130. This is done for their own faults or those of others. No matter how sinless he may be, no one is to desist from this holy example. (See “Discipline” below)**



The Fourth Way of Prayer

After this Dominic would remain before the altar or in the chapter room with his gaze fixed on the Crucified One, looking upon Him with perfect attention. He genuflected frequently, again and again. He would continue sometimes from after Compline until midnight, now rising, now kneeling, like the leper of the Gospel who said on bended knee: “Lord, if you will, you can make me clean” (Matthew 8: 2).



The Fifth Way of Prayer

Dominic would sometimes remain before the altar, standing erect without supporting himself or leaning upon anything. Often his hands would be extended before his breast like an open book; he would stand with great reverence and devotion as if reading in the presence of God. Deep in prayer, he appeared to be meditating upon the words of God, and seemed to repeat them to himself in a sweet voice. The friars were very moved by the sight of their father and master praying in this manner.



The Sixth Way of Prayer

Dominic also prayed standing up with his hands and arms outstretched in the form of a cross. Our Lord prayed thus while hanging on the cross. His hands and arms were extended and “with a loud cry and tears...heard because of his reverent submission” (Heb. 5: 7). He would slowly pronounce the words in the Psalter which mention this way of prayer. He used to say: “O Lord, the God of my salvation: I have cried in the day and in the night before you,” as far as that verse “All the day I have cried to you, O Lord: I stretched out my hands to you” (Psalm 87: 2-10).



*The “discipline” was a small whip made of cords or a switch of thin branches used on the body as a form of penance. The discipline is no longer recommended for use by the Catholic Church.

The Seventh Way of Prayer

While praying Dominic was often seen to reach towards heaven like an arrow which has been shot from a bow straight into the sky. He would stand with hands outstretched above his head and joined together, or at times slightly separated as if about to receive something from heaven. Through his words and example he taught the friars to pray in this way, often repeating phrases from the psalms: “Now bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord ... in the night lift up your hands to the holy places, and bless the Lord” (Psalm 133:1-3).



The Eighth Way of Prayer

Dominic had yet another way of praying at once beautiful, devout, and pleasing, which he practiced. He withdrew to some solitary place, to his cell or elsewhere, and placed himself in the presence of God. He would sit quietly, and after the sign of the cross, begin to read from a book open before him. He used to venerate the book, bow to it, and kiss it if he was reading the Gospels and when he had been reading the very words which had come from the mouth of Christ.



The Ninth Way of Prayer

While traveling from one country to another, especially when he passed through some deserted region, Dominic delighted in giving himself completely to meditation, and he would say to his companion on the journey, it is written: “I will lead her (my spouse) into the wilderness and I will speak to her” (Hosea 2:16). Parting from his companion, he would go on ahead or, more often, follow at a distance. Thus withdrawn, he would walk and pray; in his meditation he was inflamed and the fire of charity was enkindled.



The members of his order believed that it was while praying that Dominic gained a deep understanding of Sacred Scripture and its message. And that it was from prayer that he received the power to preach so fervently and courageously, and that through the Holy Spirit he came to know so much about God.

Other Dominican Saints

It seems impossible to complete the account of Dominic without mentioning two great Dominicans who also were saints: *Thomas Aquinas* and *Catherine of Siena*.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 A.D.)

Thomas Aquinas was born into a family of knights at Rocca Secca (Italy). When he studied at the University of Naples he met the Dominicans and was drawn to join their order. His family had other plans for him, and even imprisoned him for over a year. Finally, they gave up and Thomas joined the Dominicans in 1244. Although he was nicknamed “*the dumb ox*” as a young man, he became an expert in Christian philosophy and theology. He was a great author and was known to keep four secretaries writing at the same time, as he dictated to each of them, one after the other. He also wrote many beautiful prayers and hymns in honor of the Eucharist, including *O Salutaris Hostia* (O Saving Victim), *Pange Lingua* (Sing My Tongue), *Panis Angelicus* (Bread of Angels). Around 1266 he began to write the most important work of his life, the *Summa Theologica*. It was a masterpiece of



theology and for centuries was a basic source in Catholic universities and seminaries. Nevertheless, on December 6, 1273 after Mass, Thomas suddenly stopped writing. When his friend urged him to keep going, Thomas replied: “*I cannot, for everything I have written seems to me like straw.*” So great was his reverence for the Truth that is the Mystery of God.

The following is a portion of his hymn *Panis Angelicus* in the original Latin and English:

Panis angelicus	The angelic bread
fit panis hominum.	becomes the bread of humanity.
Dat panis coelicus	This heavenly bread
figuris terminum.	is the best of all other breads.
O res mirabilis!	What a wonderful thing!
Manducat Dominum	That the Lord is eaten
Pauper, servus et humilis.	by a poor, humble servant.

St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380 A.D.)

A little over a century after Dominic’s death another holy person, Catherine of Siena, became a Dominican. Catherine was born in 1347 Siena, Italy, to Giacomo and Lapa di Benincasa. Her father was a cloth dyer who ran the family business with his sons and wife. The house where Catherine grew up is still in existence. She was born when a terrible plague called “The Black Death” struck Europe and one third of the population died. Catherine had her first vision of Christ when she was very young, saying that Jesus smiled at her and blessed her. From then on, she had a deep desire to belong to God and Him alone. She vowed her virginity to God and despite a large, busy household, tried to find more and more time to spend with God. Often in prayer at the Dominican church near her home, she longed for the day when she would be old enough to wear the Dominican habit. As a teenager she told herself: “*Build a cell inside your mind, from which you can never flee.*” Also a vision of St. Dominic strengthened her intentions.



When she was sixteen Catherine’s parents tried to arrange a marriage for her. She was absolutely opposed to this and pleaded that her heart belonged to God alone. Finally, in protest she cut off her long beautiful hair. As a punishment she was told to wait on the family at table, but she served each person as if they were Jesus. When her father saw her determination and spirit, he gave her permission to live as she wished. She soon joined the Third Order of St. Dominic and put on their black and white habit. However, this was not without problems because some older members of the group, mostly widows, felt it was not right to accept someone so young. As a member of this order, she was able to live outside the convent, so for two years. Catherine remained peacefully in her own small, bare room that was just enough for her and God. Deep in prayer much of the time, she would have been happy to stay there for the rest of her days. But God had work for her to do and called her from its peace into the public eye. From then on Catherine dedicated much of her life to helping others.

She put her trust in God because she was terrified to go alone to the places where He asked her to go, From then on she went wherever people were in need—to homes, hospitals, prisons, and even places of execution. She became known as the “lady with the lamp” as she made her way through the city day or night. In time, her reputation attracted a group of followers, both women and men. She taught them to live prayerfully and help the poor.

She also wrote many letters in her service of the Gospel. At first her letters were written to those in her circle and her spiritual director. But gradually she began writing to people in high positions. Her letters show that she was a person of wisdom, courage and faith. In her letters to the Pope, she often called him *Papa*. Other letters included the royalty of France, Hungary and the Italy. More than 300 of Catherine's letters have survived.

Eventually God inspired her to travel beyond Siena, to work for peace among quarreling leaders and cities at war. She traveled to France to plead with the Pope to reform the clergy. She also convinced him to return to his rightful place in Rome. She did this in the face of incredible difficulties. She was only thirty-three when she died in 1380. She was an example of the Dominican life of *prayer and action*. She was described as almost never out of a state of prayer and yet she accomplished more work in her brief life than others could do in many years.

Catherine would gladly have died a martyr, and almost did when she received the stigmata while meditating on Christ's Passion. The pain almost overwhelmed her already frail body. Besides her *Letters* she is known for her work entitled *The Dialogue of Divine Providence*. It was written as a conversation between God the Father and herself. In it she offers many inspiring thoughts. In this first quote Christ is described by the Father as a bridge between human beings and God:

"Wishing to remedy your great evils, I gave you the Bridge of My Son, that you may not be drowned as you cross the flood. This flood is the stormy sea of this dark life. See how much human beings owe Me, but how ignorant they are, if they do not take the remedy that I have offered, but instead are willing to drown. So the height of the Divinity, humbled to the earth, and joined with your humanity, made the Bridge and restored the road. Why was this done? In order that humanity come to true happiness. But it is not enough that My Son made this Bridge that you should have life, unless you walk on it."

Another quote shows how prayer leads us to love of God and neighbor:

"The love of neighbor springs from love of Me. The soul learns this by knowing itself and how good I have been to it. So when the soul sees that it is loved by Me, it loves every human being with the same love as it sees itself loved. For this reason, the soul who lovingly knows Me turns immediately to love of neighbor, because it sees that I love that neighbor. It loves the neighbor it sees Me love even more."

Prayer for Generous Love

Lord, take me from myself and give me to yourself.

Prayer in Honor of the Precious Blood of Jesus

Precious Blood, ocean of Divine Mercy, flow upon us!

Precious Blood, most pure Offering, obtain for us every grace!

Precious Blood, Hope and Refuge of sinners, atone for us!

Precious Blood, Joy of holy souls, draw us!

Prayer for the Enemies of the Church

*Today again let every selfish love
be cut away from those enemies of yours
and from the vicar and from us all,
so that we may be able to forgive those
enemies when you bend their hardness;
For them, that they may humble themselves
and obey this Lord of ours,
I offer you my life from this moment
whenever you wish me to lay it down for your glory.*

Carmelite Prayer

Carmelite History and Rule of Life

The Order of Carmelites has its origins on Mount Carmel in the Holy Land. In their attempt to follow Christ more closely, the first Carmelites found inspiration in the Old Testament Prophet Elijah, and Mary the mother of Jesus. After the third crusade (1189-1191), a group of Christians from Europe came together *in the land of Jesus* near the “spring of Elijah” on Mount Carmel. Their goal was to live as hermits after the example of Elijah. The order does not refer to any one person as their founder, but regards Elijah as one of the founders of their way of life. *I Kings 19* describes how it was on this mountain that God came to Elijah not with signs of fire, earthquake and mighty wind but in the sound of a gentle breeze. These first hermits built a small church near their dwellings in honor of Mary. They gathered there each day to celebrate the Eucharist together. The Carmelites took Mary as their patroness, asking her protection and help. They called themselves “*Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel.*” They took Mary as their model because she accepted God’s will when asked to be the mother of the Jesus. And she meditated on the events of her life and saw in them God’s hand at work.

The Carmelite Rule lays out the way the members are to live in silence and solitude, so that the word of God dwells in their hearts: “*Let each one remain in their cell meditating day and night on the Word of the Lord watching in prayer, unless they are at work.*” They are to pray with perseverance, keeping vigil and praying the psalms. They are to live in unity, through the daily celebration of the Eucharist, through shared ownership of all goods, through loving correction of failings, and through a life of work and penance, uniting their wills to God’s will. During the centuries that followed, several of their members were shining examples of the Carmelite spirit. Three of them are *John of the Cross*, *Teresa of Avila* and *Therese of Lisieux* (described later in this book).

St. John of the Cross (1542-1591 A.D.)

John was born in Spain in 1542. He was the youngest son of a weaver who died soon after John was born. As a result, John had to move with his mother from one place to another in order to survive. Nevertheless he continued his education and earned a living at the same time. In 1563 he joined the Carmelite Order and took the name John of the Cross. Four years later he was ordained a priest. During a visit home he met St. Teresa of Avila, who was reforming the Carmelite nuns. He told her that he was planning to join another order that offered solitude, simplicity and prayer. She convinced him to remain a Carmelite and to help her reform the order.

