

FORM 3

A. INTRODUCTION TO PRAYER

This is **NOT** meant as a lesson plan, it gives ideas that can be used to form a lesson on prayer, or to introduce prayer as part of a lesson. It may be more appropriate to devote 10-15 minutes each lesson to prayer, than to have full lessons on prayer. This needs to be decided by each teacher and each class as to what is most suitable.

1. A Nature Meditation

Take time for a 5-10 minutes' walk. Take time to pause, to become aware of all that surrounds you, the smells, sounds, sights, feelings. Pause and focus on one gift of nature: a rose, a leaf, a tree. Feel it, smell it, study it, simply spend time with it. Return inside and write about your experience. Share what you want with the class.

2. Describe God: If prayer is a 'conversation with God' then who do we see 'God' as?

- a) Use an imaginative exercise to begin. Try 'The God Tree' from 'Imagine That', by Marlene Halpin. Or 'The Empty Chair' from 'Sadhana', by Anthony de Mello. Or 'The Thousand Names of God' from 'Sadhana', by Anthony de Mello. (Especially good to use with the New Zealand History unit which looks at the Maori names of God.)
- b) Write a description of God. This could follow one of the above imaginative exercises or a general discussion on 'Who is God' [cf. Student Booklets Form 3E 'Creation and Co Creation', Form 3G 'Recognising Signs of God'.
- c) Use various forms of art work to describe God - painting, collage work, clay modelling. Again, these could be motivated in an imagination exercise or discussion.
- d) Read other ways of viewing God — 'Mr God, This is Anna'; Prayers of people speaking about God. (Refer to Prayers and Reflections section.)
- e) Ask people — teachers, parents, grandparents, priests — whom they see God as.

3. Prayer is a part of a relationship with God. Interrelate this with how we form relationships with people, and how we need communication, trust, time together, sharing with each other.

Discuss the Questions:

How do we communicate with each other?

How do we communicate with God?

How does God communicate with us?

Who do I trust? Why do I trust these people?

Does God trust me?

Do I trust God? Why/Why not?

How do I spend time with my friends?

How can I spend time with God?

Where can I spend time with God?

Does God want to spend time with me?

What does God share with me?

What am I willing to share with God?



Use their answers from these questions to begin praying! eg: We communicate by talking with each other. Take a topic you talk about with your friends and talk to God about it. Note how you feel, react, respond. Discuss these, especially asking — Did you listen to God as well as talk? What happened? How can we listen to God? How did you finish your conversation? Or did God finish it?

4. **Use scripture as it teaches on prayer and about who God is;**
eg: read and reflect on —

Matthew 6:7-15; Matthew 18:19-20; Mark 11:20-25;

Luke 11:1-4; Luke 11: 9-13; Ephesians 3:14-21;

1 Timothy 1:1-8; Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12.

5. **Discuss why we pray**

- Prayer allows us to be in touch with ourselves and to find God's love for us as we are.
- Prayer helps us find happiness as we discover we are never left alone and are always loved.
- Prayer helps us to change. As we come to know God's love for us and to love God, we will discover God's will for us.
- Prayer gives us energy. Just as we eat, sleep and recreate and meet needs of our body and mind, we pray to meet needs of our emotions and spiritual side.

- Prayer heals. Christ was known as a healer as he touched people and enabled them to move on, healed. Sometimes the healing is emotional and spiritual, as he helps us to realise our mistakes, our inner hurts, our sins, and removes our guilt in reconciliation with him and our world. Sometimes he reaches our physical pain — in prayer, in anointing.
- Prayer helps solve problems. 'A problem shared is a problem halved' is true for problems shared in prayer as well as those shared with friends, parents and advisers.

6. Look at 'How We Pray'

- Find out how they pray now. Look for the hidden as well as the obvious prayer!
- Introduce briefly the different forms of prayer there are, emphasising that they will learn and practise these during their time at school and on retreats.

