



OUR LADY OF
LOURDES
CATHOLIC PARISH

THE **LOURDES WORD**

SUMMER 2023



Summer Theme
“Prayer”

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The Lourdes Word
Summer 2023
www.ollindy.org

Every Breath

by Linda Abner

Every Breath

A sunny morning, gentle breeze
A little birdsong, if you please
God's presence in the very air
Lord, hear my morning prayer

The day still young, perhaps I've been
Productive in the hours given,
Or need some help to get me there
Lord, hear my midday prayer

My bed awaits, soon ends this day
Forgive my sins which grieved Your way
And those of which I'm unaware
Lord, hear my evening prayer

Sometimes, sweet sleep I cannot find
Questions, sorrows haunt my mind
For dear ones gone, and those still here
Lord, hear my nighttime prayer

Let my being be in You
God of all things good and true
Through all life's minutes, ill or fair
Till every breath is prayer



Thy Will Be Done

by *Andrea Fleak*

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During my college years, I would pray before I went into every meeting: God, whatever happens at this meeting, let it be your will, and let me have the grace to accept that. When a major project came to be, or something else good happened, it was easy to see God at work and praise him. When another project fell apart or was not moved forward or we faced obstacles and challenges, I could accept that God was at work and it was not meant to be.

In the time since college, I forgot about this prayer I used to pray, until a situation reminded me of it. A friend was facing a life-alternating situation, where the decision of what happened next came from someone else. I prayed fervently for my friend for what I thought was the best outcome. When the decision came, it was not what I had prayed for to happen. In that moment, it was hard to accept that what I prayed for was not how the situation played out. It felt like Dolly Parton's song "Hello God" where she sings: "Are You out there? Can You hear me? Are You listenin' anymore?" As what comes next began to unfold for my friend, I was surprised by how everything began to fall into place. Things that I expected to take months were happening in days or weeks. I began to see that God heard all of my prayers; God was with my friend, but the answer to my prayers were happening in a way I did not expect.

Praying for God's will to be done is difficult when we or our loved ones are dealing with job loss, marriage problems, major life decisions, and the stress of every day. It is hard to pray for God's will when we see those we love dealing with illness and we want them

to be made well. Praying for God's will to be done seems almost counterintuitive. When we know what we want, or what we think is best and so ask for that, it becomes our will. And yet we pray every Sunday in the Lord's Prayer "thy will be done." "Thy will be done" requires surrender of control over the situation and faith and trust in the One who has control over all things.

The Bible gives us an example of praying for "thy will be done" that we hear in the readings during Holy Week. In the Garden of Gethsemane, we hear Jesus's prayer first in Matthew 26:39: Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." We hear a second prayer later in Matthew 26:42: He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done." Jesus was moments away from being arrested and the events of Good Friday unfolding, and yet in one of his last quiet moments, he is praying in sorrow let this cup pass from me but your will be done.

We all have our garden moments, where we too feel like we are in our own "Garden of Gethsemane." Those moments, where like I did with my friend, we pray for someone who is dealing with a difficult situation. It is easy to want to pray for what we think is best, but when we find the courage to pray "let your will be done" then we can receive the grace that God wants to give us, and we can see the miracles that God is waiting to show us.



Silent Contemplative Prayer

by Mark Hudson

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The standard definition of prayer that I have known is lifting the heart and mind to God. There are many ways to pray and types of prayers. Some can be as simple as the powerful Jesus Prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Many Catholics find great comfort in reciting the Rosary either in private or in a group setting; depending on the day of the week, there are 20 mysteries for the episodes in the life of Jesus. Prayer can be a request for something, an act of thanksgiving or of praise. Sometimes a walk can be a prayer occasion. The greatest prayer is the celebration of the Mass.

For the past 20 years, I have been practicing contemplative prayer. This began as simply a quest to understand this practice which I had read about but did not understand. Contemplative prayer began in the early years of the Church. The Eastern Church has not lost this contemplative orientation and vision.