In 1568 John, along with five other Carmelite friars, founded the first men’s house of reform. This was the beginning of what is known as the “Discalced” Carmelites, which means “without shoes” because of their simple life-style. During the next seven years John served as head of the Discalced house of studies and also served as spiritual director at St. Teresa of Avila’s convent. But the unreformed Carmelites were so opposed to him that in 1577 they kidnapped and imprisoned him in one of their monasteries. For the next nine months they pressured him to give up his reform but he stood his ground. He was alone in a small cell with one small window high on the wall. His enemies took everything from him but his God



so in the darkness of the prison he encountered his “Beloved” as he called him. He spent the long hours writing about the *Dark Night of the Soul*. Finally, he managed to tie blanket strips together to make a rope, loosened the screws on the locked door, and one night managed to sneak out, throw the rope over the wall and get away. Two years later the reformed Carmelites were approved by the Pope and his order grew rapidly. In 1591 he died from a fever at the age of 49. John was a great mystic and his books are spiritual classics: *Dark Night of the Soul*, *Spiritual Canticle* and *Living Flame of Love*.

He was concerned with the soul’s union with God through the grace of Jesus Christ. He described the path to union as a spiritual journey that consists of several phases: *the purgative way*, *the illuminative way* and *the unitive way*. John taught that in order to arrive at the All which is God, a person should give all of him or herself, not like a slave but out of love. One of John's well-known sayings is: “*In the evening of your life you will be judged by your love.*” John 17 (the prayer of Jesus for love and unity among his followers) was his favorite Bible passage. A companion recalled: “*On voyages the servant of God had the custom to keep repeating in a quiet voice Chapter 17 of the Gospel of St. John. He did this with great devotion that inspired his companions.*”

In *Ascent of Mount Carmel* John depicts the soul's journey through life as an allegory. The mountain is the place of God but the soul must go through “a dark night” to reach it. John describes the different experiences the soul encounters on its way to union with God through this dark night. In this book John examines the human attachments to things and persons. He calls these attachments “appetites” (or cravings). We crave to be esteemed, to be popular, to have money, to use others for sexual satisfaction. Or we crave security, needing to be number one, an arrogant attitude that always knows what is best. John wrote: “*It is sad to consider the poor condition of such a soul. How unhappy it is with itself, how cold toward its neighbors, how sluggish and slothful in the things of God! These appetites make the practice of virtue a burden and sad. Ordinarily, the reason many people are not eager for virtue is that their appetites are not fixed purely on God.*”

John was sorry to see so many souls with great natural ability, even spiritually gifted, who make no progress because of these unchecked cravings. He used the example of a bird that cannot fly away because it is tied by a thread—even “one single, thin thread” can do all the harm.

In *Dark Night of the Soul* John regards the dark night as God working to change the old person to a new one in His image. He taught that what we cannot do for ourselves, God does through events that He wills or permits in our lives: a child runs away from home, the doctor says it is cancer, we do not get a promotion, we make serious mistakes. Through events like these God is reaching out to us. They might not seem like it, but John saw them as graces or gifts. He himself had suffered many such “nights” during his lifetime—the death of his father and a brother when he was a little boy, having to beg for a living when he was a youth, his imprisonment for nine months, the lies that were spread about him a year before he died. In his pain, he discovered that night is not the end and pain does not mean defeat. Every moment in life is an opportunity to grow in love. He said: “*Where there is no love, put love and then you will find love.*”

John was a poet at heart so he wrote about the soul’s night of trials and union with God using beautiful words: “*O guiding night! O night more lovely than the dawn! O night that has united the lover with the beloved, transforming the beloved into the lover.*”

He also made a famous ink drawing (shown here) of Christ hanging over the world while nailed to his cross. This view from above did not exist anywhere else in Christian art.



St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582 A.D.)

Teresa was born in Avila, Spain, on March 28, 1515 and was one of ten children. Her father was a merchant whose second wife died when Teresa was 15. Shortly after this, Teresa was sent to a convent to be cared for by nuns. Eventually Teresa decided to take religious vows and in 1535 joined the Carmelite Order. She spent a number of average years in the convent. At one point a severe illness left her legs paralyzed for three years. During that time she had a vision of “the wounded Christ” that changed her life forever. From then on, Teresa had a number of ecstasies that focused on the passion of Christ. With these to inspire her, she set about reforming her order.

Teresa first began by reforming herself, trying to return to the simple Carmelite way of life. Then she gathered a group of nuns around her, who also wanted to live as she did. From 1560 until her death, Teresa worked to strengthen her *Discalced* (shoeless) Carmelites. She also convinced John of the Cross to help her reform the Carmelite friars. As a result, John founded the first group of Discalced Carmelite Friars in 1568. During the 20 years of her reform, a total of seventeen convents, and as many men’s houses were created because of her efforts. In 1582, during the last of her many journeys she became very sick and died. Her last words were: “*My Lord, it is time to move on. Well then, may your will be done. O my Lord and my Spouse, the hour that I have longed for has come. It is time to meet one another.*” She is regarded as a great mystic and her books are spiritual classics on contemplative prayer: *Autobiography*, *The Way of Perfection* and *Interior Castle*.



The Way of Perfection:

The *Way of Perfection* is a practical guide to prayer that gives Teresa’s counsel and advice on gaining spiritual perfection. Throughout the entire book she tries to teach a deep and lasting love of prayer. She begins by giving the three things that are basic to a prayerful life – love toward others, letting go of possessions, and true humility. Teresa’s advice on these came from her own wisdom and experience. Here are a few samples from this book:

Prologue:

“I shall speak of nothing of which I have no experience, either in my own life or in observation of others, or which the Lord has not taught me in prayer.”

Chapter 16:

“O Lord! All our trouble comes to us from not having our eyes fixed upon You. If we only looked at the way along which we are walking, we should soon arrive; but we stumble and fall a thousand times and stray from the way because we do not set our eyes on the true Way.”

“What a good thing it is for us to reflect on what we can be if we will only try and if God gives us His hand! Do not be afraid that He will fail to do His part if we do not fail to do ours.”

“For our sight is poor and the dust which we meet on the road blinds us; but in contemplation the Lord brings us to the end of the day’s journey without our understanding how.”

Chapter 19:

“Water is what satisfies and quenches thirst. Thirst, I think, means the desire for something that is very necessary for us—so necessary that if we have none of it we shall die. This love and desire for God can increase so much that human nature is unable to bear it. I knew one person who would almost have been drawn out of herself by raptures, if God had not quickly helped her. She had such a thirst, and her desire grew so greatly, that she realized clearly that she might possibly die of thirst if something were not done for her.”

“Remember, the Lord invites us all; and, since He is Truth Itself, we cannot doubt Him. He said we were all to come. I feel sure that none will fail to receive this living water unless they cannot keep to the path. May the Lord, who promises it, give us grace for His own sake, to seek it as it must be sought.”

The Interior Castle:

The *Interior Castle* was written as a guide for spiritual growth that includes both service and prayer. Teresa described it as a journey of faith through seven stages, ending with union with God. It contained what she felt should be the ideal journey of faith, comparing the soul to a castle with seven interior rooms (or mansions) where one room leads to the next. It is much like the walled castles of her day.

The Rooms of Ordinary Prayer:

The first three rooms are called ordinary prayer. The *first room* begins with a soul in a state of grace. However, it is surrounded by sin, and only starts to seek God's grace with humility as it strives to be perfect. The *second room* is called the practice of prayer because the soul tries to continue through the castle by frequent thoughts of God, humbly recognizing God's work in itself and daily prayer. The *third room* is the exemplary life that has such a love for God that it dislikes both mortal and venial sins. It wants to do charitable works that serve others for the glory of God.

The Rooms of Contemplative Prayer:

The last four rooms are called contemplative prayer. In the *fourth room* the soul is less active in what it gains because God increases his role. The *fifth room* the soul is in the early stage of union as it prepares to receive God's gifts. If the fifth room is like an “engagement” then the *sixth room* is like the deeper relationship between two people who love each other. The soul is torn between time with God and other demands on its attention. Finally, in the *seventh room* the soul arrives at a level of prayer that is like a “marriage” in which God and the soul are totally committed to one another.

Teresa explains that this interior journey is really about love for God and the highest rooms can only be entered by being in a state of grace through the sacraments of the Church, the total gift of the one's will to God, and humbly receiving God's love – a love so great that it is beyond human capacity or description without God's help.

After all is said and done, St Teresa has given us a beautiful and simple definition of prayer:

“Prayer, in my opinion, is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with the One that we know loves us.”

Ignatian Prayer

St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556 A.D.)

Ignatius was born of noble parents in Spain in 1491. He was the youngest of 13 children, and grew up in the family castle. As a young man he was trained as a soldier and served in the military. In 1521 during a battle, his right leg was damaged by a cannon ball. He had surgery twice, but his leg remained crooked and he walked with a limp for the rest of his life. During his recovery, he was given two books to read: the life of Christ and the lives of the saints. He was so impressed by what he read that he decided to devote himself totally to serving Christ from then on. After his leg healed he made a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Montserrat and placed his sword on the altar. Then in 1522 he withdrew from society for a year at Manresa where he experienced visions and a deeper conversion. During this time he also began to write his guide for prayer called *Spiritual Exercises*. It was intended to help others in a thirty-day or even 9-month long program of prayer



In 1523 he made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, hoping to discover what God wanted him to do with his life. Then he returned to Spain and began several years of study at the university. He earned a masters degree in 1534 at the age of 43. In that same year he founded the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) with six fellow students. After they were ordained priests, this band of seven set out for Rome to present themselves to the Pope. Along the way, Ignatius had a vision of Christ who promised him that everything would go well in Rome. The Society received the Pope's approval and they offered him their obedience and service as promoters of the Catholic faith. By the time Ignatius died in 1556 at the age of 65, the Jesuits were well established as teachers, preachers and missionaries in many parts of the world including Asia, the Americas, as well as Europe. They were known for their learning, prayerfulness and missionary spirit.

Prayer of St. Ignatius

"Take Lord and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding and all my will, all I have and possess. You gave it all to me, to you Lord I return it, it is all yours, dispose of it entirely as you will. Give me your love and your grace, that is enough for me."

St. Francis Xavier (1506-1551 A.D.) is one of the Jesuits' most famous members. Along with St. Ignatius he is considered to be one of the founders of the Society of Jesus. In 1541 with the blessing of the Pope, he sailed to India where he set up his missionary base. From there he spread Christianity throughout the islands and countries of Asia. Although learning languages was not easy for him, he preached the Gospel with sincerity and zeal, baptizing and creating many new Catholic communities. He went as a poor man among the poor, slept on the ground and survived on rice and water. After winning many converts in Japan he planned to go to China next. But he fell ill on the way and died. In all his work and travels he maintained a deep union with God in prayer.



The Spiritual Exercises

After his powerful experience of prayer during the retreat at Manresa, Ignatius wanted to share that experience with others. He put together a small book of directions to help with this goal. He called it *The Spiritual Exercises*. Every Jesuit makes the full thirty-day Spiritual Exercises, usually at a retreat center. But Ignatius also made it possible for people who could not get away, to set time aside out of their busy day for the Exercises. For them this program takes a longer period of time to complete, from a few months to a year. Some of the major topics covered during the Exercises are:

Week 1:

God's unconditional and faithful love.

Sin as our failure and the failure of all human beings to return God's love.

God's great love, mercy and forgiveness.

Week 2:

The person and life of Christ.

Our call to discipleship, ministry and friendship with Jesus.

Knowing Christ better, loving Him more, following him more faithfully.

Week 3:

The ultimate expression of God's love.

The suffering and death of Jesus for us.

Week 4:

The victory of Jesus over death.

His sharing His joy with us.

Being called to share the mission of Jesus.

Being empowered by His Spirit.

When the Spiritual Exercises are done in a directed retreat *three persons* are involved. The *first person is the Lord* who invites his followers to draw closer to him in a loving relationship. In the same way he invited his disciples: "*Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while*" (Mark 6:31).

