

FORM 6

A. TAIZÉ PRAYER1. **A Background to Taizé**

In 1940 Brother Roger arrived, alone, in the almost deserted village of Taizé, France. For two years he remained alone, praying morning, noon and night and hiding refugees, especially Jews fleeing Nazi occupation. By Easter 1949, seven brothers had gathered at Taizé and they made the first commitment to celebrate community life. The Taizé movement has steadily grown; men of Catholic or of Protestant background commit themselves to lifelong monastic vows. Since 1966, sisters of an international Catholic community, live in the neighbouring village. These women live according to the spirituality of St Ignatius of Loyola and assist with hospitality for the Taizé community.

As well as these two permanent communities, people gather from all over the world for week-long meetings to explore their faith; three times a day they gather for common prayer. During this time of prayer a psalm is sung, passages of scripture are read in various languages, after which there are long periods of silence. In the evening those who wish to continue to pray, sing small repetitive chants; these are what are now known as Taizé prayer. The chants, repeated over and over again, lead to the discovery of a meditative quality of prayer, for they express a reality of the Gospel which is easily understood and gradually penetrates the whole person.

2. **Resources for Taizé Prayer are:**

Prayers and Music

Praying Together in Word and Song

UK: Mowbray, USA GIA

Music from Taizé (2 Volumes)

Collins Liturgical Publications.

Cassettes - Audio/Visuals

Taizé, 36 Slide set plus cassette with commentary and music.**Taizé - 'That Little Springtime'** Video

Cassettes:

**With You Always; Laudate : Music of Taizé; Resurrexit;
Chanter Ensemble; Canon and Liturgies; Alleluia;
Watch and Pray.**

FORM 6**B. JOURNALLING**

When teaching students to keep a journal, it is important they have something to journal about, that they are aware that the journal is for them and nobody else - it is not going to be checked, handed in, read, shared unless they choose to; that there is a great variety in the ways of journalling, including prose writing, poetry, copying writing of someone else, or from scripture that has specific meaning for them, drawing, painting, collecting significant 'things', such as leaves, pressed flowers, pictures etc.

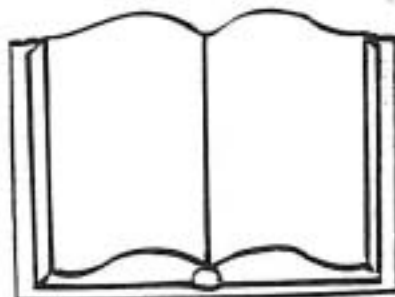
Most students will be familiar with writing about their prayer experiences from various aspects of praying they have practised in Forms 3-5; if possible check with these teachers as to what the students are familiar and comfortable with and introduce journalling using some of these, before extending them from there.

The Journal

The journal may be an ordinary exercise book, a folder, or a special book designed as a journal.

If using an exercise book or folder, encourage students to **'personalize'** their book, in keeping with the fact it is a prayer journal and they may wish to decorate it, illustrate pages, place quotes on pages etc.

A book can be designed as a journal by finding suitable quotes or illustrations for each page, photocopying the pages and stapling them together as a special book, or encourage students to do this to their own book. Encourage students to date their entries into their journals, and give time and space (maybe at the end of each term) for students to reflect on what they have written in their journals and even to summarise this space of a time within their journal. In the following sections there are a number of suggestions for the keeping of a prayer journal.



FORM 6

C. DEVELOPING PERSONAL PRAYER

There is no one way to pray. Each person because of who they are, their own experiences, their own personality, their own needs will pray in their own way. If we are serious about prayer, serious about getting to know God, to trust God, to love God, then we need to think about developing our own prayer life.

Stage One**Time**

First we need to set aside some **time** for prayer. It is very true that we can and should pray at any time, and we find we often pray particularly when times are really difficult, when there is something we especially want, when there is someone really special that we want to pray for, and these prayers are all fine. However, we all also know what it is like when a 'friend' comes to us only when they want something, or when they are in a difficult situation. We prefer friends who spend time with us because we are who we are! God too wants to spend time with us, and for us to spend time with God because we are who we are; not only when we want something. To set aside a regular time, no matter how short, is a great start to developing our own prayer life.