Contemplation is a wordless surrender to God’s will in one’s life; it is a pointed consciousness that listens for God’s most intimate communications within one’s soul. The Trappist monk/priest, Thomas Keating, wrote this about contemplative prayer: “The method consists of letting go of every kind of thought during prayer, even the most devout thoughts. The participant seeks the presence of God directly aided by a simple mantra and explicitly rejects discursive thoughts and imagined scenes.”

For me, this style of prayer has developed into a daily routine. Usually I go to a quiet room, light a candle, turn off the lights, and sit upright in a chair for 20 to 30 minutes. (As in Matthew 6:6: “When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father”). During contemplative prayer, it is only human that different thoughts will come and go. This is natural and happens to all of us. That is why the mantra is so important – it redirects ourselves back to God. The key is regularity.

Once when introducing this method of prayer to a group, Keating encountered a nun who was having difficulty. The story goes that the nun, after 20 minutes or so of silence, painfully exclaimed that she could never use contemplative prayer. She found herself drifting to something other than God 15 times. This necessitated her returning her focus to God over and over. To the astonishment of the nun, Keating told her this was great! She was giving herself to God Alone 15 times. Thomas Merton wrote, “waiting in silence was the doorway into unitive moments of a wordless dialogue with God.” Contemplative prayer is a waiting without expecting any kind of “transformation”, not even a “transformation of darkness into light.” It is nothingness. Nothing is anticipated or prayed for during this time. One waits in silence.

I am so thankful that I discovered this ancient method of prayer. It was surely the Holy Spirit guiding my prayer life to a contemplative prayer style of silence. I need to remember what Merton wrote in *New Seeds of Contemplation*, “Contemplative prayer is a practice of a lifetime, never perfected yet always enough.”



Praying the Pennsy

by Gabrielle Shufeldt

At the height of the Covid epidemic, I left my home, neighborhood, friends, causes, and holy places to move to Indiana. Over my eighty years, my spirituality had become intimately connected with each of these areas, and my prayers had become simpler. A book title, a line of poetry, a four-note sequence or a word could trigger my disposition to prayer. The word I use now is Presence. It draws me to Our Lady of Lourdes. It evokes the Biblical ad sum. It has the contemporary, causal idea: "I'd be there for you...."



Presence, as I understood it, was certainly going to be constrained by the Covid-imposed isolation and unknown surroundings. I had always liked the title given the work of Brother Lawrence: *The Practice of the Presence of God*, but I couldn't remember anything more than the title, and his 17th century monastery daily life

seemed far from my new life. Daily life, as things turned out, was the right place to start, and I focused on three activities: reading, listening to music, and walking.

Finding the Mother Tree, Gathering Moss, and Braiding Sweetgrass are the relevant books for this daily reflection. I hadn't expected to be reading about plants since I was already mourning my loss of gardening. The authors are botanists. They conduct research which meets the requirements of the scientific community. They are women who weave their life stories into their work and writing. They are committed to protecting the environment. All those characteristics were pluses for me, but most important was the description of how the trees, the mosses, and the grasses live in their environment. With all appropriate acknowledgement for the inadequacy of my words, I could only think of how these interactions mirrored my understanding of spirituality integrated in my life story. I found a bench where I could bring my lunch and be present to the trees, mosses and grasses.