The *second person is the participant*, the person who is seeking a closer relationship with the Lord and maybe trying to discover the Lord's will in some aspect of life. The participant responds willingly to the grace of God's call, sets aside the normal work and concerns of daily life, goes to a place away from daily business, and takes the time to become quiet, to focus, and to listen to whatever the Lord will say. Participants should have some experience with prayer since they need to be able to be alone and silent. Participants usually spend their days in silence, with as much as 5 hours a day in prayer. They need to understand their feelings and recognize the moments in prayer when God seems close and when He seems far away. They also must be open and trusting with their director as they share their experiences.

The *third person is the retreat director*. Each participant has a guide to lead them through the meditations of the Exercises. This guide is a companion on the spiritual journey although both director and participant realize that the Lord is the one who is directing the retreat. The director, in daily meetings with the participant, listens and encourages the person, discusses their experience in prayer and comes to a deeper understanding of the experience. Together they try to discover the action of the Holy Spirit, to recognize the direction that God appears to be leading, and to choose topics for prayer that are suitable. The Exercises in their original form last for 30 days. When done in this full-time way they offer an intense spiritual experience. Usually this takes place at a *retreat center*.

The Ignatian Method of Prayer

In the Presence of God

Ignatius suggested for each period of prayer during the retreat, that the first step begins with preparing ourselves by sitting quietly in God's presence and being open to whatever He wants to tell us. This is followed by the exercise called the Composition of Place.

Composition of Place

The Composition of Place uses mental pictures from our imagination to help us enter into what is happening in the story. For example, as I pray with Mark 10:46-52, the story of a blind man named Bartimaeus, I begin by imagining the setting. I am blind, sitting by the side of the road, staying alive by begging. It is dry, hot and dusty. Suddenly I hear people's voices and even smell the animals as they pass by. Then I realize from what these people are saying that Jesus is passing by, so I desperately call out to him: "*Jesus, have pity on me!*" People tell me to be quiet, but I keep calling out to him. When some good people bring me to Jesus, I wonder what he will say to me. As I stand before him I sense he is looking at me. Then I hear him say: "*What do you want me to do for you?*"

Desires in Prayer

His question invites me to name my deepest desire. What do I really want and what will I ask of Jesus? I say to Jesus: "*Master, I want to see.*" At this point I can think of the many ways that Jesus can restore my sight in order to follow him. I might ask to see people differently, not as objects of lust, or hate, or what they can do for me, but as created and loved by God, with a dignity and value of their own. This step invites me to "*name the desire.*" In other words, *what do I want or need most deeply from this time of prayer? What do I wish to receive from God?*

In this step I begin to notice the feelings and desires that my encounter with Jesus brings about in me. Using the imagination, as Ignatius taught, is not about focusing on ordinary facts. It helps me discover the truth of Jesus—what is in his heart—so that I can know how to live in a way that God wants for me—that is truly good for me. Ignatius expects that God will lead us to the desires that are really for our own good if we open our hearts to God and ask him to give us these desires. We cannot force ourselves to have these desires. But as Ignatius found in his own life, the stories of Jesus and the saints who followed him create a spark in us. We are drawn to a more spiritual way of living.

Application of the Senses

In order to deepen this encounter, Ignatius recommends "savoring" the experience. This means going back to that moment in my prayer when I had the strongest reaction, in order to experience the desire to be closer to God. This is called the "Application of the Senses." Here, I go more deeply into that moment by picturing the scene and paying more attention to the feelings I have.

The Colloquy

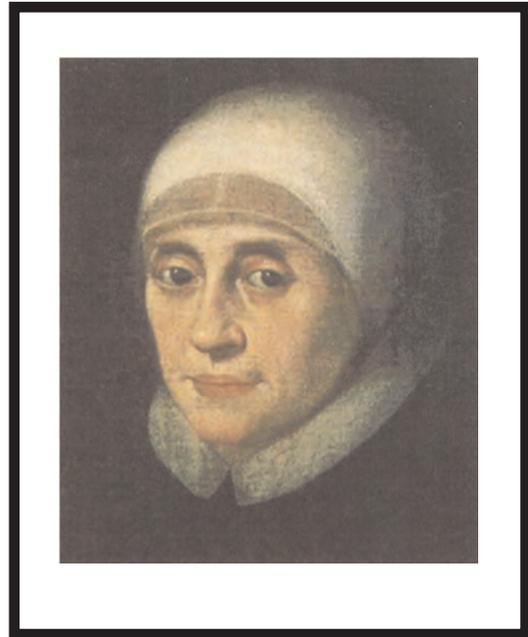
After each exercise, Ignatius suggests a prayer called a "colloquy." This is a conversation in which I imagine that I am speaking with Jesus, the Father, or the Holy Spirit. Or I might be talking with Mary or one of the disciples about what happened during my period of prayer. This type of conversation continues when the participant meets with the spiritual director. The spiritual director can point out particular experiences where the Holy Spirit seems to be acting. The images help bring about a response that leads to greater generosity, forgiveness or humility.

Prayer Leads to Action

The exercises help us to become totally committed to sharing in the life of Jesus. For example, meditating on his passion invites us to join our own sufferings with the sufferings of Christ. His death makes us focus on what is important in life. Facing our own death and our limitations makes us grateful for the gift of life. As we meditate on the events of Christ's life we are inspired to live our own lives with more patience, wisdom, mercy and love. These exercises lead us to a desire to follow Jesus, to take his words and example more seriously, and to serve others as he did.

Mary Ward (1585-1645 A.D.)

Mary Ward was born in England in 1585, of a wealthy Catholic family. She was very loving and loyal to her family and friends but described herself as a shy child who lacked self-confidence. She received an excellent education and also learned to be strong in her faith at a time when England after Henry VIII was a hostile place for Catholics. Priests provided the sacraments but under penalty of arrest, exile and sometimes death. When she was of age, Mary's parents tried several times to find a husband for her, but she refused their offers. She wanted to give herself to the service of Christ and his Church. Her deep love of her family, especially her father, meant that leaving to enter a religious order was difficult. At first she joined the Poor Clares, but soon realized that a life of prayer in a convent was not what she was meant to do. Mary was certain that Christ was calling her to a more active life. Her belief in God's calling was so strong that she convinced a small group of women to join her.



In 1609 Mary and her group formed a new community modeled after the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). Mary always admired their rule and included the *Spiritual Exercises* in their way of life. From then on she prepared her sisters to serve outside of convent walls. She wanted her sisters to do what men were doing in the service of the Church. She would say: "*There is no such difference between men and women that women may not do great things.*" However, it was a long-standing Church tradition that women should dedicate themselves to prayer and work that could be done within the convent. Only men had been allowed to serve "in the world." She and her sisters started by opening schools for girls whether rich and poor, and caring for orphans. In the end, however, Mary's work was going to need approval from the Pope and that was going to be her greatest struggle.

Her sisters were invited by rulers and bishops to set up houses and schools in Belgium, Bavaria, Austria and Italy. At one point Mary and a group of her sisters returned under cover to England to help priests in the "*English Mission.*" This was an attempt by priests and lay people to enter England to provide the sacraments to English Catholics and also win converts to the Catholic faith. As time went on, Mary's order was strongly opposed by some and praised by others. In 1629, twenty years after founding it she was called to Rome so that her work could be examined by the cardinals appointed by Pope Urban VIII. Such work by women was unheard of and gained fierce opposition by some people in the Church. She was even called a heretic and imprisoned for a time by the Inquisition. In one of her letters from prison she wrote, "*It is good to please the Friend of friends, to work for eternity, and above all to be entirely and for ever at our Master's disposal.*" In the face of heresy charges, Mary met with the Pope and said to him: "*Holy Father, I neither am nor ever have been a heretic.*" She received the comforting reply: "*We believe it, we believe it.*" No trial ever took place, but Mary was forbidden to leave Rome and in 1631 her order was suppressed by the Pope. After that, many of her sisters returned to the world or entered other religious orders. However, a few sisters still wanted to live under Mary's guidance so they were invited at the pope's request to live with Mary in Rome. Under the Pope's supervision and protection, a new order called the "Institute of Mary" gradually took shape.

In 1637 for reasons of health Mary was allowed to return to England with letters of introduction from the Pope. At first she stayed in London but in 1642 moved with her household to live near York. She died on January 23, 1645 at the age of sixty and the stone over her grave is preserved to this day.

To some, she appeared to be a failure. However, her work was not destroyed. Her followers continued to promote it according to her original idea. The order's rule was finally approved by Pope Clement XI in 1703, and again by Pope Pius IX in 1877. Mary always believed that God wanted her sisters to be called by the name of *Jesus*. In 1611, while praying, she clearly heard the words: "*Take the same of the Society.*" She understood this to mean the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). Finally in 2004 when her sisters were granted the full Jesuit Constitutions adapted for women, they took the name Mary intended—the *Congregation of Jesus*. After centuries of struggle in a Church and world not ready for Mary Ward's vision of women serving the Church, her sisters today are fulfilling her dream of service all around the world—in Europe, Asia, America and Africa. In 1922 a petition to open her cause for sainthood, signed by all the bishops of England, was sent to Pope Pius X. Seven years later in 1929 her cause officially began. In 2009, Pope Benedict XVI recognized Mary Ward as "Venerable."

Mary Ward and Prayer

As a child Mary was drawn to God and to prayer. One of the first words she spoke was *Jesus*. In her teens she adjusted strict rituals of prayer and harsh penance, realizing that she should "*act not out of fear, but solely from love.*" During the most active times of her life, she made sure there was time for prayer. During a trip through the Alps in 1626 Mary arrived at a village on Christmas Eve. Although tired and cold, she stayed in the village church from eight in the evening until three in the morning absorbed in prayer. Also in 1626, when Mary was praying for her sisters in Rome, God reminded her of Christ's words: "*Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?*" This showed her what great trials and persecution she would meet in doing His will. She joyfully said she was ready to accept it all. Her way of praying became more intimate and sometimes without words – as she encountered God with great love and trust. A quote from her retreat notes gives us a wonderful view into Mary's soul:

"He was very near me and within me, which I never perceived Him to be before. I was moved to ask Him with great confidence and humility: My God, what are You? Then I saw Him very clearly go into my heart and little by little hid Himself (and there I still perceive Him to be in the same manner, even though my meditation being ended an hour ago). I tried to proceed according to the points of the meditation (Spiritual Exercises), but could not. He held my heart, I could not act. Then I wanted to ask Him something, or given Him welcome, but He would not let me. I once asked, 'Will you stay there and do nothing? And another time, 'Make my heart perfect—such as you would have it.' But beginning to say both, I could not possibly finish the words. I saw clearly that His only will was that I should neither act nor talk, but remain at peace. My mind quiet and much contented; all noise, or things that at other times help devotion seemed displeasing. An hour was gone in what seemed like 15 minutes. I left unwillingly while I still remained in the same state."

Other Prayers:

O Parent of parents, and Friend of all friends, without entreaty you took me into your care and by degrees led me from all else that at length I might see and settle my love in You. What had I ever done to please You? Or what was there in me that could serve You? How could I ever deserve to be chosen by You. O happy freedom, the beginning of all my good, and more worth to me than the whole world. Had I never stood in the way of Your will and your working in me, what grace would I have now? Yet where am I now? My Jesus, forgive me, remembering what You have done for me and how far You have brought me, and for this excess of goodness and love let me no more stand in the way of Your will in me.

"Go close to Him—it is easy to kneel down, not very difficult to look on Him, and even less difficult to tell Him what you are thinking."

"With God's grace I will never think that I am forgotten by God. Should it happen that I might think so, I will speak with him persistently all the same, just as if he were beside me."

The Salesians and Prayer

St. John Bosco (1815-1888 A.D.)