Space

Where can we pray, giving our attention to God, and away from disruptions? Scripture tells us Christ went to the hills, alone, to pray; and Christ himself tells us to go to our room and shut the door, then pray. Plan a space you can use to pray in. Keep it simple, keep it in the realm of the possible!

How to Pray

Whilst at school and on retreats you will have looked at many ways of praying. Write down all the ways you can remember.

The list may include:

Formal	Liturgical
Imaginative	Praying with the Gospels
Intercessory	Psalm and other Scripture
Devotional	Taizé Style
Journalling	Reflective
Creative prayer with art, clay, writing, music, movement, nature . . .	

List these in order of those you have found most useful to you as prayer .

Write a comment about each type of prayer, especially ideas you would like to explore, questions you have about them, what you have found helpful or not helpful. Discuss these as a class, or if some prefer, individually, with a spiritual director/companion/chaplain.

At this point suggest students make a '**personal prayer plan**' in their journals, for one week, writing down the times, places, types of prayer they intend to use. Review this after a week, the difficulties, the good things, the frustrations, the joys.

Stage Two

Our personal prayer life is not just prayer alone, but includes praying as part of a community. There are many ways we pray as part of a community. Discuss these; for example, we pray together when we celebrate each of the sacraments, when we come together for family prayer, prayer groups, prayer chains, intercessory prayer, 'praying communities' - such as the contemplative religious orders, (Carmelites in Auckland and Christchurch, Cistercian Monastery at Kopua in the Hawkes Bay) - prayer life of active Religious Communities.

With the class, investigate what community prayer opportunities are available within the local parish or parishes; if possible organise for some students to visit each group and report back to the class, or have a speaker visit from these groups.

Invite members of local Religious Communities in to share about their community prayer life, or visit them at a time of community prayer.

Write to the Monasteries in New Zealand to find out about their community prayer and how they feel this is part of Church community.

Discalced Carmelite Nuns Carmelite Monastery 636 Mt Albert Road Auckland 3	Cistercians Southern Star Abbey Kopua Takapau - Hawkes Bay	Discalced Carmelite Nuns Carmelite Monastery 52 Halswell Road Christchurch 2
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Within the class organise various forms of community prayer — a class prayer group (voluntary!), a class prayer chain.

Suggest students continue their 'personal prayer plan' but add on some form of 'community' prayer, be it the Eucharist, family prayer, a group of their own, and record their feelings, reactions, thoughts, in their prayer journal.

Stage Three

Feeding Prayer

In stage one we commented on different types of prayer that we could use, and we tried some. Prayer needs to be fed, nourished, lived, and so we need to look for sources for this. These may be:

- Books - including scripture
 - Community prayer times
 - A spiritual director or companion
 - Retreat times
 - By using a variety of forms of prayer.
- Discuss the role of a spiritual director/companion.
 - Discuss what retreats and retreat facilities are available in your area for adults wanting retreats. You may even encourage some to join an adult weekend retreat that would be suitable and ask them if they are able and willing to discuss this with the class.
 - Feed their prayer with handouts from which they may pray, suggestions for 'prayer this week', allowing the freedom to try or not in their own time and encouraging the keeping of journals by occasionally giving time for group sharing or individual sharing in these journals.

Stage Four**Prayer and Life**

A time to emphasise that our prayer life and our everyday life are not two distinct aspects of life, but are integrated.

Take time to meditate on Psalm 139 (See section on **Praying with the Psalms**)

Suggest that students spend time reflecting on everyday events in their lives in their prayer journals as well as at specific prayer times.



FORM 6

D. CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE FOR PRAYER

When we gather as a community to pray, or when we set aside time alone to pray it can help our time of prayer to create a suitable atmosphere; however we should never lose sight of the fact that we can pray anywhere at any time in any atmosphere!