Katherine Jenkins Radio, Robert Shaw Chorale Radio, and May the Good Lord Bless and Keep you Radio are the relevant stations for this reflection. Pandora was my new Artificial Intelligence companion: getting radio stations on a TV screen which displays covers of vinyl record albums while selecting pieces based on some plus-and-minus rating you give a piece. Spirituality and humor enrich us. "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" really hit some part of my soul's music file, and I would be humming it all through the day. I still don't know the words, but by giving it a thumbs up I am likely to hear it frequently on one station or another

I took a morning and an afternoon walk when the weather permitted and learned about the streets, neighborhoods, stores, shops, churches, schools, and bars. My gratitude for, and celebration of, all that went into a Covid vaccine could be a separate prayer topic. With it, the community began to emerge. Greetings could become conversations, conversations could become friendships. On the Pennsy Trail, I met characters I'd see later at the library or pantry, and I was working on being a character, too. I have received the gift of friendships as life stories become entwined. Martin Buber in *I and Thou* said that all real living is meeting. I have made Irvington my home, and I have found grace on the trail. I grab my hat and sneakers, fill my pockets, and head for the trail....

~Praying the Pennsy~

Words: O Lord

Presence, present, presents, the present, being present, presentation

Melody: *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*

*An obligato of robins
The fanfare of roosters
The woodpecker riffing*

Lord, Teach Us to Pray

by Lucy Miller

If these lyrics don't sound familiar, then you might not have been around in the '60's when this Joe Wise song was popular in Catholic liturgies. I've been reminded of it lately (April when I started this article) because of the depressing weather in April. The first verse continues, "It's been a long and cold December kind of day...." But I found the image of Jesus as the teacher of prayer an inviting one.

I had many teachers of prayer along my life's journey, my parents being the first. They taught mostly by example. It was expected that my sister and I would follow suit.

The first prayer I learned from my mom was the "Angel of God, my guardian dear..." aided by a picture on the wall of an angel guarding two children. I tried recalling this prayer one night shortly before my mom died when neither of us could sleep, but I couldn't remember the words, and Mom had to fill them in. Although her mental acuity was compromised at that time, it came through when needed most.

Another poignant image and reminder of my parents' prayer lives was seeing my dad on his knees before he went to bed. Of course, as a family, we prayed before and sometimes after meals. Offering a blessing before eating at family gatherings has continued among my sister's family, although with less of a Catholic flavor as the family has become more diverse religiously.

During the '50's, praying the rosary as a family was emphasized in our diocese, and we followed through, usually praying in the evening though I don't remember how often. This prayer form languished with me as an adult, and I seldom used it except at funerals in my home parish. It wasn't revived until recent years when I started going to weekday/evening Mass at St. Bernadette and OLL that I prayed it more often. I had to do some reviewing to come up with all the mysteries.

In later years, I've been more experimental with prayer, trying centering prayer, Lectio Divina, and striving to grasp contemplative prayer as encouraged and taught by Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM. Although I know that I did not put in enough time and effort, none of these prayer forms has taken root or routine.

I've tried to become a better listener at Mass, too. In recent years, I've listened more intently to the Eucharistic Prayer and its many variations, although in many liturgical settings the shortest version is repeated. Fr. Rick, who expanded my appreciation for this prayer by his intentional and beautiful rendering of it, offers it with greater variations than do most celebrants and, even better, I can hear him clearly even with my compromised hearing. I become a super critic when it is mumbled.

(continued on pg 6)

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Lord, Teach Us to Pray

(continued from pg 5)

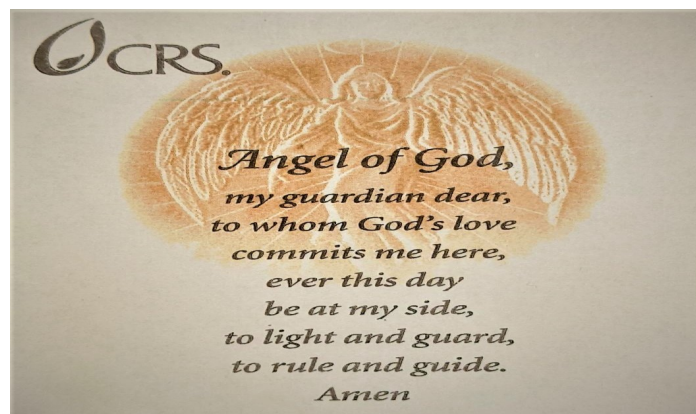
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My daily communication with God in any person tends more to informal talking with some structure, particularly Scripture reading. One area in which I'm most disciplined and faithful is reading the daily Lectionary readings followed by at least one reflection from a variety of sources.

