

SACRED SPACE

The Prayer Book 2017

SAMPLE

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



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Sacred Space: The Prayer Book 2017
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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 routine 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*, 2017

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 started to offer 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 of 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 an honest conversation with God.

For each week, there is an overarching suggested theme and a method for spending time with God each 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 of the 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 “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 if you need them. Then return to the “Conversation” and “Conclusion” steps. Use this process every day of the year.

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The First Week of Advent
November 27—December 3, 2016

Something to think and pray about each day this week:

The Dynamic of Hope

A driving dynamic of Advent is hope. If we had nothing to hope for, there would be no point to this season. The original hope was for a child to be born who would bring justice and peace to the world and who would heal the rift between humanity and God. But that larger hope is filled with smaller ones—daily hopes that can shape us as people. Some hopes will shape our relationships. The Christ Child grew to be a man who embodied forgiveness and generosity. A life of hope sees the good in others, is patient with their shortcomings, and tenaciously envisions them at their best. Some hopes will shape our life work. The promised Messiah proclaimed God's realm of justice and mercy. No matter what jobs we do or work positions we hold, as hopeful people we maintain fairness and integrity as short-term and long-term goals. We make our work matter for the common good. Some hopes will shape our character. Jesus exemplified hope that cultivates true interior freedom. A hopeful person cannot continue in anxiety, grasping, need for control, and habitual anger. How is hope visible in your life? Where has it faded?

—Vinita Hampton Wright, Loyola Press blogs

The Presence of God

Be still and know that I am God. Lord, may your spirit guide me to seek your loving presence more and more. For it is there I find rest and refreshment from this busy world.

Freedom

By God's grace I was born to live in freedom. Free to enjoy the pleasures he created for me. Dear Lord, grant that I may live as you intended, with complete confidence in your loving care.

Consciousness

In God's loving presence I unwind the past day,
starting from now and looking back, moment by moment.
I gather in all the goodness and light, in gratitude.
I attend to the shadows and what they say to me,
seeking healing, courage, forgiveness.

The Word

The word of God comes to us through the Scriptures. May the Holy Spirit enlighten my mind and 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

Jesus, you always welcomed little children when you walked on this earth. Teach me to have a childlike trust in you. To live in the knowledge that you will never abandon me.

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 27th November

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.

- There are tough images here: floods, capture, thieving. These are frightening, life-changing events. We have one life, and it is precious and fragile. We need to be in tune with Jesus constantly, ready for whatever comes our way, not sleepwalking through life.
- Lord, make me present to your daily appearances in my life. As the poet Tagore says, “He comes, comes, ever comes.” Lord, do not let me miss you, even in my ordinary routine.

Monday 28th November

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 was an officer of the imperial army, a man with power and status. He was begging a favor from a penniless itinerant teacher and declaring himself unworthy even to entertain Jesus in his house. Jesus was amazed, not merely at the trust of the man but at the fact that his love for his servant led him to cut through all the barriers of rank and race. Lord, so much of my life is structured by social conventions and barriers. Give me the grace to listen to my heart and reach out to those that I can help.
- This miracle is unusual for two reasons. Jesus was not actually present when the healing took place: he spoke the word, and the centurion's servant was healed. The servant did not even have to hear Jesus speak the word: it was enough that the word was spoken. Do we realize that when we speak God's word, someone, somewhere, may find healing?

Tuesday 29th November

Luke 10:21–24

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."

- In this scene, Jesus seems to be rejoicing in his disciples, happy that they are with him. He is happy, too, in what God his Father has given to his followers. Jesus rejoices in us just as friends rejoice together and as parents rejoice in the talents and gifts of their children. Perhaps, then, can we rejoice in one another? In prayer we can allow ourselves to be grateful for the goodness, gifts, and faith of others, especially people who are significant in our lives.
- I watch Jesus at his prayer. What is it like to see him rejoicing in the Holy Spirit and thanking his Father? At this moment as I pray, the

three divine Persons are present with me, and the Spirit is praying in me. Awareness of this can transform my prayer.

Wednesday 30th November

Matthew 4:18–22

As Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—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.

- Jesus called the fishermen, speaking to them in terms they recognized. Jesus calls me as I am, wanting me to use my skills and abilities to draw others to life. Peter, Andrew, James, and John responded to Jesus immediately. I think of how slow my reactions are. I try to see what holds me back, and I talk to Jesus about it.
- In the middle of any ordinary day Jesus walks by, sees me, singles me out from the crowd, speaks to me, and invites my discipleship. What attracts me to Jesus? What helps me respond generously to him? Am I a close follower of his, or do I keep my eye on him only occasionally?

Thursday 1st December

Matthew 7:21, 24–27

Jesus said to the people, “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!”

- Saint Ignatius remarks that love is found in deeds rather than in words. Jesus praises good deeds over good intentions that are not carried out. I pray to be like a good servant who does the work God invites me to do.
- Hearing or reading God's word is important, but it is not the end. I take time to let the word of God settle into the shape of my life. I take care not to let it merely stay in my mind but to let it touch my heart and desires as well. I ask God to help me be present to the word. My words are part of my response to God, but I realize that it is not just the saying of words that is important. I ask for sincerity and integrity, that my words will become actions that become my way of life.

Friday 2nd December

Matthew 9:27–31

As Jesus went on his way, 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.

- How could these men follow Jesus if they could not see? By hearing his voice, perhaps. Or maybe others led them to him. How did they know what to ask for? They knew they needed physical *and* spiritual sight, so they asked for more than sight: they asked for mercy. Their faith in Jesus opened their hearts to appeal to him. Their faith touched power in Jesus, and they were healed. They knew their need for God and for others; they did not hide their need and thus were healed.
- 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. You meet me and listen to my desire when it is free from the illusions of mass emotion.

Saturday 3rd December

Matthew 9:35–10:1, 5a, 6–8

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 every disease and every sickness. These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Go 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.”

- This seems to be a really outgoing Gospel reading: we are to look at the big harvest—the sick, the dead, the outcasts. All the needs of people are part of prayer. It is in care and compassion that the kingdom of heaven comes near.
- Lord, the cries of the poor and brokenhearted are evident in the mass migrations 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.