John Bosco was born in 1815, the youngest of three sons. The parents were farmhands on the land of a wealthy family. When John was two years old his father died, so he was raised by his mother. In the midst of their hardships she gave him a deep religious faith. At the age of nine he had a dream that stayed with him for the rest of his life: *“In my dream, I was playing with my friends near home when an angry quarrel broke out. I rushed in with my fists flying to stop it. All of a sudden a mysterious man appeared and stopped me. ‘No, no—not that way. Be kind and gentle.’ As he pointed to a majestic lady he told me his mother would always be my friend and guide.”* For the rest of his life John was devoted to Mary. His own mother also was an emotional and spiritual support for his dreams of getting an education and becoming a priest. However, the family’s poverty made it hard to reach these goals. His mother gave her consent when John left home at the age of twelve to find work and continue his education as best he could. Having to face life by himself as a boy may be why his future work was helping youth who were poor or in trouble.



In 1835 John entered the seminary and six years later was ordained a priest. One of his first duties was to go with another priest to visit the city’s prisons. The conditions of the youthful offenders, abandoned and with little hope of a better life, made a deep impression on him. The prison visits began to shed light on the deeper meaning of the dream he had as a boy. He decided to devote his life to rescuing society’s troubled youth. In those days, there were serious social problems. People were coming to the city looking for work in the factories. But there were not enough jobs, especially for the young. Crime was on the rise and the prisons were filled with boys and young men whose hopes and dreams of “making it” were gone. His way of reaching the youth on the streets was considered radical for a priest. He talked with them, played cards with them in the taverns and became their friend. This upset some priests who thought he was insane. They even tried to commit him to an asylum. But John overcame such misunderstandings. He continued to gather young people to provide for their needs of body, mind and spirit. This included an education, job training and religious teaching. He called his place the *Oratory* because daily life always included prayer. In 1842 he was caring for twenty boys, but a year later it was four hundred! His mother *“Mama Margareta”* came to help and devoted the last ten years of her life to his work. By 1868 fifty priests and teachers were assisting him and with Don Bosco they started the *Salesian Society* and shared a common rule of life. They were called *Salesians* because *Don Bosco* (*Don* is an Italian title for priests) greatly admired *St. Francis de Sales* (see the next page).

In his dealings with the boys Don Bosco never failed to see their goodness under their dirt, ragged clothes, and poor manners. His way of educating came from the boyhood dream that he never forgot. He carefully worked out how they studied. Rules, although necessary, were to be reasonable. He did not tolerate physical punishment and shaming. He said: *“As far as possible avoid punishing; try to gain love before inspiring fear.”* He made sure that a boy’s efforts to be good, no matter how small, did not go unappreciated. He believed that a teacher should be like a father, adviser, and friend. In 1887 he wrote: *“I do not remember ever using formal punishment and with God’s grace I have always gotten, even from so-called hopeless children, not only what was required, but what I simply wished for.”* His spirituality,

and the Salesian Society he founded, had love, kindness and generosity at its core, especially for those in need. Don Bosco's approach was always encouraging and joyful. One of his older students told a new student one day: *"Here in this school we make holiness consist of always being happy."* This older boy was St. Dominic Savio.

Don Bosco's last years were not easy. Nonetheless he smiled a lot and tried to keep up with the activities, inspiring his Salesians to always do more for the youth. By 1887, when his body had worn out and he stayed in bed he said, *"Now I go to my rest; I shall not get up again."* Just before he died, he called for his Salesian brothers and asked for their prayers. Then he advised them, *"Do not ever forget these three things: devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, devotion to Mary Help of Christians, and devotion to the Holy Father!"* He died on January 31, 1888, with the names of Jesus and Mary on his lips. At the time of his death there were 250 Salesian houses around the world serving 130,000 children.

Don Bosco and Prayer:

While at prayer one time, Don Bosco was interrupted by the visit of a wealthy person. *"Tell him I'll be there soon,"* he said, and he continued his prayers. Three times he was called. Finally he went to meet him and said. *"You are a good friend of mine, but God comes first."* He also used to repeat, *"First of all Don Bosco is a priest!"* With such a great sense of values, he balanced his activity with a deep and constant devotion to God. In fact, the energy to do his work came from the fire of prayer that he kept burning in his soul. God rewarded him in a wonderful way because later in life, people were cured of their illnesses after he prayed for them. As was the case with other saints, sometimes he was seen rising from the floor in ecstasy during Mass. He tried to support his daily work with prayer, and did this so well that Pope Pius XI said, *"he prayed every moment of his life."* Don Bosco's holiness drew people to him because it was rooted in love. He used to say: *"Sanctity is easy. God does not scare us away. You do not have to scourge yourself or fast or pray long hours. Just do your duty in school, at home, at work. Take sufferings as they come-bad weather, disappointments, illness, sorrow-that will make you saints."*

The following is Don Bosco's prayer in honor of Mary, Help of Christians:

*Most holy Virgin Mary, help of Christians,
how sweet it is to come to your feet imploring your constant help.
If earthly mothers never stop remembering their children,
how can you the most loving of all mothers forget me?
Grant then to me, I beg you, your constant help in all my needs,
in every sorrow, and especially in all my temptations.
I ask for your unceasing help for all who are suffering now.
Help the weak, cure the sick, convert sinners.
Grant through your prayers many vocations to the religious life.
Obtain for us, O Mary, help of Christians, that having invoked you on earth,
we may love and eternally thank you in heaven.*

St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622) was born of wealthy French parents and well educated. Although he could have had a great career and marriage, he wanted to become a priest more than anything else. After he was ordained he devoted his life to serving the Church. He was known for his care for the poor and his preaching, and converted many by the great love, understanding and gentleness for which he became so well-known. He said: *"To speak well we need only to love well."* Another of his sayings was: *"Consider all the past as nothing and say like David: now I begin to love my God."* As a spiritual director he led many to a deeper love for God. He wrote two spiritual classics: *Treatise of the Love of God* and *Introduction to the Devout Life*.



St. Maria Mazzarello (1837-1881 A.D.)

Maria Domenica Mazzarello was born in 1837 in Mornese (northern Italy) on the family's simple farm. She was the first of ten children and early on helped her mother care for her brothers and sisters. Once her sister was old enough to take over, she went with her father to work in the fields. Maria went to Mass every morning, but could not go back in the evening. So she found a way to those who gathering in the church for evening prayer. She went to her window where she could see the light of the Tabernacle in the church. When her mother realized what Maria's evening escapes were about, she arranged it so that the whole family would gather by her window for their evening prayer.

When she was seventeen years of age she joined a group of young women who helped the local priest in various activities of the parish: catechism lessons for children, assistance to the sick, meeting with parents and organizing activities for youth. Wherever she went the village children were drawn to her like a magnet, eager to hear her jokes and stories, or to ask her about the many questions they had.



At the age of twenty-three she was stricken with typhoid fever and nearly died. From this point on, the physical strength she always had was gone forever. While not losing her love for life, this period was confusing and frustrating. She was not sure what she could do without her old strength and energy. She turned to God, with the prayer that sustained her during her illness and throughout her life: “*Lord, if you give me a little more time to live, let me be forgotten by all, so that I will be happy knowing that I am remembered by YOU only.*” Before it was time for Mass, Mary used to remain kneeling in front of the church door even in the cold of winter, waiting for it to be opened.

One day as she walked along the road, she suddenly saw before her buildings that appeared to be a school filled with young women. She stopped full of amazement, and said to herself: “*I have never seen anything like this before? This building never existed here. What’s happening?*” Then she heard a voice say: “*I entrust them to you.*” This frightened her and she ran away. Later, she realized what this vision was calling her to do.

With her closest friend, Petronilla, she started a school for girls to help them earn a living and to learn Christian values. On Sundays Maria gathered the girls from around the area and offered them the opportunity to play games and pray together. She also gathered a group of women into a pious association to help as her work expanded. In 1864, when Maria was 24 years old, Don Bosco came to Mornese and saw the great work that Maria and her friends were doing for young women. He also was very impressed with the holiness of their lives. He was thinking of founding a religious community of women and here were these women doing for girls what he and his Salesians were doing for boys.

Eventually, he and Maria founded the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. It was based on the Salesian rule, and Maria Mazzarello became the first director. She said to her fellow sisters: “*Oh, my companions, What a joy it is for us poor country folk of Mornese to become the spouses of Jesus Christ and the daughters of Don Bosco and Mary, Help of Christians. O my dear Lord, what a grace! What a great grace! We thank you for it.*” She was known and loved for her good spirit, sense of humor, positive outlook and charity. She often would ask a sister what time it was, and when they looked at the clock she would say with a smile: “*It is time to love Jesus; let us love Him with all our*

heart.” She did not intend to correct them, but wanted to remind them of the presence of God and the great reward that would be theirs if they remained faithful to their calling.

When things were difficult Maria would encourage the sisters by saying: *“A little at a time and you will do much.”* At the time of her death, there were 166 sisters in 26 convents in Italy, France, and South America. The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians are now the second largest congregation of women religious in the Church.

Never strong after the typhoid that struck her when she was young, and weakened by her hard work, Maria’s health began to fail. During her last days she focused on the crucifix and the sufferings of Jesus: *“Yes, Lord, send me great sufferings, but also give me patience and strength to bear them. Oh my Jesus, I want to love you now and forever.”* After receiving the last rites she turned to those around her and whispered, *“Good-bye. I am going now. I will see you in heaven.”* On May 14, 1881 Maria Mazzarello died at the age of 44. This simple peasant girl had accomplished so much in her short life for others and for God.

Although she could hardly read or write, she spoke well and clearly, and it often seemed that she was inspired by the Holy Spirit. When speaking about heavenly things she often became radiant and her face took on a spiritual look. Everything about her helped others catch some of her zeal and love for God. As she was walking or talking she often held in her hand the crucifix that hung around her neck. In the words of her friend Don Bosco, *“Mother Mazzarello has special gifts from God. There are virtues in abundance to make up for her scanty learning. She is prudent, she has wonderful insight into things, and a gift for governing, based on kindness, charity and unshaken faith in God.”*

The following are some of her sayings:

“Work willingly for Jesus.”

“Do freely all that charity requires.”

“Cheerfulness is the sign of a heart that loves very much. Always be cheerful in the Lord.”

“Do you love Jesus very much?”

“Let us do good while there is time.”

“When the Lord is among us, all goes well.”

“As far as possible, preserve the spirit of union (with God).”

Final Examples of Saints and Prayer

The history of the Catholic Church spans more than 2,000 years. It is filled with generations of known and unknown saints. Therefore, it is not possible to tell about them all or how each one prayed. That task would be like the one described about the deeds of Jesus: “...if these were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world would contain the books that would be written” (John 21: 25).

However, a few final examples closer to our time have been chosen as an encouragement before this study of prayer comes to a close. They reveal to us how each person is called to friendship with God who is our greatest joy. Like many other saints, these examples encourage us as we continue our own spiritual race to God’s embrace, as it says in scripture:

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us...persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith. For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross...in order that you may not grow weary and lose heart” (Hebrews 12: 1-3).

St. Therese of Lisieux (1873-1897 A.D.)

Thérèse was born in France on January 2, 1873. After the death of her mother in 1877, she and her family moved to Lisieux. When she was only fifteen she was deeply convinced that she wanted to enter the Carmelite convent, like her sisters before her. But she was not allowed because of her age. On a visit to Italy with a group of pilgrims in 1887, she bravely asked the Pope for permission to join the Carmelites. In 1888 she was allowed to enter the convent, received the habit in the following year and made her vows in 1890. She lived by the Carmelite rule, carrying out in a very special way all the little tasks of daily life. She did this with humility, simplicity and great trust in God. Her greatest desire was to share the gospel by example and words with the other sisters, especially the new ones.