There are a number of ways of describing these different forms:

- a) Prayer when we are alone
 - Group prayer
 - Formal prayer in the sacraments.
- b) Prayer as Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving, Supplication, as we talk with God and with Jesus and the saints and angels, particularly my baptismal saint(s) and with Mary, the Mother of Jesus.
- c) Prayer as — Formal memorised prayers
 - intercessory prayers
 - praying with the imagination
 - traditional prayers
 - praying with scripture
 - liturgical prayer
 - meditative prayer
 - creative prayer including art, drama, movement, song
 - reflective prayer
 - Taize prayer
 - journalling
 - praying with the psalms
 - healing prayer
 - visiting the Blessed Sacrament
 - talking with God.



7. What we need to do if we decide to PRAY!

Find a **PLACE** — a place where we are happy to meet God. This place might change. It might be our room, a place outside, a spot in a chapel or church. Emphasise this is not the **only** place we pray. We pray 'on the spot' during the day as we realise God's presence with us, but this is the place we set aside just for 'God and Me' times.

Find a **TIME**. It might be one minute, it might be five minutes, and as we grow in prayer so might the time we spend in prayer grow. We need a time when we are undisturbed: first thing in the morning, last thing at night, at lunch time. This time is an important appointment you've made to keep.

Find a **POSITION**. Do you want to sit on a chair, on the floor, kneel, lie..?

Now you are ready to pray.

Take time to get comfortable. Take time to let go of all that's happening and to come into the presence of God.

- Concentrate on your breathing. Don't change it, just be aware of it.
- Feel your clothing on you. Feel your points of contact with your chair, the floor.
- Listen. Listen to noises far away, noises near you, noises within you,
- your heart, your breathing.
- Slowly let go of these noises.
- Now you are ready to talk with God.

Practise these as a class a number of times with simple prayers to follow — depending on what type of prayer you are concentrating on. Try finding different places for them to experiment with. Allow room for a different position. Give different lengths of time. Talk about their reactions, as a group and as individuals. Encourage them to write about their experiences. As to the type of prayer you lead into, the suggestions for **Form 3** are **Formal Prayer**, **Intercessory Prayer** and **Praying with the Imagination**.





Make copies of worksheets (Masters 1 & 2) (Prayer: When, Where & How?) for students. Students complete these sheets individually. Then they may use them as a basis for discussion.

P R A Y E R

When, Where and How?

A monk once went to his spiritual adviser and asked:

'Father, is it all right if I smoke while I'm praying?'

'Certainly not!' came the reply.

Some time later the monk returned and asked:

'Father, would it be permissible for me to pray while I'm smoking?'

'Why, of course you may.' was the answer.

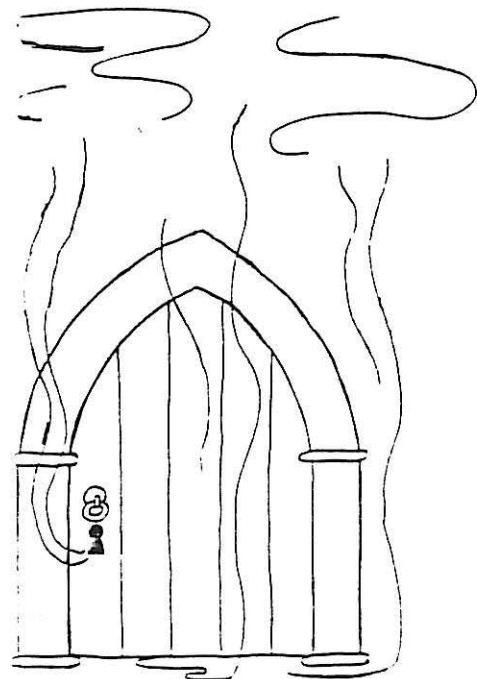
This incident makes two points about the way we fit prayer into our lives.

What are they?

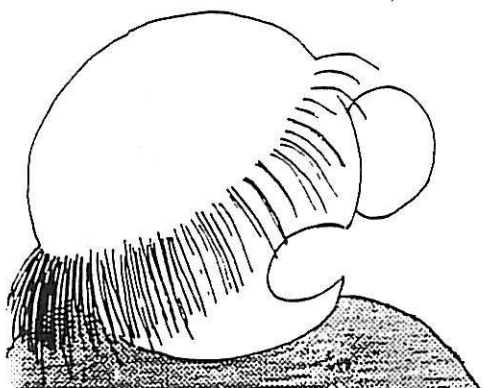
Read Matthew 6:5-13

What do these verses say about:

- the place to pray?
- the way to pray?
- the things to pray about?



