

SACRED SPACE

The Prayer Book 2019

SAMPLE

from the website www.sacredspace.ie

Prayer from the Irish Jesuits





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Sacred Space: The Prayer Book 2019

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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.

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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*, 2019

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.

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.

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Second Week in Ordinary Time
January 20—January 26

Something to think and pray about each day this week:

We're always moving from old to new. Our God is a God of new beginnings and renewal. We tend to be more aware of it during those points in the year that mark transition, like New Year's or Lent. One way of looking at our inherent feeling of lack is what Jesus called poverty of spirit. It describes the reality that I especially recognize each new year: My lack, my emptiness can never be filled completely with resolutions and good choices; only God can fill that space and poverty of spirit gives God the space to fill us. St. Ignatius realized this when he prayed to God, "Give me only your love and your grace. That is enough for me." And so, we build new dreams from the ashes of lack. Yet like all things in this world, they're temporary. We need not lament about our lack. Indeed, we can embrace poverty of spirit as a reminder that only God can fill us completely with love and grace.

—Andy Otto on *dotMagis*, the blog of *IgnatianSpirituality.com*

The Presence of God

Dear Jesus, I come to you today longing for your presence. I desire to love you as you love me. May nothing ever separate me from you.

Freedom

Lord, grant me the grace to be free from the excesses of this life. Let me not get caught up with the desire for wealth. Keep my heart and mind free to love and serve you.

Consciousness

Where do I sense hope, encouragement, and growth in my life? By looking back over the past few months, I may be able to see which activities and occasions have produced rich fruit. If I do notice such areas, I will determine to give those areas both time and space in the future.

The Word

God speaks to each of us individually. I listen attentively to hear what he is saying to me. Read the text a few times; then listen. (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

What is stirring in me as I pray? Am I consoled, troubled, left cold? I imagine Jesus standing or sitting at my side, and I share my feelings with him.

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 20th January

John 2:1–11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

- In some incidents of the written narrative about Jesus we find signals and unmistakable gestures that indicate who he really is. We see magi and shepherds recognizing his lordship at his birth. We see the heavenly manifestations at his baptism in the Jordan. And here in John’s Gospel we see a signal from Jesus himself: the replenishment of the wine for the large crowd of wedding guests.
- A banquet—including the free flow of wine—was always, for the people of God, a figure of the total fulfillment and happiness that would mark the Lord’s final future coming. His overflowing generosity is always available to us. Can I image myself at the Lord’s banquet feast?

Monday 21st January

Mark 2:18–22

Now John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to Jesus, “Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” Jesus said to them, “The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will

come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins.”

- People noticed the contrast between the Pharisees’ preoccupation with laws and regulations and Jesus’ love of celebrations and feasts. They saw Jesus as someone who was always ready for a party, who enjoyed life. In Jesus’ parables, the kingdom of heaven is often a banquet, a wedding, a party. Am I more likely to cling to a set of standards I know well or to join a celebration I don’t quite yet understand?
- “New wine, new wineskins.” Lord, you caution me against having a closed mind. You challenge me not to cling to old ways and to be receptive to the new. Grant me openness of heart and mind. Let me trust in the depths of your creative Spirit, who is making all things new.

Tuesday 22nd January

Mark 2:23–28

One sabbath Jesus was going through the cornfields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?” And he said to them, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions.” Then he said to them, “The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath.”

- The Pharisees were skillful at pointing out deficiencies in others. Before God I review my thoughts and words to take care that I do not measure the world by my own small scale.
- Forgiveness, mercy, and compassion are at the heart of true religion. Without these, only heartlessness and empty performance remain. Lord, would others see me as a truly religious person?

Wednesday 23rd January

Mark 3:1–6

Jesus entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man who had the withered hand, “Come forward.” Then he said to them, “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

- Jesus was being watched to see what he might do, yet it did not stop him from doing good, from bringing life. I ask God for the courage I need to do what I know to be the right thing. The anger of Jesus is passion for life. I let myself imagine how Jesus wants to brush away whatever it is that holds me back from living fully.
- Lord, when you celebrated the Sabbath by healing a person, the Pharisees responded by plotting to kill you. You were stressing that God does not want to make our lives more difficult and does not impose arbitrary rules on us. The great commandment is the law of love. Would people who know me be able to say that I follow the law of love?

Thursday 24th January

Mark 3:7–12

Jesus departed with his disciples to the sea, and a great multitude from Galilee followed him; hearing all that he was doing, they came to him in great numbers from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and the region around Tyre and Sidon. He told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, so that they would not crush him; for he had cured many, so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him. Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and shouted, “You are the Son of God!” But he sternly ordered them not to make him known.

- Jesus is at ease in open spaces: near lakesides, hills, and the sky, unprotected by institutional walls. People converge on him from unexpected places, seeking healing and good news. Lord, I come to you seeking to

be healed and to hear good news. No place is too far that we cannot come to you.

- The magnetism of Jesus is revealed here. Ordinary, unimportant people offer him an enthusiastic reception. They approach him with one desire: to touch him and be healed. Loving energy flows from Jesus. Am I easy about joining this enthusiastic crowd of poor people? Can I admit that I, too, need the healing touch of the Son of God? Do I radiate healing to others?

Friday 25th January

Mark 16:15–18

[Jesus said to the apostles], “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

- Lord Jesus, we leave the frailty that is in us open to your touch. We commit to you the joys and the failures of our lives. Use them to bring good to others.
- I pray for healing for those parts of creation that are wounded and damaged, that have yet to experience the good news that Jesus sends us to proclaim. I proclaim this good news to the whole of creation by the way I live, by being a blessing to the world that God has made.

Saturday 26th January

Mark 3:20–21

[Then Jesus went home;] and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, “He has gone out of his mind.”

- Jesus’ family considers him imbalanced. He has left the security and safety of Nazareth and his carpentry business. He is on course for a head-on collision with the orthodox leaders, and he has recently

gathered a crowd of disciples who will do nothing for his career prospects. He has gone out of his mind!

- Lord, in choosing to live by the gospel, I, too, run the risk of being misunderstood and ridiculed. You faced opposition with determination and courage. Grant me your grace to follow you resolutely, especially when opposition comes from those near me.

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