In September 1896, Thérèse began to feel that her vocation as a Carmelite was not enough. She felt the desire to do greater things—to be a missionary or a martyr. This changed, however, after she read *1 Corinthians 13*. Everything became clearer for her and she realized: “*O Jesus, my Love, at last I have found my vocation—my vocation is Love! Yes, I have found my place in the Church and it is You, O my God, who have given me this place; in the heart of the Church, my Mother, I shall be Love... thus I shall be everything... and thus my dream will be realized!*” She understood that although she was hidden in a convent that she was living at the heart of the Church. In that spirit she offered her life for the salvation of souls and the well-being of the whole Church.

She is called the “Little Flower” because she saw each person as a unique flower in God’s garden. She saw herself as a small flower: “*I understood that every flower created by Him is beautiful, that the brilliance of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not lessen the perfume of the violet or the sweet simplicity of the daisy. I understood that if all the lowly flowers wished to be roses, nature would no longer be enameled with lovely hues. And so it is in the world of souls, Our Lord's living garden.*”

In her eyes, every human being was loved infinitely by God and had great dignity as a child of God. Her



love for others and her prayers for them were not confined to the convent. They included the Church everywhere and the whole world. In her diary she wrote about a man named Pranzini who was condemned to death. The newspapers described him as a hardened criminal who was going to his execution without repenting. Therese began praying for him and asked God for a sign to show that he had a change of heart. At the last minute, as Pranzini was walking up the steps to the guillotine to be executed, he suddenly turned to the priest beside him, took his cross and kissed it. Her prayers had been answered when this new Dismas the good thief entered paradise at the last minute.

In 1896, during the night between Holy Thursday and Good Friday, Therese coughed up blood. It was the first sign of the tuberculosis that would take her life. She saw this event as a mysterious visit from Christ. During the months that followed her bodily suffering and spiritual trials became greater. But through it all she remained steadfast in her faith. She died at the age of twenty-four on September 30, 1897. Her final words were, *“My God...I love you!”* This began her new heavenly life of which she said: *“When I die, I will send down a shower of roses from the heavens, I will spend my heaven by doing good on earth.”* The title *doctor* (Latin for teacher) was given to this young nun who never earned a degree at a university. It means she is an official teacher of the Catholic Church, because her life and writings have given a special message to the whole Church. One year after her death, a book based on her own writings was published entitled *The Story of a Soul*. It quickly spread the story of *the little flower* who loved Jesus above all and in all.

The Little Way

During her life she developed a special way of living by the gospel. She called it *“the little way”* and believed that anyone could follow it and become a saint. She taught: *“Miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word; always doing the smallest right and doing it all for love.”* Love was the key—doing little things with great love. She herself realized that just because it was called “little,” this did not mean it was always easy. She admitted: *“If I did not simply live from one moment to another, it would be impossible for me to be patient. But I only look at the present, I forget the past, and I take care not to guess the future.”*

Her starting point for this little way was the infinite mercy of God. This mercy is God’s love in the midst of human hurt and pain. The *“good God”* as Therese often said, is a God of love and mercy, not of strict, punishing justice. God is not focused on our sinfulness, looking for the first bad move we make. His love is unconditional, but to receive that love we have to be in touch with our weakness. The spirituality of Therese was that of the Good Thief who counted on God’s mercy at the very last minute of his life as he appealed to the heart of Christ. At the heart of her way is the same trust in God’s mercy despite our human weakness. Trust—throwing ourselves into God’s loving arms—is what brings Divine Mercy and human weakness together. Our job is to accept God’s love and the fact that we are powerless and need God’s healing in our lives. Then, we allow the power of God’s love to heal us. *“All is grace”* Therese often said. By this she meant that God’s love (or grace) is everywhere, at every turn in our daily lives. According to Therese this is the good news of Jesus Christ pure and simple. Her little way simply brought this into clearer light. Therese was a living example of what she taught: *“Without love, even the most brilliant deeds count as nothing.”*

Her Daily Offering

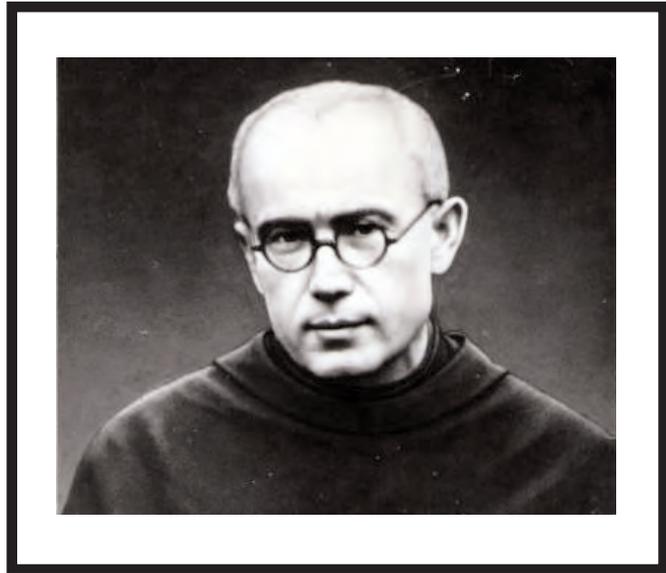
My God, I offer You all the actions of this day in union with the intentions and glory of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I wish to sanctify each and every heartbeat, every thought, every simple little action, by joining them to His infinite worth; and I desire to make reparation for my sins by casting them into the furnace of His merciful love. O my God! For myself and for all my dear ones, I implore the grace to perfectly fulfill Your holy will and to accept for love of You all the joys and sorrows of this passing life, so that one day we may be united in Heaven for all eternity. Amen

Maximilian Kolbe (1894-1941 A.D.)

Maximilian (Raymund) Kolbe was born in Poland on January 8, 1894 into a Catholic family. His father was of German origin and his mother was Polish. In 1907 he and his older brother joined the Franciscan order. He took the name Maximilian with a second name, Maria, in honor of Mary the mother of Jesus whom he was loved. As a child he was strongly influenced by a vision of the Virgin Mary that he later described:

“That night, I asked the Mother of God what was to become of me. She came to me holding two crowns, one white, the other red. She asked me if I was willing to accept either of these crowns. The white one meant that I

should persevere in purity, and the red that I should become a martyr. I said that I would accept them both.” In 1918 he was ordained a priest and soon was very active in promoting devotion to the mother of Jesus (the Immaculate Virgin Mary), founding a monastery and seminary, and overseeing a radio station. Eventually, he became the director of some of Poland’s most important Catholic publications– a magazine with about one million readers, and a daily paper with 230,000 readers.



When the Nazis invaded Poland in September of 1939, Maximilian suspected that his monastery was in danger so he sent many friars home. Soon the monastery was searched, and Maximilian and about 40 friars were taken away to a holding camp, first in Germany, and then back to Poland. After several weeks they were released and allowed to return to their monastery. After that it became a refuge for thousands of Poles and Jews seeking escape from the Nazis. The friars shared everything they had with the refugees and the monastery became a shelter for anyone in need. Maximilian is credited with saving 2,000 Jews. It would not take long before Maximilian and the friars caught the attention of the Gestapo once again. Maximilian refused to become a German citizen and continued his publishing and radio broadcasts. His activities were seen as a threat to Nazi power over the Polish people.

In order to trick him, they allowed one last issue of his newspaper *The Knight of Mary Immaculate* in December, 1940. In it Maximilian wrote: *“The real conflict is inner conflict. Beyond armies of occupation and the catacombs of concentration camps, there are two irreconcilable enemies in the depth of every soul: good and evil, sin and love. And what use are victories on the battlefield if we ourselves are defeated in our innermost personal selves?”* Two months later, in February 1941, Maximilian and four other friars were arrested and charged with helping Jews and the Polish underground. On May 28, 1941 they were deported to the “death camp” at Auschwitz. Over the front gate of this camp was a sign that read: *“Arbeit macht frei”* (“*Work makes you free*”). The truth was that very few people left the camp alive. Maximilian exchanged his Franciscan robe for striped convict clothes and his arm was tattooed with the number 16670.

Maximilian continued his priestly work secretly, hearing confessions in unlikely places and celebrating Mass with bread and wine smuggled in. One concentration camp survivor explained: *“Life in the concentration camp was inhumane. One could not trust anyone because there were spies, even amongst the prisoners. All of us were selfish at heart. With so many being assassinated all around, the hope was that others would be assassinated and that we could survive; our animal instincts took over because of hunger.”* This was the reality that Maximilian shared with them daily, yet he brought peace, consolation and courage to many. He lived what he had taught his friars: *“Don’t ever forget to love.”*

One survivor recalled: *“If I was able to leave that place alive, keep my faith and not despair, I owe it to Father Kolbe. When I was close to desperation and just about to jump on the electrical voltage barbed wires, he gave me strength and told me I would come out of there alive. Just lean on the intercession of the Mother of God. He instilled in me a strong faith and a living hope.”* Another survivor said: *“Father Kolbe lived day by day by the hand of God. He had such an attraction, which was like a spiritual magnet. He would take us to God and the Virgin Mary. He wouldn’t stop telling us that God was good and merciful. He desired to convert everyone in the camp, including the Nazis. He not only prayed for their conversion, but would encourage us to also pray for their conversion.”* Another survivor stated: *“Many youth like myself lost all hope of survival, and many jumped into the high voltage barbed wires to commit suicide. This is how Father Kolbe found me, to put it in simple terms, while I was looking for someone with whom I could make a connection. He was like an angel for me. Just like a mother hen takes in her chicks, that’s how he took me into his arms. He would clean my tears. I believe more in the existence of God ever since then. Ever since the death of my parents, I would ask myself, Where is God? I had lost all faith. Father Kolbe gave me back my faith.”*

One day, a prisoner was missing, so the men from Maximilian's bunker were forced to stand in the hot noonday sun, not knowing what was going to happen. Finally, the SS commandant known as the “Butcher” for his cruelty, announced that ten men were going to be starved to death as a punishment for the missing person. Then he began to call one man from each line. When Francis Gajowniczek’s name was called out he cried in a loud voice: *“I will never see my wife and my children again!”* Without hesitating, Maximilian stepped forward from the line and offered to take his place. The commandant did not care who went to the Bunker, so long as there were ten of them, so he agreed but asked, *“Who are you?”* Maximilian replied, *“I am a Catholic priest. I wish to die for that man because I am old, but he has a wife and children.”* Immediately after that Maximilian and the nine other men were led away to Cell 18 to die. As the long days without food and water dragged on, Maximilian encouraged his fellow prisoners with prayers, psalms, and meditations on the Passion of Christ. Each time the guards checked on him, he was standing or kneeling in the middle of the cell and looked calmly at those who entered. After two weeks, only four of the group were alive, and only Maximilian was fully conscious. Finally, all four were killed with injections of carbolic acid on August 14, 1941. Some who were present at the injection told later that he raised his left arm and calmly waited for the injection. His body was cremated on August 15, which is the feast of the Assumption of Mary.

In 1982, Pope John Paul II declared Maximilian Kolbe a saint and called him a “martyr of charity.” Francis Gajowniczek, the man he saved, was still living and was able to be present at the ceremony. The feast day of St. Maximilian Kolbe is August 14, the day he died.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997 A.D.)

Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu (her middle name means “*rosebud*” or “*little flower*”) was born in Albania on August 26, 1910. She was the youngest of the family. After her father died, when she was eight years old, her mother raised her as a Roman Catholic. As a young girl Agnes loved stories about missionaries, especially those in India. In 1928 she decided to enter religious life while praying at the shrine of the *Black Madonna* of Letnice. She left home at age 18 to join the Sisters of Loreto to fulfill her dream of becoming a missionary. She arrived in India in 1929 and began teaching in the Loreto convent school in Calcutta. As a religious sister she wanted to be named after *Thérèse de Lisieux*, patron saint of missionaries. But one of the members already had that name, so Agnes took the name *Teresa*, the Spanish spelling. She served at her post for almost twenty years, but more and more she became disturbed by the extreme poverty that she saw around her.



