

Prayers & Reflections

For Catholic Teachers

Compiled by
Ann Rennie

2020



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Contents Page

Introduction	2
January	5
February	10
March	30
April	52
May	74
June	95
July	117
August	140
September	161
October	183
November	205
December	226
Feast Days and Special Days	242
Bibliography	244

Introduction



Prayer feeds the soul. It connects us with God and makes us look inside ourselves, to see who we truly are as Catholics and educators in witness to those we teach. The daily practice of prayer helps to develop a thoughtful and reflective capacity, much needed in a world where busyness and immediacy seem to prioritise the superficial and the shallow. Prayer can make us look at the world and its wonder and woes in a new, deep and hopeful way. Prayer is about surrendering time. It is about going in, soul-searching and not being afraid to seek what it is we need from God and from ourselves.

It is also about what we do as a faith community in the Catholic tradition. We are accustomed to gathering together to pray. In our Catholic schools, this tradition is as vital as ever, if not more so in a world of demand, disruption and distraction. It reminds us of our foundational stories and provides us with the spiritual impetus to lead our students to the message of the gospel. Prayer is a time for stilling, for catching our breath with God, albeit briefly in the staff meetings that punctuate the teaching and learning day.

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (534) prayer is the raising of one's heart and mind to God. In this encounter we enter a personal relationship with God and join with all those past and present – the communion of saints who have prayed with similar fidelity and earnestness in the Catholic community. Praying together unifies the staff in a manner of belonging. It is something easily undertaken when the right disposition, individually and collectively, is present. The Benedictine nun, Joan Chittister, reminds us that prayer is an attitude of mind, a quality of soul and a dimension of the Daily*.

To begin prayer properly it is important to get into the zone of stillness and surrender, to be receptive to the prayerful moment. In the staff room at briefings or larger gatherings it is important to treat this time with suitable attentiveness and reverence. We need to be fully present. Put that phone away and the cup of coffee down. Focus and stop fidgeting. The staff room is transfigured into a sacred space when we pray. The prayers we respond to collectively may be particular to our school or charism or to the concerns in our specific community, parish, neighbourhood or city.

Our private prayer is our resting in God: letting God into the secrets of our successes and sorrows, our doubts and delights, unconditionally, no ifs or buts or maybes. Our collective prayer identifies us as a group with a particular emphasis or concerns, often to do with the expectations, joys and challenges of our job as Catholic educators in a sometimes harsh and unforgiving world.

Prayer can be the place where gentleness and grace is breathed back into community, some spiritual nourishment given to continue on in the work of building both the Kingdom of God and a better Australia. Such praying together is an act of faith and a belief in eternity.

In Luke's gospel Jesus tells his disciples a parable about their need to pray always and never lose heart (Luke 18:1). Humans have always needed to pray, to put their hope in the Lord. In the 21st century, in a world saturated by the addictions of the marketplace and the competing demands of a pluralist secular culture, it is hoped that the daily practice of prayer will become for you a sacred, nourishing and life-long conversation with God.

As a teaching profession, praying together will enhance that sense of community and communion, cohesion and collegiality. You are on a 'mission possible' together; the time

spent in prayer together may recalibrate that interior journey for you and for the students you teach. As a consequence, this communal prayer can influence every single day as it unfolds in the classrooms across the country.

This book aims to provide you with prayers and reflections for every day of the 2020 school year. It follows the liturgical seasons: each entry is there to provoke reflection or insight or a renewed way of thinking about your vocation and duty as a Catholic educator.

It is hoped that these selections give you something to think about, a prayerful pause point in the busyness of your day, and a reason to recognise the good you do in carrying out God's work with the children who are the future of the Church and the future of country, this Great South Land of the Holy Spirit.

Ann Rennie

**The Daily is the name given by Benedictines to their current practice of the Rule of St Benedict. Its application places one in constant mindfulness of God's loving presence in every aspect of life.*

27 January – 31 January
3rd Week in Ordinary Time
Sunday Reading: Matthew 4:12–23

Monday

27.1.2020



(AUSTRALIA DAY 26.1)

In this wide brown land there are many peoples who have come from near and far to call this country home.

Let us respect our original inhabitants, our First Nation Peoples, for whom this land is mother, and let us listen to their voices.

Let us respect the many immigrants from all corners of the globe who have settled here in safety and peace.

Ann Rennie

Tuesday

28.1.2020



Listen to your body.

Did you know that every experience you've ever had is stored up in your body, and that your every thought and feeling affects every cell and nerve ending in it?

The human body is God's masterpiece – the divine work of art. It is only through the body that God's best secrets are revealed.

Learn to listen to the wisdom of your body.

Daniel O'Leary
Travelling Light

Wednesday

29.1.2020



With each new year we make and break resolutions to change a habit, get fit, lose weight, read more, join a volunteer group, spend time with family, save, pursue a hobby, cut down on Netflix ... a myriad of things about becoming a better person. Each year we grow in a new way. This year may give you the opportunity to look inside yourself and revitalise who you are and how you see yourself.

Ann Rennie



Thursday

30.1.2020



We are all miracles
living on a miracle
called the Earth.

Joan Chittister
Our Holy Yearnings

Friday
31.1.2020



For many of us, childhood memories of religious formation are suffused with a sense of simple trust. Our parents, grandparents and teachers told us that God created us, loves us and takes care of us.

It's good to remember that those who taught us knew, as we do now, of suffering, pain and shadows.

These experiences may have raised questions, but in the end, they also brought the answers of trust and faith they shared with us.

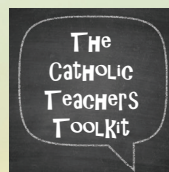
Lord, in this New Year, give me the grace to live in response to the simple truth of your love and care for me.

Amy Welborn
A Catholic Woman's Book of Days

Prayers & Reflections for Catholic Teachers is a must-have for the busy Catholic teacher. This accessible and engaging resource provides thoughtful spiritual insights to assist teachers as they negotiate the demands of today's Australian Catholic school.

These specially selected and compiled prayers, quotes and reflections from traditional and modern sources – saints, philosophers, theologians, mystics and recent public figures – aim to engage the reader and listener in contemplation with observations that are real, relevant and replenishing. The book includes scriptural references related to liturgical Year A, special feast days, and other dates of importance in the Australian school calendar.

Whether it is for daily classroom prayer, a school meeting, assembly, or for personal use, this prayer book is an essential and timely resource for the contemporary Catholic educator.



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