The Form 4 section on Liturgy (pages 29-43) includes ideas that can be used for setting the atmosphere for prayer. In Form 6 students need to explore the possibilities both for group prayer and for individual prayer, and to be encouraged to keep a record of their reactions, feelings and ideas in their journals. The following are some suggestions:

1. Whenever possible take opportunities to pray:

- in different places
 - a formal church
 - outside
 - where they can lie on the floor
 - sitting on the floor
 - sitting on straight chairs
 - sitting in a circle, in rows, in no order...
- different lighting
 - bright lights
 - candlelight
 - a light focusing on one area - a picture, crucifix, icon, flower...
 - a single candle
 - natural light
 - dimmed light
- different focal points
 - a crucifix
 - flowers
 - a picture
 - the tabernacle
 - a table set with bread and wine
 - a plant
 - the Blessed Sacrament
 - a piece of artwork
- different music
 - traditional
 - background
 - modern
 - instrumental
 - singing...



- 2. Decide on a theme for class prayer** (pp.33-40 for ideas) and allocate groups/individuals different aspects of the atmosphere to prepare — the lighting, flowers, focal point, seating, audio-visuals, music. You will also need to have a group preparing the actual prayer service and somebody responsible to co-ordinate the different groups.

3. **Give students time to pray individually, choosing their own setting** — make available as wide a variety of spaces, candles, flowers, pictures... as possible. Ensure they have a specific prayer exercise to do during the set time. At the end of the time gather and discuss the types of environment they chose and/or created and how this affected their prayer. (This may be more suitable to retreat days than the school environment.)
4. **Ask students as individuals or small groups to prepare a prayer time for a junior class** — each 1-3 seniors preparing for 4-6 juniors — where they decide the type of prayer, the setting, how they are going to create the appropriate atmosphere and then have the opportunity to lead others in prayer. (This could be co-ordinated to be part of junior retreats.)
5. **Ask groups from within the class to prepare sessions for groups outside the school** — students at a local Catholic Primary school, elderly in the parish, young mothers in the parish, the RCIA group in the parish or any other suitable local groups.



FORM 6

E. PRAYING WITH THE PSALMS**1. Introduction to The Psalms**

The Psalms are a collection of 150 prayer poems gathered together in a single book called the Psalter. All were probably intended to be sung or accompanied by music, but not all are alike. Many are brimming with joy and praise of God's goodness; others are filled with sorrow and lament and a spirit of contrition. Some are aimed at sickness or bad fortune in life and some were used at weddings or on other special occasions.

In Hebrew the Book of Psalms is called Tehillim '**Praises**' and the name captures the meaning of these songs better than any other word. Even in Psalms of deep sorrow and distress the note of confidence and trust in God's goodness always comes through.

The Psalter was Israel's hymn book and it was used in the temple worship and the synagogue long before it was adopted by the Christian tradition. Many of the Psalms have been attributed to King David, 73 altogether, and this is not surprising, as the historical books speak of his musical talent, his poetic gifts and his love of the Liturgy.

The spiritual riches of the Psalter need no commendation. They were recited by Jesus himself - Lk 13:34-35; 20:17-18 and 41-44; by his mother Mary, by the apostles and the early martyrs. The Christian church has adopted them unchanged for official prayer.

Despite their public use most of the Psalms contain a very personal note: quite possibly any single Psalm began in the personal prayer of someone either in distress or feeling thankful and was so appreciated and liked that it was treasured and used by all. In the same way, Christians pray the prayer of St Francis of Assisi for peace, or have recited the famous 'Breastplate prayer of St Patrick' or the 'Memorare' down through the ages.

The Psalms express a full range of emotions and feelings — joy and happiness, security, hope, praise and thanks, confidence in God; these emotions we class as positive. The Psalms also include the more negative emotions of distress, sinfulness, fear, the cursing of the Godless, appeals against one's enemies and anger. These Psalms that express negative emotions and thoughts help us to acknowledge that anger can be very deep, and that we often try to justify our anger by making God a partner to it in our thoughts, words and actions. They also acknowledge how easy it is to become superstitious and give directions on how to address this tendency in our lives.

The deepest insight into the religious prayer of an ancient Israelite comes from the ways the psalmists address God. Certain qualities of God are mentioned over and over again.

Among the most important of these are:

God is holy; God is greater than all gods; God is eternal;
God is a redeemer; God is compassionate and merciful.