It's only
Brother Ignacius
meditating again!



Here are some things people have said about prayer. Cross out the things you completely disagree with. If you want to add anything to any of the statements, write in the space provided. If any of them puzzle you, put a question mark by them. Compare what you have left with the rest of the group and discuss.

- It is best to pray in your own words. It seems more sincere.
- Prayers should be as short as possible.


MASTER SHEET 2.

- c) We don't need to pray very often because God knows what we need.
- d) It is good to learn prayers off by heart.
- e) Whatever we say won't make any difference to what God does
- f) We should pray often even when we don't feel like it.
- g) Even if we are searching and doubtful we can still pray.
- h) The Lord's Prayer is enough in itself. We don't need any other prayers.
- i) We can pray without saying anything at all.
- j) Prayers are more powerful if we kneel and close our eyes.
- k) We can pray at any time, but we should keep a special time each day for prayer.
- l) Work is prayer and prayer is work.

'Most People do know how to pray in theory. They have just never made the effort to put it into practice!'

Discuss.

From: **Live It Up**, by Michael Proctor, SCM Press 1973
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 Photocopy this page for students - encourage them to keep a 'Dear God ...' diary for a day — writing a short prayer at the beginning of each lesson/ commitment of the day.

8. In Case We Forget to Pray

We do not need to limit prayer to a few minutes at the end of the day, or before meals. Imagine what it would be like if for one day we actually did 'make every thought and action a prayer'. I wonder . . .

- 6.45am** Dear God, my dad just woke me up and it's only quarter to seven. He said he has to drop me off early this morning, so I have to hurry. I wish it was Saturday or somehow there was no school so I wouldn't have to get up. Please help me to choose the right thing to wear today, let me do well on my maths test, and make today better than yesterday.
- 8.30am** Dear God, my friend Carol is absent today. School will not be half as much fun without her. Some people in this class are hard to get along with and it always seems better when Carol is around. We have been in the same class since I first moved here five years ago. Our last names begin with the same letter so she almost always sits behind me. Thanks for my friends, God, especially Carol.
- 10.30am** Dear God, maths is my worst subject. Do I really need to know this stuff? I just hate it when we have tests. I do study, but somehow I can't get a good grade. My dad says maths is important and I'd better do well if I want to get a good job later. Help me, God, to do well on this test and to be really successful later on, too.
- 11.30am** Dear God, we learned that people are hungry all over the world and that we should not waste food, but this sandwich is awful. My sister put mustard on it again and she knows I hate it. I wish for once I could eat what I want.
- 1.30pm** Dear God, I feel so stupid in these gym shorts. My legs are really skinny and I know everyone laughs when I run after the ball. At least my team won. God, help me to grow taller and bigger and keep on winning.
- 3.30pm** Dear God, there is never anything to do after school. I'm supposed to stay in the neighbourhood, but nobody my age lives here. If only my bike didn't have a flat tyre. If I had a new bike, I could get around more easily. I'd like to get a job to have some money but who would hire a twelve year old? God, I wish I wasn't so bored! I suppose I will just watch TV.
- 6.00pm** Dear God, why do we bless our food? I must have said this prayer a thousand times. Sometimes we forget and it feels strange to remember half way through eating. I kind of feel guilty when that happens. God, I really am thankful for this food even when I don't say the prayer.
- 8.30pm** Dear God, my mother made me get off the phone after only a few minutes. I wanted to find out who was going to be at the mall on Saturday so I could get a ride. It sounds like everyone is going and I hope I can go, too. I'm sure dad will let me - I just have to convince mum. Help her to say yes, God, and I will try to get along better with her.
- 9.30pm** Dear God, today was not so special. Maybe tomorrow something really good will happen to me. Good night God.