I think of God more often as I grow older, perhaps because death seems closer and more imminent among family and friends. Time to ponder and pray is also more abundant at this age, as well as delving more deeply into Scripture with parish discussion groups and innumerable resources available, particularly online.

Scripture tells us that Jesus prayed frequently and took time to teach his followers how to pray. St. Paul advises us to pray constantly. I don't think any specific form of prayer is as important as just doing it. Making prayer a habit helps create a sense of comfort, familiarity, and relationship with God our Creator, Jesus, Brother and Savior, and the Holy Spirit who guides us on the journey. What is basically needed is that we stay in touch.

NB: The remainder of the first verse of the song "Lord, Teach Us to Pray" is, "With our hearts and hands all busy in our private little wars, we stand and watch each other now, from separate shores....We lose the way." If these lyrics sound as much like the 2020's as the 1960's, I would be in full agreement. You can find the lyrics alone or many sung versions (including Joe Wise) online. It has a great melody.



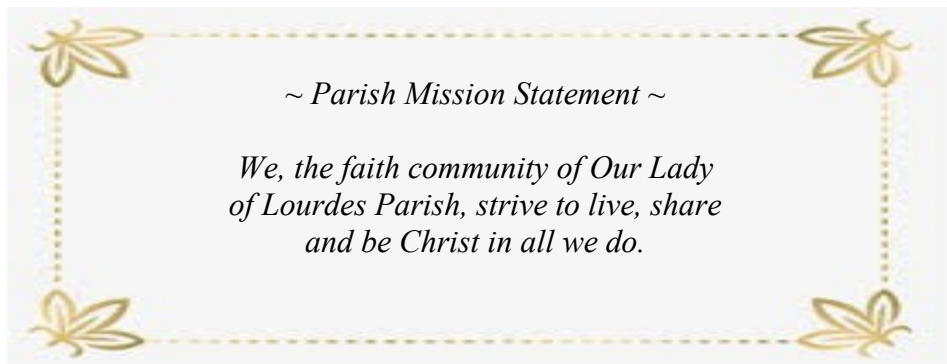
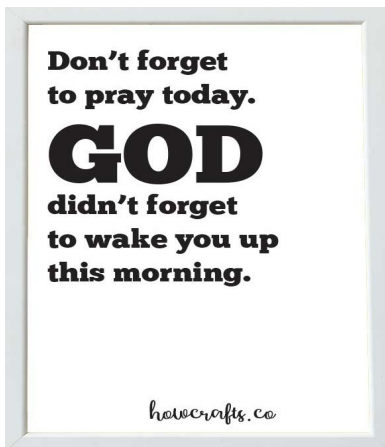
“.....spend the appointed time in prayer quietly and peacefully, doing nothing in God's presence save to content yourself with being there, and that without desiring devotion or making any act unless you can do so with facility, sitting there in inward and outward tranquility and reverence, with the conviction that this patience is a powerful prayer before God...In a word, we must be content to be impotent, idle, insensible, before God, dried up and barren, when God permits it, as with facility and devotion....for our union with God consists wholly in loving the one way as much as the other.”