In 1946, during her yearly retreat, Teresa had what she later described as “*the call within the call.*” She explained, “*I was to leave the convent and help the poor while living among them.*” Instead of her Loreto habit she wore a simple white cotton sari with a blue border and began caring for the desperate and starving. In the beginning of 1949 she was joined in her work by thirteen young women and she began to create a new religious community called the Missionaries of Charity. They dedicated themselves to serving the “*poorest among the poor.*” Teresa wrote in her diary that her first year was filled with difficulties. She had no income and turned to begging for food and supplies. Teresa faced doubt, loneliness and the temptation to return to the comfort of convent life. She wrote: “*Our Lord wants me to be a free nun covered with the poverty of the cross. Today I learned a good lesson. The poverty of the poor must be so hard for them. While looking for a home I walked and walked till my arms and legs ached. I thought how much they must ache in body and soul, looking for a home, food and health. Then the comfort of her former order came to tempt me. 'You have only to say the word and all that will be yours again,' the Tempter kept on saying. Out of free choice, my God, and love for you, I desire to remain and do whatever is your holy will for me. I did not let a single tear come.*”

In 1952 “*Mother*” Teresa (as she was called by then) opened the first Home for the Dying in Calcutta. She converted an abandoned Hindu temple into the Home for the Dying, a free hospice for the poor who received medical care and the opportunity to die with dignity. She and her sisters did this respectfully according to their faith. Muslims were read the Quran, Hindus were given water from the Ganges, and Catholics received the Last Rites. She said: “*A beautiful death for people who lived like animals and die like angels—loved and wanted.*” Mother Teresa also opened a home for lepers called City of Peace. Eventually she and her sisters opened hospices, orphanages and leper houses all over India and many countries beyond India.

In 1983 Mother Teresa suffered a heart attack in Rome during her trip to see Pope John Paul II. She had another attack in 1989. In 1997, she stepped down as the head of the Missionaries of Charity. She died on 5 September 1997. At the time of her death, Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity had over 4,000 sisters, and an associated brotherhood of 300 members, operating 610 missions in 123 countries. When she began her order there were just 13 members in Calcutta. By the time she died in 1997 there were

more than 4,000 sisters around the world running orphanages, AIDS hospices, charity centers for the poor and homeless. They also care for refugees, the blind, disabled, the aged, alcoholics, and victims of floods, epidemics, and famine.

Pope John Paul II who admired and loved Mother Teresa said: *“Where did Mother Teresa find the strength and perseverance to place herself completely at the service of others? She found it in prayer and in the silent contemplation of Jesus Christ, his Holy Face, his Sacred Heart.”* However, Mother Teresa faced spiritual struggles that lasted nearly 50 years until the end of her life. She often felt no presence of God whatsoever. But her faith that God was working through her remained constant. While she longed for the feeling of closeness with God, she did not question his existence. She may have had an experience like Jesus while he hung on the cross, when he said: *“My God, My God, why have you abandoned me?”* Many other saints had this experience called “spiritual dryness” which is a test or purifying of the soul. Mother Teresa's patron saint, St. Therese of Lisieux, called it a “night of nothingness.”

Mother Teresa wrote many letters to her spiritual contacts and religious leaders during her life. She asked that her letters be destroyed, because she did not want people to *“think more of me and less of Jesus.”* Nevertheless, her letters were collected and published in a book: *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light*. In a publicly released letter to Rev. Michael van der Peet, she wrote, *“As for me, the silence and the emptiness is so great, that I look and do not see, listen and do not hear. I want you to pray for me—that I let Him have a free hand.”* Mother Teresa was “beatified” by the Catholic Church on October 19, 2003, bestowing on her the title “Blessed.”

The following are prayers and sayings of Mother Teresa;

Daily Prayer

Dear Jesus, help me to spread Thy fragrance everywhere I go. Flood my soul with Thy spirit and love. Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly that all my life may only be a radiance of Thine. Shine through me and be so in me that every soul I come in contact with may feel Thy presence in my soul. Let them look up and see no longer me but only Jesus. Stay with me and then I shall begin to shine as you shine, so to shine as to be a light to others. Amen.

Prayer for the Poor

Make us worthy, Lord, to serve our brothers and sisters throughout the world who live and die in poverty and hunger. Give them through our hands this day their daily bread, and by our understanding love give them peace and joy. Amen.

Quotes by Mother Teresa

“There is a terrible hunger for love. We all experience that in our lives - the pain, the loneliness. We must have the courage to recognize it. The poor you may have right in your own family. Find them. Love them.”

“Before you speak, it is necessary for you to listen, for God speaks in the silence of the heart.”

“Give yourself fully to God. He will use you to accomplish great things on the condition that you believe much more in His love than in your own weakness.”

THE LITURGICAL YEAR

Each Sunday the Church remembers the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ—that is, his passion, death and resurrection. And during its year long worship (the liturgical year), the Church relives this entire mystery of Christ. This includes the events and prophecies of the Old Testament that pointed to his life and Christ’s life and ministry in the New Testament. In this way, the feasts of the liturgical year are a celebration of the entire history of our salvation. As a reminder, the word “liturgy” comes from a Greek word meaning “a work or service on behalf of the people.” This points to the fact that the Church’s official worship is not a private prayer, but a prayer for all people. The Mass or Liturgy actually connects believers of every age with the saving power of Christ.

Even though these events took place in the past, they are celebrated as present whenever the Church gathers for worship. God is not limited by space and time. Therefore the Church celebrates these sacred mysteries as happening now. At every Mass we are present at the Last Supper, at the foot of the cross and the empty tomb where we encounter the risen Christ. That is why Paul wrote, “*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes*” (1 Corinthians 11:26).

ADVENT

Advent begins the liturgical year or cycle with the four Sundays before Christmas. It is a time to prepare for the birth of Christ. The color of the altar cloths and vestments for this season is *purple*.

CHRISTMAS SEASON

The season of Christmas begins with Christmas Day, includes the Epiphany and lasts until the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. The color of the altar cloths and vestments is *white*.

LENT

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday and lasts for forty days. It is a period of fasting, prayer and almsgiving (donating). It includes Palm Sunday, which is the last Sunday before holy week. The color of the altar cloths and vestments is *purple*.

HOLY WEEK

The week before Easter is the holiest week of the liturgical year. It begins with Palm Sunday. It marks the Church's annual celebration of the events of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection.

EASTER TRIDUUM (Three Days)

The Easter *Triduum* (Latin for *three days*) includes Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday with its Easter Vigil. During these three days, the Church remembers the Lord’s supper, his passion, death, and resurrection. These three sacred days are the heart of the liturgical year.

EASTER SEASON

The Easter season lasts for fifty days. It begins with Easter Sunday and ends with the feast of Pentecost (the coming of the Holy Spirit). *Easter* is always the first Sunday after the first full moon in the spring. That is why Easter can be in March one year and April another year. The color of the altar cloths and vestments during this season is *white*.

ORDINARY TIME

This season is made up of the days between Christmas and Lent, and the days between Easter and Advent. The main focus of Ordinary Time is the ministry of Jesus. The colors of the altar cloths and vestments is *green*.

There are some special feast days during Ordinary Time such as Trinity Sunday and the Feast of the

Body and Blood of Christ. These are the first two Sundays after Pentecost. The Feast of Christ the King takes place on the last Sunday before Advent. The altar cloths and vestments for these days is *white*.

Pentecost

This feast is celebrated fifty days after Easter. At the first Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples gathered in the upper room according to the promise of Christ.

Other Feast Days and Days of Obligation

While the annual liturgical cycle of major feasts celebrate the saving mysteries of Christ's life, the lesser feast days honor Mary, the Mother of God, and the saints. These days provide Catholics with examples of those who gave faithful witness to Christ.

HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION

In addition to Sundays, Catholics are obligated by Church law to participate in the Eucharist on certain special days. These days can vary in different parts of the world. According to the U.S Conference of Catholic Bishops the holy days of obligation in the United States are: *Mary, Mother of God, the Ascension, the Assumption, All Saints, the Immaculate Conception, and Christmas*. The *Epiphany* is now celebrated on the first Sunday after January 1, and the feast of the *Body and Blood of the Lord* is observed on the second Sunday after Pentecost.

1. Mary, Mother of God

On New Year's Day, eight days after Christmas, the Church celebrates the *Solemnity of the Holy Mother of God*. The day celebrates Mary's virginity and motherhood because through her we have received Christ our redeemer who is both human and divine.

2. The Epiphany

The Church's celebration of the Epiphany (Greek for *manifestation*). Actually the Church's celebration of this feast predates even the celebration of Christmas itself. In the Christian tradition, there are actually three manifestations of Christ's divinity: *his birth, his adoration by the Magi, and his baptism*.

3. The Ascension

The feast of the Ascension is celebrated forty days after Easter. It recalls Christ's return to heaven and the continuation of his mission by his disciples. The liturgy on this day celebrates the entry of Christ into heaven and the promise that we will be glorified with him one day.

4. The Body and Blood of Christ

This feast remembers Christ's gift of the Eucharist. Originally it was called *Corpus Christi* (the Body of Christ) and introduced in the late 13th century. It was created to encourage Christians to give special honor to the *Real Presence* of Christ in the Eucharist. The name of this feast was changed in 1970 to the current *Body and Blood of Christ*.

5. The Assumption of Mary

For hundreds of years, Christians observed the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on August 15. It celebrates the taking of Mary's body to Heaven after her death. However, it was not until 1950 that Pope Pius XII declared it as a dogma (teaching) of the Church. August 15 was the day that Christians traditionally celebrated the *Dormition* (falling asleep) of the Virgin Mary. The feast of the Assumption links both the death of Mary, and her bodily assumption into heaven.

6. All Saints

The Church celebrates the feast of *All Saints* as a way to honor all those witnesses to the Christian faith

both known and unknown. At first the Church remembered the day of each martyr, but as time went on there were so many that it created this day on which all those who lived and died for Christ could be honored. All Saints is celebrated on November 1.

7. Immaculate Conception

This dogma was a long-standing Christian tradition and defined as a dogma in 1854. It teaches that from the first moment of her conception, Mary was preserved from original sin—by the grace of God and because of her sinless son, Jesus Christ. It is always celebrated on December 8.

8. The Nativity of the Lord

The Nativity of the Lord, or Christmas as it also is called, is always on December 25. However, it was not until the 4th century that Pope Julius I set December 25 as the date to celebrate Christ's birth.

Liturgical Scripture Readings: Cycles and Lectionaries

In addition to the *Sunday cycle*, there are two other cycles of feasts on the church calendar. The *second cycle* is composed of the saints' days, one for every day of the year. The *third cycle* is made up of more than 15 feasts throughout the year that honor Mary. They begin with the Immaculate Conception on December 8 through the Assumption on August 15.

Catholics celebrate each of these seasons by reading the Bible texts appropriate to the feasts. For instance at Mass, there is a *first reading* from the Old Testament, a *second reading* from the New Testament, and a *Gospel reading* from one of the four Gospels. These readings are spread over a three-year rotation. The book of scripture readings is called a *lectionary* (from *lectio*, a Latin word for *reading*). There is a *Sunday Lectionary* (for Sundays and main feasts) and a *Weekday Lectionary*. The scripture readings for each year are chosen so that every three years much of the Bible is included in the readings at Mass and in the Liturgy of the Hours.

Sunday Lectionary

The Sunday lectionary uses a **three-year cycle of readings**. Each of the three years is designated by a letter: **A, B, or C**. Each yearly cycle begins on the first Sunday of Advent, for example:

Year A: Gospel of Matthew (November 2010 through 2011)

Year B: Gospel of Mark (December 2011 through 2012)

Year C: Gospel of Luke (December 2012 through 2013)

The Gospel of John is read throughout Easter, and is used for other liturgical seasons including Advent, Christmas, and Lent where it is appropriate.