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B. FORMAL PRAYER

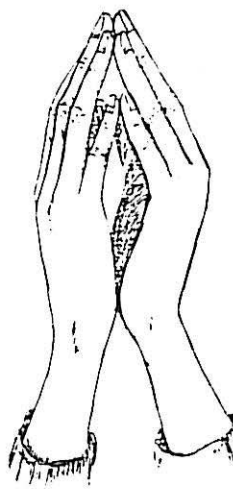
1. **It is recommended** that third form students **learn** the following prayers:

The Our Father
The Hail Mary
The Apostles Creed
The 'Glory Be'
The Sign of the Cross

2. **It is recommended** that third form students **become familiar** with the following prayers. Teachers may also introduce other prayers according to the needs of the class.

The Nicene Creed, (Relate this to 3D 'The Church's Story - The Beginnings')
The Gloria
The Magnificat
Act of Contrition
Grace before and Thanksgiving after meals
Prayer for the Faithful Departed
Morning and Evening prayers
The Memorare

The words of these and some reflections can be found in the 'Prayers and Reflections' section of this resource book. Students should be encouraged to read them at the beginning or end of class, as part of class or school prayer services, and to think and discuss the meaning of what they are reading. Students may write their own reflection on what the words mean to them, or make their own versions of these well known prayers.



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C. PRAYING WITH THE IMAGINATION

Follow the procedure described on pages 3-6 to prepare for any of the following:

1. **Take an object from creation** — leaf, flower, rock, twig, pine cone. Take time to feel it, smell it, observe it. Learn all you can about it. Now let your imagination take over — what is the object telling you? If it is a rock it may tell a story of being broken off from a large rock in a storm, of being thrown around in the water of a river, being cast up on the shore to be run over by many feet, left in the hot sun, exposed to cold rain, hidden under piles of earth. Re-found, picked up and carried, thrown about . . . Next, stop to listen — ask God to help you discover what this object is telling you about your life. It may be that the rock is telling you there are lots of hassles at the moment as you're tossed about by teachers, parents, fellow students, or maybe your rock is firm and strong and tells you about the support you have. (Teachers need to create their own stories to spark students' imagination — but then let their imaginations go). Conclude by either reciting a commonly known prayer and allowing time for brief sharing by any who want to, or allowing students time to write or draw a reaction.
2. **Distribute pictures to the class** — the same or different — allow time just to stare, to let thoughts come and go. Then write a caption for the picture. If the pictures are simple and black and white, you may also encourage students to colour them. Those who are artistic may prefer to draw their own.
3. **Use the imagination to 'find space'**. Let your mind go quiet, and as it does let it discover a place where you feel safe and secure; it might be a place you know or a place you invent. Spend a little time exploring this place, get quite familiar with it, so that you can revisit it whenever you feel you need a space to think, to be alone, to rest in.
4. **Imagine yourself to be a tree**. Imagine your feet lead down into the ground as roots, that your arms are branches. Once you've come back to reality, consider what it was like to have 'firm roots'. Do you feel you have firm roots in your life? What role did your branches have?
5. **Use a story that leads to the use of the imagination**. See Resource list for possible books, or tell your own stories.

For Example:

Imagine you are walking along a beach, have a good look around. Look out to sea, watch the waves, hear them coming in, look to the sandhills... What do you see there? Look ahead along the beach. Look up, watch a sea gull. Now look ahead again; you see a lump in the sand. You wriggle your toes in the sand and find it is hard. You start to dig to discover what it is. You find a big solid box, you lift the lid. What's inside the box? Take time to look through its contents. Now close the box. Keep walking on the beach and slowly come back into the room.

Reflect — Write — Draw — Share

6. **Use the lyrics of a song to lead the imagination**, allow students to listen several times, imagining what the song is telling them. Allow time for them to write or draw or share their responses.
7. **Following any of these exercises using the imagination**, encourage students to write, create, paint or draw a reaction to their imaginative response.
8. **Fantasy Walk**

This is a type of prayer — a fantasy walk
 — a chance to meet Jesus in our minds

First we must relax

Lie on the floor — arms at your side
 — legs straight, not crossed

Tense up — starting at the toes curl in all the muscles of your body hard
 — Hold it . . . relax (x 3)

Now, hold on to that sensation of relaxation, let all the muscles of your body go and stay loose.

Silently tell your feet to relax
 your legs to relax
 your torso
 your arms
 your shoulders
 your face

Now, think of your favourite outdoors place for relaxing— somewhere sunny and quiet that you have visited before.