*The Spirit of Saint Jane Frances de Chantal as Shown by her Letters,
Quoted and edited in People's Companion to the Breviary. Vol II*

(Contributed by Lucy Miller in memory of Jane Frances (Miller) Stafford, 1937-2019)

PRAYER stands for ~

- P ~ Presence
- R ~ Relationship
- A ~ Amen
- Y ~ You and Yahweh
- E ~ Expression
- R ~ Recite



Prayer: Give and Take

Prayer is to be in God's presence with open hands and an open heart. There are many things in my life to which I cling as with a clinched fist—my possessions for sure but the immaterial things as well—the work I do, the position I hold, the friends I have, my ideas, my principles, my image. If I should open my fist, they still remain. Nothing drops out. But my hands are open. And that is what prayer is. After a while, if I am willing to remain long enough with open hands, the Lord will come. He will have a look and roam through my hands to see what I have. He may be surprised—so many things! Then He will look at me and ask: "Would you mind if I take out this little bit?"

And I answer: "Of course you may take it out. That's why I am here with open hands."

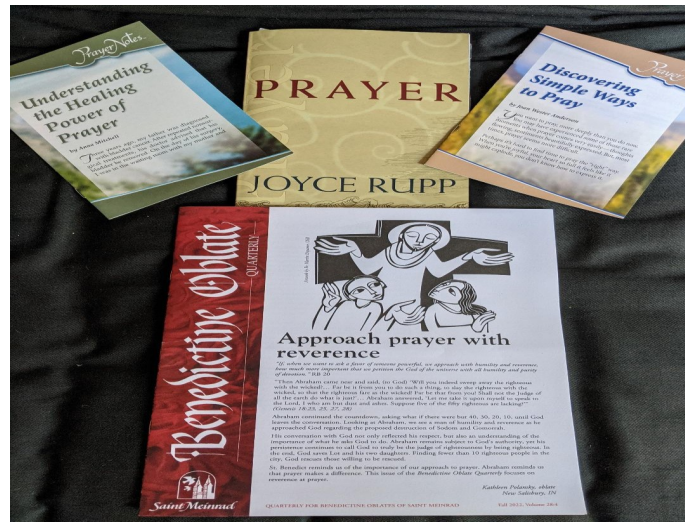
And perhaps the Lord will look another time at me and ask: "Would you mind if I put something else in your hands?" And I answer: "Of course you may." That is the heart of prayer. The Lord may take something out and He may put something in. No one else can do this, but He may. He is the Lord. I have only to open my hands and just stay there long enough for the Lord to come.

—Peter G. van Breemen, S.J.



If you enjoy writing and would like to submit an article, poem, etc., then please see the last page of this publication.

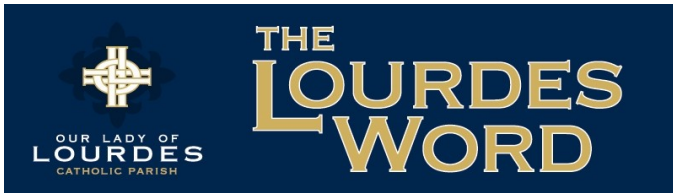
~Inspiration~



What a simple and beautiful prayer. When you wake up say: Jesus I love you ... When leaving the house say: Jesus come with me ... When you feel like crying, say: Jesus hug me ... When you feel happy say: Jesus I adore you ... When you do something, say: Jesus help me ... When you make a mistake, say: Jesus forgive me ... When you go to sleep say: Thank you Jesus and cover me with your holy mantle. Send this prayer to the people you care about ... **God loves you!**

Anyone else have prayer ADHD ? Like you start praying, wander off, come back, and you're all like "God I'm sorry, where was I?"

Pray
more
Worry
Less



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Our quarterly publication of *The Lourdes Word* is an attempt for us, the followers of Christ, to reflect publicly on our faith journey. Each edition has a specific theme. Contained in this issue are reflections on “*Prayer.*”



secretary.

We invite the parishioners of Our Lady of Lourdes to submit writings which they feel will help address the theme of the next publication. All submissions will be reviewed by the publication committee. Please note that due to space requirements, editing may be necessary. Therefore, please limit your submission to 525 words or fewer. The theme for the next edition will be “*Year of the Eucharistic Revival.*” The edited copy will be returned to the author for review before final publication. Please feel free to submit writings through the parish