Weekday Lectionary

The weekday lectionary includes a 2 year cycle for the daily Mass readings (called Cycle I and Cycle II). Odd-numbered years are Cycle I; even-numbered ones are Cycle II. The weekday lectionary includes a reading from the Old Testament, Acts, Revelation, or the epistles, a responsorial psalm, and a reading from one of the Gospels. These readings are generally shorter than those used on Sundays. The selections for the first reading along with the psalms are arranged in a 2-year cycle. The gospel readings are arranged so that portions of all four gospels are read every year. The Lectionary should not to be confused with the *Missal* or *Sacramentary*. The Lectionary contains *scripture readings for the Mass*, while the Missal or Sacramentary contains the *instructions and prayers of the Mass*.



The Cycle of Liturgical Seasons

The History of the Eucharist

Just as it took time for the major feast days of the Church to become fixed, it also took time for the celebration of the Eucharist, or the Mass as we know it today, to take shape. Over the centuries the Mass changed from a simple eucharistic meal to the “eucharistic liturgy” of today.

Breaking Bread

At first, after Jesus died, rose and ascended into heaven, his disciples, many of whom were Jews, continued to worship in synagogues and in the temple. There they listened to the reading of the scriptures and offered prayers to God. However, they returned home to “break bread” and “bless the cup” as Jesus had asked them to do during his Last Supper. Before he died he told them. *“This is my body...do this in memory of me”* (Luke 22: 19). Like Jesus, they did this during a meal. They gathered around the table to eat and drink together as God’s family, but at a certain point they fulfilled the request of Jesus.



Later on, when the Jewish leaders began to persecute the followers of Christ, and especially after the Romans destroyed the temple in 70 A.D., they no longer went to the temple. They did not reject their roots, however, and still read and reflected on passages the Old Testament and prayed the psalms. They understood that the new was built on the old, that the Old Testament scriptures pointed to and predicted the coming of Christ. About 25 years after the resurrection, Paul gave a brief account of the Last Supper and an explanation of the Eucharist:

“For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me’” (1 Corinthians 11:23-25).

Then Paul added some very important words about what the early disciples believed about this bread and wine. It is the heart of the Catholic Church’s belief to this day: *“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. Whoever eats or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 11: 26-27). As Paul explains, the bread and wine truly are the body and blood of Christ. After all, in Luke 22: 19 Jesus did not say *“this stands for my body”* but, *“this is my body.”* Catholics believe what the Bible teaches about the Eucharist—that Jesus meant what he said. Not long afterward, perhaps still during the time of the apostles, the Eucharist began to be celebrated without a regular meal. By the time the apostles had died, there were Christians living in almost every part of the Roman Empire. They did not have churches but met in private homes to worship.

Early Christian Writings

We get another glimpse of the Eucharist as it was celebrated in 96 A.D. from a letter to the Corinthians

from Pope Clement, the bishop of Rome. In his First Epistle to the Corinthians he stated that it is the bishop, priests and deacons who should offer the Eucharist, not just anybody. He also called the Eucharist a sacrifice.

Just ten years later in 106 A.D., Ignatius of Antioch wrote a letter to the Christians in Philadelphia. In this letter he also explained what Christians believe about the Eucharist. He wrote that there is only one Eucharist because the Body of Christ is one, and there is only one altar and one bishop assisted by the clergy and deacons. He also wrote to the Christians of Smyrna, and warned them about those who do not believe “...the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, and which the Father, of his goodness, raised up again.”

In the middle of the second century Justin Martyr, an educated philosopher and convert, also described in his *Apologia* (explanation) how Christians worshiped. He was trying to put to rest the false rumors that were being told to the emperor, Antoninus Pius and his son Marcus Aurelius, about what Christians did in their worship:

“On the day we call the day of the sun, all who dwell in the city or country gather in the same place. The memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read. When the reader has finished, he who presides over those gathered admonishes and challenges them to imitate these beautiful things. Then all rise together and offer prayers for ourselves and for all others. When the prayers are concluded we exchange the kiss. Then someone brings bread and a cup of water and wine mixed together to him who presides. He takes them and offers praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and the Holy Spirit and for a considerable time gives thanks that we have been judged worthy of these gifts. When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all present give voice to an acclamation by saying ‘Amen.’ When he who presides has given thanks and the people have responded, those whom we call deacons give to those present the eucharistic bread, wine and water and take them to those who are absent.”



Eucharist - Catacomb of St. Priscilla, Rome

Most of the things in this description are the same as our Mass today, but for the sake of worse rumors, Justin Martyr did not share the words of Jesus about the bread being his body and the cup being his blood. As it was, this beautiful letter which was an attempt to put Christians in a better light did not keep him and many other Christians from being executed during the persecution of Marcus Aurelius.

Another educated Christian named Hyppolitus (170-235 A.D.) also wrote a beautiful Eucharistic prayer that was one of several others used during his time. With a few changes, it is used as one of the Eucharistic prayers today:

“We give you thanks, O God, through your beloved Child Jesus Christ, whom you have sent us in these last days as Savior, Redeemer, and Messenger of your will. He is your Word, inseparable from you, through whom you have created everything and whom, in your good pleasure, you sent from heaven into the womb of a virgin. He was conceived and became flesh, he manifested himself as your Son, born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin.”

The Persecution of Early Christians

For many early Christians, celebrating the Eucharist was a heroic act that placed them at risk of being killed. Emperor Nero blamed the Christians for burning Rome and began a persecution that lasted from 64 to 68 A.D. It took the lives of Peter, Paul and many other Christians. Later, under several of the emperors other persecutions were carried out. During those times, it was impossible for Christians to worship openly. In some cases, they went to underground cemeteries (catacombs) to worship. There were no altars so it was typical to offer the Eucharist on the tomb of a martyr. That is how the custom began of placing relics of saints in the altars of Catholic churches. Even in these places, Christians were hunted down and killed sometimes on the spot. During the persecution of the emperor Valerian, his soldiers trapped a group of Christians who were worshipping in a catacomb. They buried them alive by blocking the entrances. In 258 A.D. Pope Sixtus was put to death in a catacomb along with four deacons.

Constantine and the End of Persecution

After Emperor Diocletian's death, several people fought for the throne of the empire. In the end, Constantine, an army general, was victorious. The story is told of how he saw a cross in the sky before the final battle and heard the words: "*In hoc signum vincit (In this sign conquer).*" One of his first acts as emperor was to allow Christians freedom of worship. Not only that, he actually promoted Christianity throughout the empire by giving them many public places for their worship. He even gave his own palace to the Pope. Today the Basilica of St. John Lateran stands on that spot. This now meant that large crowds of Christians could gather for worship, and this had an impact on how the Eucharist was celebrated.

Spiritual leaders, many of them great saints, began to guide the Church in preparing its worship services. Some of these people were St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, and later on St. John Chrysostom and Pope St. Gregory the Great. The Eucharistic prayer written by St. Ambrose is very close to our Eucharistic Prayer I that is used in the Mass today.



Emperor Constantine

As time passed, and the Roman Empire began to fall apart, different rituals and languages developed, as each part of the empire went its own way. In the eastern parts of the empire, Greek remained the language of the liturgy. In the western parts Latin became the common language. During his time as pope (590-604 A.D.), St. Gregory the Great had a major influence on how the Eucharist was celebrated in Italy and western Europe for centuries to come. He was well educated and an excellent organizer. He took several different liturgical books from previous popes and organized them into one book. It included guidelines for participation, used Latin as the official language of worship and included music called Gregorian chant. At first, his book was used mostly in Rome, but because his Eucharistic service was so beautiful, eventually several copies were made and the Roman liturgy was spread by priests and monks throughout Europe. This *Roman* liturgy remained for several centuries afterward as the typical way that Christians in western Europe worshipped. In time the great churches and cathedrals of Europe also were built to provide beautiful settings for celebration. In eastern Europe and in the Middle East the *Byzantine* liturgy developed as another way for Christians to worship. (*Byzantine* comes from Byzantium (or Constantinople), which Constantine made the capital city of the empire.

In time there were problems with how the Roman liturgy was celebrated. The Latin language and chants

tended to keep the uneducated people from participating. They did not speak Latin and were not trained in singing chant. So they tended to be silent bystanders. Gradually, the people stopped receiving Communion at each Mass. They came to see the host and the chalice because they believed in the Real Presence of Christ but many did not receive Communion regularly. In fact, many only received it on their deathbeds.

Times of Change and Upheaval

The period of the Renaissance (meaning *rebirth*) was a gift and a challenge for the Church. It was a time of great change in art, learning and inventions and lasted approximately from the 14th to the 16th centuries. The popes during this period came from wealthy, political families and many did not live good lives. They loved art and grand buildings, and built St. Peter's Basilica and the Sistine Chapel, but they did not attend to the spiritual needs of the Church or how people participated in the Mass or sacraments. The faith of many Catholics was tested by the poor example of these popes. Reforms were badly needed and many clergy and laity begged the popes for reform. Sadly it did not happen in time to keep a crisis from dividing Christians.



The Council of Trent (1545-1563)

In 1517 a Catholic monk named Martin Luther began to call for reforms by publicly nailing his demands to the door of a church. In the beginning his reforms could have been carried out within the Catholic Church. But after awhile some of his demands were not acceptable because they went against Catholic teaching on the Pope, infallibility and salvation by *faith alone*. He also eliminated several books from the Bible (in the Old Testament: *Tobit, Judith, Baruch*, parts of *Daniel* and *Esther, Sirach, 1 and 2 Maccabees*; in the New Testament: *James, Jude, Hebrews, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John* and *Revelation*). Eventually, Martin Luther broke away from the Catholic Church and founded his own church. Others followed his example and also founded their own churches, for example: King Henry VIII in England, John Calvin in Switzerland and John Knox in Scotland. They were called *protestants* because they openly protested against Catholic authority, especially the Pope.

The Council of Trent

This Protestant upheaval finally shook Catholic leaders into action and they began to reform the Church. The Council of Trent (1545 to 1563) was held to uphold Catholic teaching and correct abuses. Finally, the saintly Pope Pius V (1566-1572) brought a much-needed spiritual revival to the Catholic people and clergy. The clergy had to be educated and properly trained in seminaries, and the Roman *missal* (the official book that guided how the Mass was conducted in a proper manner) was revised. This missal was so well done, that it remained in use until the twentieth century.

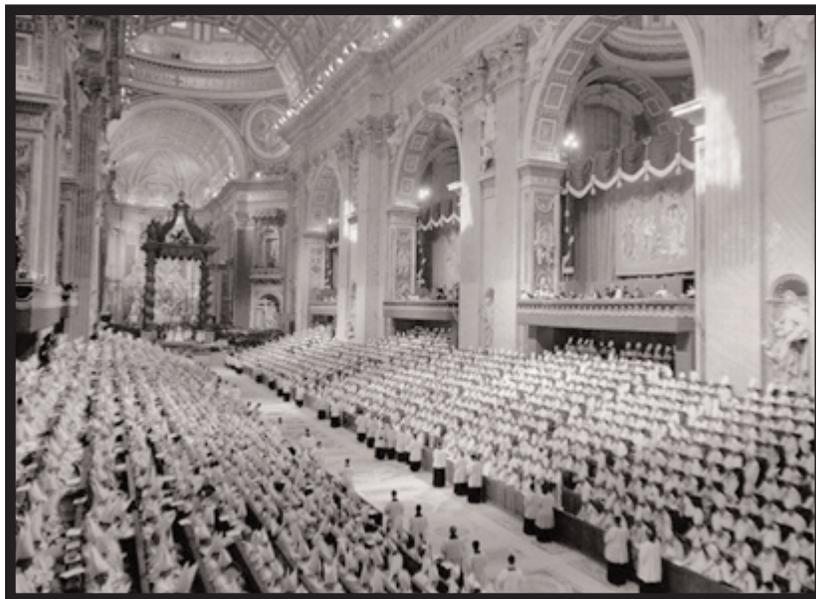
The Roman Missal of Pope Pius V was a great help to bishops and priests as they prepared for Mass. It meant that one approved book contained all the texts and guidelines in Latin for celebrating the Eucharist. Translating this Missal into other languages was forbidden so that everyone in the Catholic Church would worship in the same way. Only in the 20th century was permission given to translate the missal into other languages. Until then, the missal did not encourage ordinary people to participate actively in the Mass. Very often, they brought their own prayer books or prayed the rosary while the priest and choir performed the Mass. Pope Pius X (1903-1913) allowed more changes so that the people

could participate more fully. He taught that Catholics should receive Communion often, even daily. He encouraged the entire congregation to learn Gregorian chant so that they could sing along during various parts of the Mass. He also allowed translations of the missal into other languages so that the people could follow the prayers of the Mass more closely. In 1947, Pope Pius XII reinforced these ideas by teaching that the liturgy is the public worship of the *entire* Body of Christ. This meant that everyone who was present should actively participate—priests and people. Pius XII also brought back the ancient and beautiful ceremonies of Holy Week.