In your mind travel there now. Picture yourself in the middle of that scene. See the bright colours about you - feel the warmth of the sunshine, hear the wind rustling tree leaves. Know that you are secure and safe.

Breathe deeply, relax.

In that place leave your cares, tensions and worries — move on from there feeling refreshed in body and mind. Not sleepy but very calm.

Now go from there to the other side of the world — backwards in time by nearly 2,000 years. You are standing near a big river — it is wide and slow moving. The land about it is dry and dusty — the sun at your back is hot and the air is still. There are people about — little groups, most of them are going away. You know that they and you have been listening to that fiery new preacher — the one named John whom people call The Baptist.

You move closer to him — John has just stepped out of the river. His clothes are dripping wet but he is full of dignity, every inch a prophet. As you come up to him he is looking over towards the road. You look that way and there is a man walking but nothing much else. John says suddenly, 'Look, there is the Lamb of God.' You look again, the man seems ordinary enough but you respect John enough to act on what he says, so you walk after the man on the road.

As you come up behind him, he turns and gently asks, 'What do you want?' Not sure how to reply you ask in return, 'Master, where do you live?' He looks you straight in the eye and says, half response, half invitation, 'Come and see.'

In silence for a few moments walk with Jesus . . . look at him . . . try to understand what kind of man he is.

Let him ask you a few questions about yourself. Tell him the kind of person you are.

You arrive at a house. It is as you would expect. Jesus invites you in to sit and talk. Tell him of your hopes and fears . . . Ask him what he wants of you . . . Ask his help.

Evening is coming and it is time for you to leave. As you stand to go, Jesus invites you to return to continue your conversation whenever you can.

You walk away from the house and find yourself walking through time until you are again at your favourite place. You rest there, reflecting until you are ready to come back to here, ready to wake up, to sit up and quietly to look around.

9. Jonah

Read or tell the story of Jonah

Discuss - Jonah sneaked aboard a ship to escape some work he didn't like the sound of. Jonah didn't want to go to a foreign country — he implied that God's love and forgiveness should be reserved for the people of Jonah's land.

Meditation - How often am I like Jonah — sneaking away from work, looking after myself and restricting my love to a few chosen people? How often do I really show some concern for the rest of the human family — the starving, homeless, refugees.

Action - Experience hunger — Either plan a 24 hour fast as a group — or plan a 12-24 hour fast as part of your normal daily programme, (a group doing this can be a real challenge to the group and others.) — emphasising the need to remember Christ's teaching — Matthew 6:16-18.

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D. INTERCESSORY PRAYER

1. **Encourage prayer for daily needs, hopes, fears, forgiveness, to be created orally or in written form.**
2. **Ask students to watch TV news, listen to radio news, read a newspaper and write a prayer related to these.**
3. **Use a set of prepared written intercessory prayers. Refer to pp.112-115.**
4. **Create a 'Prayer Poster' on which written prayers of intercession are placed as constant reminders of the need to pray.**
5. **Create a 'Prayer Box' in which students' created prayers are placed on individual cards — then a group of 6-8 could draw a card that they read at prayer time.**



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E. SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS:

- Bloom, Anthony **Beginning to Pray**
New York: Paulist Press 1970
- De Mello, Anthony **Sadhana**
Anand Gujarat Sahitya Prakash (1979)

A good source of imaginative exercises.
- Fynn, **Mr God, This is Anna**
Collins, London (1974)

Good extracts to help focus on who God is.
- Halpin, Marlene **Puddles of Knowing - Engaging Children
in Our Prayer Heritage**
Wm C Brown Company Publishers 1984

The book introduces her way of introducing prayer
to 5-18 year olds, the types of prayer she has used
and the reactions she has had. Each chapter has a
summary at the end, giving excellent ideas for
introducing prayer.
- Halpin, Marlene **Imagine That**
Wm C Brown, Iowa (1982)

Another good source of imaginative exercises.
- Pennock, Michael **Prayer and You. A Journey with the Lord**
Ave Maria Press (1985)

This consists of a teacher's manual and pupils'
book. These include an introduction to prayer,
why we pray, how to pray, ideas for meditation
and contemplation, praying with the saints and
praying with others. They include both exercises
in praying and written exercises about prayer.

