

PRAYER RESOURCES

Books

The Gospel of Luke
Romans 8

The Benedictine Handbook
ed. Anthony Marrett-Crosby OSB
Canterbury Press 2003

The Coming of God
Maria Boulding OSB
Canterbury Press 2001

Marked for Life
Maria Boulding OSB
SPCK 1995

Spiritual Letters
John Chapman OSB
Burns & Oates 2002

The Way of Benedict: Eight Blessings...
Laurentia Johns OSB
SPCK 2019

Where Prayer Flourishes
Thomas Merton
Canterbury Press 2018

Simple Prayer
Wendy Beckett
Quidenham

Making Space for God
Nicolas Stebbing CR,
Philippa Edwards OSB
Mirfield Publications 2019

Websites

www.stanbrookabbey.org.uk

www.benedictines.org.uk

www.sacredspace.ie

THE LAST WORD

Prayer

*God's breath in man returning to his birth,
The soul in paraphrase,
Heart in pilgrimage...*

A kind of tune which all

Things hear and fear...

Softness, and peace, and joy, and love and bliss...

Heaven in ordinary, man well drest...

The land of spices; something understood.

George Herbert

Our Element

The Divinity is the proper vast element wherein the soul shall find life and infinite life. But when out of this element, the soul is like a whale that has been stranded in a brook: the great creature has not space enough to swim or plunge in its waters. Hence it ever desires the ocean, which, for its depth and wideness, is capable of containing it and millions of others. Here these huge creatures...can swim in all fullness and enjoy security from all danger; for they are in their own element.

Augustine Baker OSB (1575-1641)

The one thing necessary.

Dame Catherine Gascoigne (1600-1676)

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LORD
teach us to
PRAY



LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY

Prayer is a relationship with God. As with all relationships, it is about communication, like texting. But unlike texting, prayer takes time to develop; it's not instant: just pressing the 'send' button isn't enough! Yet, we are all born with a deep yearning for relationship with God (*deep is calling on deep*, as Psalm 42 says), and with the capacity to fulfil this yearning through God's gift. Deep down within each one of us lies a hidden well, waiting to spring up in conversation with the God who made us. How do we tap into this source of living water?

First, we need the help of the Holy Spirit - often symbolized as water - to remove anything which may be blocking the inner well. These are chiefly our doubts and fears: doubts as to whether anyone is listening to us; fears that we are not good enough to come into God's presence. The Holy Spirit helps us to come into God's presence just as we are, and to know we are loved and listened to, because Jesus has won us an audience through his life, death and resurrection.

Down to practicalities

Choose a quiet place where you can be alone. It can help to start with some words of Scripture like *Be still and know that I am God* (Psalm 46), or to have an icon, candle or a peaceful picture as a focus to still the mind (maybe try the image of the bowl on the front of this leaflet.) For the early Christian writers, man was *capax Dei*, that is, created with a capacity for God, so when we pray, we are like empty bowls waiting to be filled ever more fully with the Holy Spirit.

You don't have to kneel to pray. Select a position which is comfortable - but not so comfortable that you fall asleep!

An upright chair or a prayer stool may suit you. Some people like to cup their hands loosely, in an attitude of receptivity, as they pray.

Try to become aware of your breathing - this should slow down as you become more settled.

If possible, stick to the same time(s) each day - mornings and evenings are often best, or whenever you can manage. The length of time is probably less important than the regularity. 10-15 minutes is enough to start.

It takes time to be comfortable with silence in prayer, as in any relationship. Don't be afraid to use words. Speak to God as to a friend. Voice your needs. Leave time to listen, too.

Some people find the acronym ACTS helpful:

A – ADORATION Put yourself in the presence of God. Consider God's greatness, majesty and incredible delicacy.

C – CONTRITION Awareness of God's qualities makes us realize our own failings. Tell God you are sorry.

T – THANKSGIVING We are sure of forgiveness when we say sorry. Thank God for this and for every blessing.

S – SUPPLICATION We can legitimately bring before God the needs of others and ask for what we need ourselves.

It can happen that spontaneous prayer or a peaceful, silent resting in God's presence will flow out of this basic structure. Don't be afraid to follow where the Spirit leads...

HOW TO COPE WITH DIFFICULTIES IN PRAYER

- some suggestions

• **Lack of time** God accepts what we have to give. Try to make a realistic time commitment which takes into account your other demands. Don't be over ambitious.

• **Distractions** Treat them like the sounds of children playing in the street - you are aware of the laughter and the shouts, but you needn't go and join in. Keep your gaze fixed within.

• **Boredom** A certain amount of patience is required in any relationship; it takes time to be at ease in another's company. Tell God what you feel!

• **Temptation** One of the biggest temptations is to give up trying to pray. The practice, which has come down to us from the earliest monastic tradition, of repeating short scriptural phrases like, *O God, come to my help or Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me*, can prove powerful in times of temptation.

JESUS' TEACHING ON PRAYER

When his friends asked Jesus to teach them to pray, he gave them the Lord's Prayer. We can do no better than to say this prayer slowly and thoughtfully:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
(Matthew 6. 9-13)

QUESTIONS ON PRAYER and ANSWERS FROM JESUS' TEACHING

WHERE? Matthew 6. 6

HOW OFTEN? Luke 11. 3

WHAT TO SAY? Matthew 6. 9-13

SHOULD WE ASK FOR THINGS?

Luke 11. 9-13

SHOULD WE PRAY FOR OTHER PEOPLE?

Luke 22. 32; John 17

WHAT SHOULD PRAYER BE LIKE?

Luke 18. 1-18;

Luke 11. 5-8; Matthew 6. 7

Prayer is God's gift to the one who prays

St John Climacus