The psalmists loved to speak of God under endless descriptive names: not just — **rock, fortress, stronghold, saviour,** but terms such as:

**The Mighty One; The Most High; My Inheritance;
My Portion; My Cup.**

It is important to be aware of the rich language that Israel developed to express the wonderful sense of God's mysterious goodness that they had experienced in so many ways in all aspects of their lives.

2. **In Form 4 students are introduced to the Liturgical Prayer of the Church** — including the Liturgy of the Hours — or office (page 31) as celebrated by Priests and Religious and some laity. This includes singing or recitation of Psalms — students could be reintroduced to this form of prayer — and could use copies of an appropriate section of the office as their prayer.
3. **Discuss the way we pray a Psalm in the Liturgy of the Word** during all Eucharistic Celebrations as a response to the reading.
4. **The Psalms express how the writers were in touch with their inner feelings** — both good and bad, and with their relationship with God. Give students extracts from Psalms such as:

Ps 22: 6- 8; Ps 63:1-2; Ps 131:1-2;
Ps 116:10-11; Ps 133:1.

and ask students to reflect on these — identifying the feelings written about and whether they have similar or different feelings. Students might rewrite the extract to demonstrate their own feelings and relationships in their journals.

5. **Ask students to read a Psalm and choose a line or phrase that they can relate to** — write this line or phrase in their journal and expand their feelings about what it says. If gentle background music is played, students can be asked to read out the line they've chosen at the conclusion of the prayer time. If the group has a strong enough trust element they may also read out their feelings.
6. **Distribute cards with a line from different Psalms:**

<i>God works wonders for those he loves.</i>	Ps 4:3
<i>God will accept my prayer.</i>	Ps 6:9
<i>Lord my God, I take shelter in you.</i>	Ps 7:1
<i>I keep God before me always.</i>	Ps 16:8
<i>I love you, God, my strength.</i>	Ps 18:1
<i>To God belongs the earth and all it holds.</i>	Ps 24:1
<i>To you Lord, I lift up my soul, O my God.</i>	Ps 25:1
<i>God is my light and my salvation, whom need I fear.</i>	Ps 27:1
<i>Lord teach me your way, lead me in the path of integrity.</i>	Ps 27:6
<i>God's love fills the earth.</i>	Ps 33:5

Play quiet background music and have students read their quote allowing a pause for reflection between each quote. Suggest students carry that quote with them through the day and write in their journals what it has meant to them at the end of the day.

7. Encourage students to search through the Psalms and make and design their own prayer cards from appropriate phrases.
8. Use modern Psalms —
 eg: Aotearoa Psalms
 Psalms of a laywoman
 for students to reflect on.
9. Encourage students to write and share their own psalms.
10. Suggest students take one of the qualities of God expressed in the psalms —
 eg: God is holy; God is greater than all gods;
 God is eternal; God is redeemer;
 God is compassionate and merciful;
 or one of the descriptive names of God —
 eg: rock, fortress, stronghold, saviour, The Mighty One,
 The Most High, My Inheritance, My Portion, My Cup
 and find where these are expressed in the Psalms and then write their own reflection on this quality or descriptive name.
11. Meditation on Psalm 139

'Lord you examine me and know me,'

You really know ME - the individual I am,
 My thoughts and dreams, my fears and hopes,
 my joys and problems.

*'You know if I am standing or sitting -
 whether I walk or lie down - you are watching.'*

You know my every action - sometimes I am not sure I even know them myself.

*'You read my thoughts from far away -
 you know every detail of my conduct.'*

But Lord, my thoughts stay so worldly, my imagination takes me in all directions. Do you really know all my thoughts? Are you really so close to me in my every day life?

*'The word is not even on my tongue, Lord,
 before you know all about it!'*

So often my tongue runs away with me. I say things that later I wish I'd never said, or I keep quiet when I really should speak out, and yet you, Lord, know what I am going to say.

'Close behind and close in front you fence me round, shielding me with your hand. Such knowledge is beyond my understanding, a height to which my mind cannot attain.'

Sometimes it does feel as if you fence me around, with rules and regulations, do's and don'ts, but on the other hand it is good to feel you shield me, protect me, hold me, you are close to me, for you are awesome, magnificent, wonderful, and yet you are close and protective. That is what I find so hard to understand.

