

SACRED SPACE

The Prayer Book 2020

from the website www.sacredspace.ie

Prayer from the Irish Jesuits





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Sacred Space: The Prayer Book 2020

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Sacred Space Prayer

Bless all who worship you, almighty God,
from the rising of the sun to its setting:
from your goodness enrich us,
by your love inspire us,
by your Spirit guide us,
by your power protect us,
in your mercy receive us,
now and always.

SAMPLE

Preface

In 1999 an Irish Jesuit named Alan McGuckian had the simple—but at the time radical—idea of bringing daily prayer to the Internet. No one imagined that his experimental project would grow into a global community with volunteers translating the prayer experience into seventeen different languages.

Millions of people, from numerous Christian traditions, visit *www.sacredspace.ie* each year, and what they find is an invitation to step away from their busy routines for a few minutes each day to concentrate on what is really important in their lives. Sacred Space offers its visitors the opportunity to grow in prayerful awareness of their friendship with God.

Besides the daily prayer experience, Sacred Space also offers Living Space, with commentaries on the Scripture readings for each day's Catholic Mass. The Chapel of Intentions allows people to add their own prayers, while Pray with the Pope joins the community to the international Apostleship of Prayer. In addition, Sacred Space provides Lenten and Advent retreats, often in partnership with Pray as You Go, an audio prayer service from the British Jesuits.

The contents of this printed edition, first produced in 2004, are taken directly from our Internet site. Despite the increased use of Sacred Space on mobile devices, many people want a book they can hold and carry, and this book has proven especially helpful for prayer groups.

In 2014 the Irish Jesuits entered into an apostolic agreement with the Chicago-Detroit Jesuits, and Sacred Space now operates in partnership with Loyola Press.

I am delighted to bring you the *Sacred Space* book, and I pray that your prayer life will flourish with its help.

Yours in Christ,

Paul Brian Campbell, SJ

Introduction to *Sacred Space*, 2020

Saint Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, is famously known for wanting to find God in all things. *Is that even possible?* you might ask. He believed it was, but only as a gift from God and only as the fruit of our paying attention to our experience. Ignatius developed an optimistic spiritual practice that assumed the presence of God at every moment of our existence. While we tend to think of God's presence as a "sometimes thing," Ignatius came to believe that our perception of God's presence as a sometimes occurrence is a major spiritual hindrance. Ignatius believed that God is always creating this universe, always keeping it in existence, always working to bring about God's purpose in creation, and always trying to move us to join God in the great adventure of bringing about what Jesus called the kingdom of God.

In order to experience this ever-present God, we need to develop a regular spiritual practice, a practice Ignatius had learned from his experience as a relatively untutored layman. Ignatius began to teach people and to write down the spiritual practices that helped him move toward uniting himself with God's purposes and thus toward finding God in all things. *Spiritual Exercises* is Ignatius's manual for those who want to follow his example of helping others get in touch with our ever-present God. God wants a close personal relationship with each of us, and he wants each of us to join him in the great work of bringing about a world where peace and justice prevail. Over the almost five centuries since the time of Ignatius, Jesuits and many others have found through these spiritual practices the answer to their own deepest desires.

Over the centuries, the *Spiritual Exercises* have been adapted in many ways. Jesuits originally followed Ignatius's own practice of giving the Exercises to individuals for thirty days. But they also used the methods of prayer suggested in the Exercises in their preaching, missions, and talks to larger groups. Eventually, houses were set aside for the giving of the Exercises to individuals and large groups. One of the adaptations suggested by Ignatius himself was to make the Exercises in daily life under the direction of someone trained in giving them. In this format, an individual maintained his or her regular daily life and work but promised to devote time every day to the spiritual practices suggested by Ignatius and to see the spiritual director

once a week. In the past fifty years, this adaptation has seen a worldwide resurgence and has touched many lives. It has also been used with groups to great advantage. In modern times, the giving of the Spiritual Exercises has become something of a cottage industry in many countries.

Enter the age of the Internet. Could this new tool be used to help large numbers of people move toward finding God in all things? The answer is a resounding *yes!* Many websites, in multiple languages, try to help people become more aware of God's presence in their lives, using practices stemming from the Spiritual Exercises. One example is the book you have in your hands. In 1999 the Irish Jesuits began offering daily prompts for prayer based on Ignatius's Exercises on the website Sacred Space (www.sacredspace.ie). The English edition was soon translated into other languages, and the site now features twenty-one languages that span the globe.

In my work as a spiritual director and in my travels, I have come across many, many people from various walks of life who use the daily prompts for prayer provided through Sacred Space. People find the site and the daily suggestions to be user-friendly, inviting, and—in keeping with Ignatian spirituality—optimistic. The suggestions help them pay attention to their experience, notice intimations of God's presence in that experience, and engage in honest conversations with God.

For each week, there is an overarching suggested theme and a method for spending time with God every day. One of the methods is to turn to the Scripture and reflections suggested for each day of the week. Each day's text is taken from the Gospel reading for Mass that day. Thus, someone who follows Sacred Space every day will, in the course of a year, work prayerfully through all four Gospels. No wonder that so many have been enthralled by this site!

In spite of the digital age, many of us still like the feel of a book in our hands. The book *Sacred Space*, which you now hold in your hands, was designed for the likes of us. I am very happy to introduce the book and even happier that Loyola Press, a Jesuit institution, is now the publisher. Ignatian spiritual practice has brought me closer to God, for which I am immensely grateful. Through Ignatius's spiritual practices I have experienced God's desire for my friendship, and I figure, if God wants *my* friendship, he wants *everyone's* friendship. If you take this book seriously and engage in the relationship with God that it suggests, you will, I'm sure, find as much joy in God's friendship as I have. Try it—you'll like it.