Vatican Council II

Then, in 1959, Pope John XXIII announced that Vatican Council II would be held to renew the Catholic Church.(Vatican I was held from 1869-1870 and was interrupted by war). This new council gathered all the bishops of the world together in St. Peter's Basilica. It began in 1962 and lasted until its work was completed in 1965 after John XXIII died and Paul VI became Pope. Among other important works, this council approved the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* which brought reforms that restored some of the ancient ways that Christians worshiped. Once again the priest faced the people as he presided at worship. Before then the priest prayed with his back to the people, facing the altar. Major aspects of this document are the following:

- full and active participation by all the members of Christ's Body
- rituals were simplified and liturgical books revised
- other languages were allowed besides Latin
- the liturgical calendar was revised
- more scripture was included in the readings
- the importance of the homily (sermon) was emphasized
- the prayers of the faithful (as in ancient times) were brought back
- the people could receive the Eucharist under both forms of bread and wine.



Vatican Council II (1962-1965)



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The Early Church and Prayer

1. St. Ignatius of Antioch first used the word “*catholic*” to describe the whole Church. ___True ___ False
2. “*He who died in place of us is the one object of my quest. He who rose for our sakes is my one desire.*” When St. Ignatius of Antioch said this, who was “He”? _____
3. St. Ignatius of Antioch told his fellow Christians, “*Do not stand in the way of my birth to real life. Only on my arrival there can I be _____.*” (Fill in the missing words).
4. As Perpetua and the others left their cells for the stadium singing psalms, they went “*joyfully as though they were on their way to _____*” (Fill in the missing word)
5. Who wrote *The Life of Anthony* which became a “best seller” in the Christian community?

6. One of his great written works was “*On the Incarnation of the Word*” in which he defended the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ. Who wrote this work? _____
7. According to St. Athanasius, “*Why did the Word of God come in His own Person?*” _____

8. She convinced her mother, sisters, and servants to help create a community of women on their family estate and to live as equals, sharing a life of prayer, penance and works of mercy to the needy of the area. Who was she? _____
9. Ambrose learned to study and comment on the Bible, and to use a way of meditating on scripture called *lectio divina*. What did it involve? _____
10. St. John Chrysostom wrote, what is “*The reason why the devil plunges us into thoughts of despair*”?

11. According to St. John Chrysostom, “*He (God) never turns his face away from sincere repentance, but if any one has gone to the very extreme of wickedness, and chooses to return to the path of virtue*” what does God do? _____
12. “*Seventeen years I passed in this desert fighting mad desires and passions...After weeping and beating my breast for a long time I began to see light at last which seemed to shine on me from everywhere. After the violent storm, lasting calm descended on me.*” Who said this? _____
13. “*See, I do not hide my wounds; you are the physician and I am sick; you are merciful, I in need of mercy.*” Who wrote this and in what book? _____
14. Accepting that her son was not ready to change, she stopped confronting him. Instead, what did St. Monica turn to? _____
15. Tertullian tells us that Christians made *a sign* upon rising, as they were dressing, entering or leaving their houses, before they bathed, sat down at the table, lit their lamps, and at the beginning of almost every action. What was this sign? _____



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Benedictine Prayer

1. St. Benedict organized monasteries with a rule that centered on *prayer and work*. What *Latin words* for these two words became the Benedictine motto? _____
2. The _____ along with the _____ were the center of the monastic daily life. (Fill in the missing words)
3. When she learned of St. Benedict's new monastery, this woman and a group of pious virgins set up a convent nearby. What was her name? _____
4. After the heavy rain kept Benedict from going home what did he and his sister do?

The Liturgy of the Hours

1. Which scripture passage says: “ ‘Seven times in the day,’ says the Prophet, ‘I have rendered praise to You’ ”? _____
2. Our prayer is the prayer of _____ as it reaches the Father through Christ our mediator. (Fill in the missing word)
3. What is the *Liturgy of the Hours* composed of? _____

Franciscan Prayer

1. While St. Francis prayed in the abandoned church of San Damiano, what did a voice from the crucifix say to him? _____
2. Francis was alone in deep prayer and fasting on Mount Alverna, when an amazing thing happened. What was left on his body? _____
3. What Greek word means a *mark, scar or opening*? _____
4. Where in the Bibles does the *Favorite Blessing* of St. Francis (“*The Lord bless you and keep you*”) come from? _____
5. St. Clare said: “*They say that we are too poor, but can a heart which possesses _____ be truly called poor?*” (Fill in the missing words)



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Dominican Prayer

1. Why did St. Dominic want his houses to be centers of prayer and learning?
_____.
2. In the *Second Way of Prayer* Dominic used to pray by throwing himself outstretched on the ground, lying on his face. He would feel great remorse in his heart and call to mind which words of the Gospel? _____.
3. In the *Sixth Way of Prayer* Dominic prayed standing up with his hands and arms outstretched in the form of a cross. Why? _____
4. St. Thomas Aquinas suddenly stopped writing. When his friend urged him to keep going, what did St. Thomas reply? _____
5. As a teenager what did St. Catherine of Siena tell herself to build “*inside your mind, from which you can never flee.*”? _____
6. In her “*Dialogue of Divine Providence*” St. Catherine has God say “*the soul who lovingly knows Me turns immediately to love of neighbor.*” Why does the soul do this?

Carmelite Prayer

1. The first Carmelites found inspiration in which two people of the Bible?
_____ and _____
2. The Carmelite Rule lays out the way the members are to live in silence and solitude, so that the word of God dwells in their hearts: “Let each one remain _____ meditating day and night on the Word of the Lord watching in prayer unless they are at work.” (Fill in the words)
3. St. John of the Cross said, “*In the evening of your life you will be judged by _____.*” (Fill in the word)
4. In *Dark Night of the Soul* John regards the dark night as God working to change the old person to what? _____.
5. Every moment in life is an opportunity to grow in love. St. John of the Cross said: “Where there is no love, put love and then you will find _____.” (Fill in the word)
6. In *The Way of Perfection*, St. Teresa of Avila gives three things that are basic to a prayerful life. What are they?

7. St Teresa said, “*Prayer, in my opinion, is _____.*”



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Ignatian Prayer

1. Complete the Prayer of St. Ignatius: *“Give me your love and your grace, that is _____.”*
2. Ignatius wanted to share his experience of prayer with others, so he put together a small book of directions. What did he call it? _____
3. When the Spiritual Exercises are done in a directed retreat three persons are involved. Who are they?
The first person is _____. The second person is _____,
The third person is _____.
4. For St. Ignatius the *“Composition of Place”* uses mental pictures from our imagination to help us do what? enter into what is happening in the story.
5. Ignatius expects that God will lead us to the desires that are really for our own good if we do what? open our hearts to God and ask him to give us these desires.
6. In 1609 Mary Ward and her group formed a new community modeled after the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). Mary always admired their rule so what did she include into their way of life?

7. Once when Mary Ward tried to proceed according to the points of the meditation (Spiritual Exercises), how did she explain what happened?

8. Mary Ward said, *“With God’s grace I will never think that I am forgotten by God.”* If she might think she is forgotten, what will she do?



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Salesian Prayer

- As a young priest, whose conditions made a deep impression on St. John Bosco?

- After St. John Bosco told a friend who was trying to interrupt his prayer. “*My dear sir, you are a good friend of mine*” what did he say to him? _____
- St. John Bosco always tried to support his daily work with prayer. He did this so well, what did Pope Pius XI say about him? _____.
- One of St. Francis de Sales’ sayings was: “Consider all the past as nothing and say like David: _____ (fill in the words)
- As a young girl St. Maria Mazzarello found a way of to join those who gathered in the church for evening prayer. She went to her window where she could see what? _____
- In the prayer that sustained her during her illness and throughout her life. St. Maria Mazzarello said: “Lord, if you give me a little more time to live, let me be forgotten by all, so that (complete the prayer):

Final Examples of Saints and Prayer

- St. Therese the Little Flower understood that although she was hidden in a convent that she was living at the heart of the Church. In that spirit what did she offer her life for? _____

- In St. Therese’s little way, what was the key? _____.
- St. Therese said: “*If I did not simply live from one moment to another, it would be impossible for me to be patient,*” In her words, how did she do this? _____

- According to St. Maximilian Kolbe, “*There are two irreconcilable enemies in the depth of every soul*” What are they? _____
- St. Maximilian Kolbe wanted to kill the Nazis and refused to pray for them. __True __False
- As the long days without food and water dragged on, Maximilian encouraged his fellow prisoners with what? _____.
- Mother Teresa faced spiritual struggles that lasted nearly 50 years until the end of her life. She often felt no presence of God but what remained constant? _____
- Mother Teresa said: “*Give yourself fully to God. He will use you to accomplish great things*” On what condition would this happen? _____



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The Liturgical Year

1. Each Sunday the Church remembers the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ.
What is the *paschal mystery*? _____
2. Even though these events took place in the past, they are celebrated as present whenever the Church gathers for worship. God is not limited by space and time. True or False
3. The color of the altar cloths and vestments for which seasons is purple? _____
4. The week before Easter is the holiest week of the liturgical year. It begins with Palm Sunday. It marks the Church's annual celebration of the events of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection. What is this week called? _____
- 5-What is the book of scripture readings called and where does this word come from?

6. There are two lectionaries used during Mass. One is for _____ and the other is for _____. (Fill in the words).
7. The Sunday Lectionary uses a three-year cycle of readings. The years are designated by what letters?



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The History of the Eucharist

1. Over the centuries the Mass changed from a simple eucharistic _____ to the “eucharistic liturgy” of today.
2. According to 1 Corinthians 11: 26-27 “Whoever eats or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable...” for what? _____
3. St. Ignatius of Antioch wrote to the Christians of Smyrna, and warned them about those who do not believe *what*? _____

4. Many early Christians went to underground cemeteries called *catacombs* to worship. There were no altars so it was typical to offer the Eucharist on the tomb of a martyr. That is how the custom began of placing relics of saints in the altars of Catholic churches. __True or __False
5. One of Constantine’s first acts as emperor was what? _____
6. This Protestant upheaval finally shook Catholic leaders into action and they begin to reform the Church. Which council was held as a result of it to uphold Catholic teaching and correct abuses?

7. Pope Pius X (1903-1913) allowed certain changes in the Mass so that the people could participate more fully. What did he teach about receiving Communion? _____
8. Pope John XXIII announced that Vatican Council II would be held to renew the Catholic Church. It began in 1962 and lasted until its work was completed in what year? _____
9. In 1963 Vatican Council II approved what Constitution which brought reforms that restored the ancient way that Christians worshiped? _____
10. Give two major aspects of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy:



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