*'Where could I go to escape your spirit?
Where could I flee from your presence?
If I climb the heavens you are there.
If I flew to the point of the sunrise and venture across the sea,
Your hand would still be guiding me, your right hand holding me.
If I asked darkness to cover me and the light about me to be night.
The darkness would not be dark to you,
Night would be as light as day.'*

Sometimes I don't want to know you, Lord. I seek to do things my own way. I feel I am capable of managing my own life, I think if I forget you, you will not know me - so I hide from you, in my work, in my play, in my thoughts, in my actions, but you are always there close beside me, like a shadow, you never leave me. When I turn towards you, there you are, stretching out your hand of love and hope.

*'It was you who created my inmost self
and put me together in my mother's womb;
for all these mysteries I thank you,
for the wonder of myself, for the wonder of your works.'*

When I think of all that makes me, me . . . my physical body, my thoughts and imagination, my ability to learn and search, my emotions, I can but stand in awe and wonder at who designed the human person, who designed me, as I am, and give thanks that this is the person I am.

*'You know me through and through,
from having watched my bones take shape,
when I was being formed in secret
knitted together in the womb.'*

You know me through and through - every bone, every vein, every muscle, as well as my thoughts, hopes, dreams, feelings.

*'God, how hard it is to grasp your thoughts!
How impossible to count them!'*

I could no more count them than I could the sand, and suppose I could, you would still be with me. God, I cannot grasp my own thoughts, and when I look into the future so much seems uncertain, difficult to plan. I wonder where you are in that future, and yet I know you are there with me, here with me, and in the past I've come from you and you were with me.

*'God, examine me and know my heart
probe me and know my thoughts.
Make sure I do not follow wrong paths,
and guide me in the way that is everlasting.'*

Other Psalms suitable for students to use for their own meditation are:

Psalm 23, 27, 42-43, 51, 63, 67
Parts of Psalms 89, 90, 96, 100, 102, 115, 121.



F. SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

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| Brother Roger | <p>Parables of Community: basic texts of Taizé
Mowbray Publications</p> |
| Fritz, Maureena | <p>The Exodus Experience:
A Journey in Prayer
St Mary's Press, Christian Brothers Publications
Minnesota 1989.
This book follows the Book of Exodus through, developing twenty-two meditations that relate readings from Exodus to our own lives. Each meditation has a passage of scripture, a commentary, reflection and journal writing exercises and a memory verse.</p> |
| Chittister, Joan | <p>Psalm Journal
Sheed and Ward, 1985.
Takes 26 Psalms and develops five prayer ideas with each psalm. The first day you memorise a verse of the psalm. The second day there is a read reflection and thought-provoking question to journal about. The third day there is another reflection and question. The fourth day you are invited to write your own reflection. The fifth day you reflect about what the verse says to you and at the end there is a suggested action. Ideal to use as a class exercise as well as in their own prayer time.</p> |
| Cowley, J | <p>Aotearoa Psalms
Catholic Supplies (NZ) Ltd, 1990.
A great collection of New Zealand/Aotearoa Psalm prayers.</p> |
| Gallagher, M
Wagner, C
Woeste, D | <p>Praying with Scripture
Paulist Press, New York, 1983.
Includes interesting ideas and suggestions for praying with scripture - including Psalms - and journaling.</p> |
| Gateley, E | <p>Psalms of a Laywoman
Anthony Clarke, Hertfordshire, 1988.
A collection of modern, personal Psalms.</p> |
| Green, Thomas | <p>Opening to God
Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame,
Indiana 46556, 1985.
Good background material for teachers on developing personal prayer.</p> |
| Knowles, Andrew | <p>Discovering Prayer
Lion Publishing 1985.
A good look at developing personal prayer in a well-illustrated, practical way.</p> |
| Link, M | <p>The Psalms for Today
Tabor Publishing, California, 1989.
This book places each Psalm into context and then suggests an idea for prayer following one's reading of the Psalm.</p> |
| Taizé | <p>Praying Together in Word and Song
Mowbray, London and Oxford. Second Revised Edition 1988.</p> |