William A. Barry, SJ

How to Use This Book

During each week of the Liturgical year, begin by reading the section entitled “Something to think and pray about each day this week.” Then proceed through “The Presence of God,” “Freedom,” and “Consciousness” steps to prepare yourself to hear the word of God in your heart. In the next step, “The Word,” turn to the Scripture reading for each day of the week. Inspiration points are provided in case you need them. Then return to the “Conversation” and “Conclusion” steps. Use this process every day of the year.

The First Week of Advent
December 1—December 7, 2019

Something to think and pray about each day this week:

In a way, it is we who have to make the Gospels meaningful, because their meaning is not meant to be contained in the covers of a book, however well read. The Scriptures function fully as revelation when we reveal the love of Christ in what we say and do. The Bible, without readers who love, is just a book on the shelf. . . .

The Scriptures testify to a love called for whether we're simply passing strangers on the sidewalk, living next to neighbors, attending to the needs of a friend, or involved in an ugly dispute with someone we passionately dislike. The span of time, whether seven seconds or seventy times or seven years, makes no difference. Love is eternal; it is unconstrained by time.

—Kyle C. Cupp, *Living by Faith, Dwelling in Doubt*

The Presence of God

“Be still, and know that I am God.” Lord, your words lead us to the calmness and greatness of your presence.

Freedom

I am free. When I look at these words in writing, they seem to create in me a feeling of awe. Yes, a wonderful feeling of freedom. Thank you, God.

Consciousness

At this moment, Lord, I turn my thoughts to you.
I will leave aside my chores and preoccupations.
I will take rest and refreshment in your presence, Lord.

The Word

The word of God comes down to us through the Scriptures. May the Holy Spirit enlighten my mind and my heart to respond to the Gospel teachings. (Please turn to the Scripture on the following pages. Inspiration points are there, should you need them. When you are ready, return here to continue.)

Conversation

Begin to talk with Jesus about the Scripture you have just read. What part of it strikes a chord in you? Perhaps the words of a friend—or some story you have heard recently—will slowly rise to the surface of your consciousness. If so, does the story throw light on what the Scripture passage may be trying to say to you?

Conclusion

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen.

Sunday 1st December

First Sunday of Advent

Matthew 24:37–44

For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.

- As we begin our new church year in Advent, we are reminded that we are to be ready and looking forward to the Lord's appearance. This call can come upon us suddenly. However, a person who is watchful and full of hope will be quick to recognize the Lord when he appears. Even in day-to-day life, Jesus comes to us through people, situations, even our own prayer. Today, pray expecting to see him.
- Jesus desires our friendship when he calls us and offers his friendship. And this offer continues throughout life. How can you develop your friendship with Jesus here and now?

Monday 2nd December

Matthew 8:5–11

When Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, appealing to him and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible distress." And he said to him, "I will come and cure him." The centurion answered, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does it." When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to

those who followed him, “Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”

- The centurion interceded with Jesus on behalf of his servant, not himself. Who do I want to intercede for today?
- “Lord, I am not worthy.” Do I ever feel that way? Do I ever feel that I am getting more than I deserve? We live in a culture of entitlement, thinking we deserve to get everything on offer. How about me?

Tuesday 3rd December

Saint Francis Xavier, Priest

Luke 10:21–24

At that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” Then turning to the disciples, Jesus said to them privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.”

- Christian joy is a deep reality. It is different from being lighthearted or in a good mood. Its fundamental constituent is peace. As in Jesus, so in us, it comes from the Holy Spirit. What is my own experience today?
- Children trust their parents and, because of that trust, listen to what their parents say. Jesus trusted and listened to the Father. Can I imitate that trust in my prayer today?

Wednesday 4th December

Matthew 15:29–37

After Jesus had left that place, he passed along the Sea of Galilee, and he went up the mountain, where he sat down. Great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many

others. They put them at his feet, and he cured them, so that the crowd was amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel. Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way.” The disciples said to him, “Where are we to get enough bread in the desert to feed so great a crowd?” Jesus asked them, “How many loaves have you?” They said, “Seven, and a few small fish.” Then ordering the crowd to sit down on the ground, he took the seven loaves and the fish; and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all of them ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full.

- The people who came to Jesus were broken people. This is still true. It is why I am here, listening to him. Where is my life broken; where do I need his healing power? It is important to get in touch with that place in my life.
- Jesus feeds us well with the miraculous food, which is his Word. There is more than enough to satisfy our hunger completely. We listen and chew and digest, and we feel the peace it brings.

Thursday 5th December

Matthew 7:21, 24–27

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. . . . Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!”

- We establish our belief by acting on it. Jesus knew that only those who followed God through action would build for their own faith a strong

foundation. What action will I take today to live out my faith and help it grow stronger?

- Lord, Francis Xavier experienced the rains of misfortune and floods of disaster as he worked to spread your word. When I am threatened by disasters that seek to smother me and overwhelm my faith in you, keep me firm—keep me rooted in you, my rock!

Friday 6th December

Matthew 9:27–31

As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, crying loudly, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!” When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to him, “Yes, Lord.” Then he touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith let it be done to you.” And their eyes were opened. Then Jesus sternly ordered them, “See that no one knows of this.” But they went away and spread the news about him throughout that district.

- The blind men were not afraid to be heard—they cried out for you loudly. May I be unafraid to voice my needs, whether in private prayer to you, Lord, or within my faith community when I need your assistance through their gifts.
- Lord, I name for you a specific need today; I know you are able to help me. Please touch my life where it needs restoration.

Saturday 7th December

Saint Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Matthew 9:35—10:1, 5a, 6–8

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure