

SACREDSpace



THE PRAYERBOOK 2021

from the website www.sacredspace.ie
Prayer from the Irish Jesuits



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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.

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 a 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.

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 Campbell SJ

Introduction to *Sacred Space: The Prayerbook 2021*

Someone wrote that, just as there are many rooms in the Father's house, there are many rooms in our personal world: the mental room (for reading and decision-making, for tuning in to wisdom and insight), the emotional room (for love, affection, fear and many other emotions) and the spiritual (where we find meaning and where we pray). A fourth might be the physical (for exercise, dieting and looking after the body).

In Sacred Space we offer nourishment for wisdom, emotions and prayer.

Praying Sacred Space each day has its positive effect. One person writes: 'I am truly grateful for Sacred Space which is an integral and much-loved part of my prayer life'. Another: 'it is a blessing to read your commentaries each morning and to receive the spiritual nourishment you generously provide'. Regular use of the prayer material of Sacred Space gives us a regular meeting with the Lord, an essential element of prayer.

The words of Jesus are divine words with the human voice; Scripture is a privileged place to meet God, so the material of Sacred Space is Scripture-based. Each day's gospel reading from the Roman Catholic lectionary is provided. We read it slowly, even aloud, maybe more than once. We allow the word reach from our head to our heart. The short commentaries give sometimes an interpretation of the gospel reading, other times maybe a prayer. We use them as they are helpful, as we use the other parts of each day's prayer.

In the 'mental room' we feed the mind with some insights on prayer and the Christian life from different authors, which are included in the weekly introduction. We also find there a structure to begin the prayer for each day, ending with conversation with the Lord.

Sacred Space is a help to prayer of the heart, beginning with the word of Jesus. It encourages us to find God in all the experiences of our lives, and also in our joys, hopes, fears and in everything that goes to make up who we are. We approach prayer just as we are, sharing this with the Lord. We hear the words of Jesus and notice that his words are spoken from his heart, from his love for us. He enters into the emotional space

of our lives with his love, into the mental space with his wisdom and into the spiritual space with his invitation to follow him, 'the way, the truth and the life'.

Maybe as we bring all of our life to our prayer, we will know what it is 'to find God in all things', in the words of St Ignatius.

With all this, we ask, 'what is prayer for?' One good answer is that praying is putting on the mind and heart of Jesus Christ and of God. Prayer opens us to receive the greatest gift of all, the love of God. Asked once how a person knows if they are 'praying right', a guide just remarked, 'our prayer is right for each of us if it makes us fuller followers of Jesus Christ'. In the words of Blessed John Sullivan, the Irish Jesuit: 'in prayer don't mind the scaffolding, get at God'.

We hope that you find the material for each day leads you into deeper prayer, either on the www.sacredspace.ie website or in *Sacred Space: The Prayerbook 2021*. All prayer leads us into the community of Jesus' disciples, so maybe we can pray for all who make Sacred Space their daily prayer and know we are part of this worldwide community of praying people, of many denominations and faiths.

Donal Neary 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

29 November – 5 December 2020

Something to think and pray about each day this week:

The terms spiritual and religious are often used interchangeably and most often when people identify themselves as 'spiritual but not religious'. Joseph and Mary, as they are depicted in the Christmas Story in Matthew's Gospel, appear deeply spiritual. They use inner resources to overcome difficulties; these difficulties and challenges don't have to be spelt out to us who are familiar with the account of the birth of Jesus. These inner resources open them to occasions when God's promptings and grace help nudge them into a safer place, even though at times comfort might tempt them to sit still in the same spot for a while.

However, the narrative in Matthew shows how deeply they are immersed in the religion of their days. Quotes from the Old Testament show how these moments are part of something greater and of which they are an important part. The two, religion and spirituality, are one. One definition of spirituality that I cannot forget is that it is the art of making connections. In our prayers and in our ponderings we try to connect with someone or something that can help us make our paths straight and find our own 'Immanuel', or God who is with us (Matthew 1:23). If we remain solely spiritual (if that can be done) then we are left with nothing to connect to and good religion helps us to connect deeply through its rituals, peoples, wisdom and traditions.

Alan Hilliard, *Dipping into Advent*

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 29 November*First Sunday of Advent**Mark 13:33–37*

‘Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake – for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: “Keep awake.”’

- Advent begins today. We spend this time preparing for the coming of Christ into our world. He is here already, of course, but he wants to come closer. Let me be one of his points of entry by keeping awake to open the door when he knocks.
- What has Christ put me in charge of? How am I doing? Will I be delighted to see him when he comes?

Monday 30 November*St Andrew, Apostle**Matthew 4:18–22*

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake – for they were fishermen. And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.’ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

- Simon Peter and Andrew heard the voice of Jesus as he walked by; James and John, while at their work, heeded and responded. Jesus speaks to them, not in a time of retreat, meeting them at their work. What does it mean for me to work in a way that keeps me tuned in to a message that is for my salvation?
- In their everyday tasks, the apostles saw metaphors for how they would be as disciples of Jesus. Are there ways God speaks to me in

my ordinary chores? How might God address me in the language of my every day?

Tuesday 1 December

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.’

- Jesus is rejoicing because the seventy disciples whom he sent out have returned. They are ecstatic about the great things they have done in his name. Whenever I spread the word of God, I too am sharing in the mission of Jesus, and this should give me great joy.
- Our sense of wonder is strongest when we are children and the whole world is new. As we grow older, we become world-weary. We look without seeing and listen without hearing. I ask the Holy Spirit to make me sensitive to God’s self-revelation in the everyday events of my life.

Wednesday 2 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.

- Jesus 'called his disciples to him'. God calls us constantly; we seek him only because he sought us. Our love is a response to his pre-existing love for us. Can I go to God in the confidence that he has compassion for me, as he had for the crowd? That he will heal, nourish and sustain me, as he did the crowd?
- Jesus did not conjure the loaves and fish out of thin air. He took what was offered to him and multiplied it greatly. We must never think we have little to give others. As St Teresa of Ávila reminds us, 'Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world.'

Thursday 3 December

Matthew 7:21.24–27

'Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

[Jesus said to his disciples] '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!’

- St Ignatius also taught that love is expressed more in deeds than in words. Without good deeds there is no real life at all!
- This is our life; listening to the word of God and doing it. We are building up the Church, the Body of Christ, founded on the rock of Peter.

Friday 4 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 start of this encounter is in public. There are crowds around Jesus, and the blind men are caught up in the general emotion. They shout at Jesus using a formal title, Son of David, as though he was a powerful messianic figure dispensing health to crowds. Jesus waits until he is in the house, where he can meet the blind men in person, and question their faith.
- Lord, you do not meet me as one of a multitude, but face to face, on my own, where you can test the truth of my words, free from the illusions of mass emotion.

Saturday 5 December

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 labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the

harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.’

Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: ‘Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, “The kingdom of heaven has come near.” Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.’

- Jesus, in this gospel account I see you engaging with vigilant eyes and ears to the cry of the suffering world of your day. To them you were the compassionate one, bringing balm to the wounded places of their lives.
- Lord, the cries of the poor and broken-hearted are evident in the mass migration daily beamed into my living room. Let me not forget that you summon me today, to be your eyes, your ears and your hands of compassion. May I respond with loving compassion to all who come to me.