

YEAR LEVEL	9 & 10
TITLE	Prayer and Meditation
STRAND	PRAYER AND DISCERNMENT
SUGGESTED DURATION	10 weeks (25 hours)
ENDURING QUESTIONS	<p>What is prayer?</p> <p>How can I nurture my spirituality?</p>



Unit Focus

Students will focus on the concept of prayer as communication with God, expressing our relationship with God, both individually and communally. Such communication and expression assists in making meaning of life experiences. In investigating prayer, students will consider a range of formal and informal prayer forms.

Achievement Standards

By the end of Year 10:

Students recognise prayer as central to growing in faithful relationship to the living God.

Unit Outcomes

By the end of this unit students should be able to:

1. Recognise that experiences of joy, hope, grief and gratitude are springboards to different forms of prayer.
2. Appreciate the ways that creation invites a response to God by drawing on examples from Hebrew and Christian Scriptures.
3. Analyse and experience a variety of prayers in the Catholic tradition, including meditation, Eucharist, reflection, litanies, Marian prayer.
4. Appreciate elements of prayer including ritual, symbol, sacred space, music and movement.

Key Understandings for Students

- Prayer is communication with God and expresses our relationship with God, through talking and listening to God.
- The Holy Spirit is present in prayer.
- There are many forms of prayer in the Catholic Tradition, both formal and informal.
- When people pray alone, it is personal prayer. When prayer is prayed with others it is communal.
- All liturgies, especially the Mass, are both formal and communal prayers.
- Prayer may express praise to God out of feelings of joy (e.g. at creation); it may express thanksgiving for gifts received, sorrow for sin or petition for things needed.
- Jesus taught about prayer and gave a model for prayer.

- Scripture is a rich source of prayer. Prayerful reading of Scripture leads us to discover and know ourselves more deeply and strengthens our relationship with God.
- Meditation allows us to focus on God and the mystery of God's love given to us in all of creation.
- Mary's Magnificat (Lk 1:46-55) provides a clear example of personal and public prayer. Aware of her own gifts, Mary is able to respond to God's initiative.

Student Context

While individual students differ considerably, a growing idealism and a quickness to challenge, with some emotion, any perceived shallowness or inconsistency in the adult world is a noted characteristic of the year 9 and 10 student. This characteristic leads year 9 and 10 students to question the relevance of the Church in their lives and to question their own relationship with God. At the same time year 9 and 10 students have a capacity for introspection and insight which makes the adolescent more aware of his or her own understandings and values and this inclination to introspection can be channelled to practices of contemplation and reflection.

Year 9 and 10 students have had differing experiences with prayer and liturgy and some will have been positive. The challenge for teachers is to allow the students the validity of their own experience while at the same time inviting them to experience and understand more of the richness of the Catholic tradition in prayer and liturgy. The students' attraction to novel, multi-sensory experiences, and their challenging of more traditional forms of prayer and liturgy, offers great opportunities to introduce them to creative forms of prayer and liturgy which include dance, mime, music, art, meditation, etc.

Theological Background for Teachers

- Prayer is communication with God and an awareness of the Creator's powerful and loving presence. (Ekstrom, 1995, *The New Concise Catholic Dictionary*, p.206)
- Prayer is a human response. It is about life. It is a human response to God's initiative in relationship. In prayer the person attempts to gain a greater sense of wholeness in life. (Archdiocese of Sydney, *Faithful to God: Faithful to People, Stage 6*, p.160)
- In the act of creation, God calls every being from nothingness into existence (CCC, 2566). "Prayer is lived in the first place, beginning with the realities of *creation*." (CCC, 2569)
- Prayer is God's gift implanted into human hearts, an expression of a covenant between the divine and humanity. In this covenant with every living creature, God is calling people to prayer.
- Prayerful reading of Scriptures leads the individual to discover and know thyself more deeply and to develop a relationship with God. (Archdiocese of Sydney, *Faithful to God: Faithful to People, Stage 6*, p.160)
- There are four basic types of Christian prayer: petition, praise, thanksgiving and sorrow. Prayer of petition asks something of God; it centres on human needs. Prayer of praise gives glory to God for God's own sake and acknowledges all that God has created. Prayer of thanksgiving expresses gratitude, humility, and awareness of God's greatness. Prayer of sorrow focuses on human failures and expresses contrition but also focuses on God's ever-present offer of mercy and forgiveness to the sinful human community. (Ekstrom, 1995, *The New Concise Catholic Dictionary*, p.207)
- "By a living transmission – Tradition – the Holy Spirit in the Church teaches the children of God to pray." (CCC, 2661). In the Catholic tradition there are many possible ways to pray, especially participation in the worship of the church community (e.g. the Eucharistic liturgy) and use of church practices such as meditation, reflection, litanies and Marian prayer.
 - The entire liturgy of the Church – its sacraments and rituals, including the Mass and the church's official prayer for each day called the Liturgy of the Hours – is formal prayer. (Zanzig & Allaire, 1996, *Understanding Catholic Christianity*, p.290)
 - "The Eucharistic prayer emphasizes the death and resurrection of Jesus and our own self-sacrificing dyings-and-risings as Christians. The faith expressed in the Eucharistic prayer is

meant to encourage church members to choose ever-new life, love, and personal sacrifice in daily service to the human community.” (Ekstrom, 1995, *The New Concise Catholic Dictionary*, p.97)

- Meditation is an inner quieting so that a person can centre within him/herself and focus attention on something. Christian meditation focuses on God and the mystery of God’s love given to us in all of creation using thought, feelings and imagination. “Be still and know that I am God.” (Ps 46:10) (Zanzig & Allaire, 1996, *Understanding Catholic Christianity*, p.286)
- A litany is a Christian form of prayer centering on a series of invocations and responses (for example: ‘St John: Pray for us’. ‘St Joseph: Pray for us’.) During the Middle Ages, litanies were used to venerate and pray to Christian saints. Litanies are both prayer devotions and rituals in the Catholic community. They are used today in communal church worship, at the Easter Vigil liturgy, at ordinations, and by assemblies at church devotions. (Ekstrom, 1995, *The New Concise Catholic Dictionary*, pp.156-157)
- Because of Mary’s cooperation with the action of the Holy Spirit, the Church loves to pray in communion with Mary, to magnify with her the great things the Lord has done and to entrust our petitions and praises to her. (CCC 2682)
- There are times when the response to God’s presence is one of song or movement or word or art or poetry or silence.

Scripture

Ps 138

I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart;
before the gods I sing your praise;
I bow down towards your holy temple
and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness;
for you have exalted your name and your word
above everything.
On the day I called, you answered me,
you increased my strength of soul.

All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O LORD,
for they have heard the words of your mouth.
They shall sing of the ways of the LORD,
for great is the glory of the LORD.
For though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly;
but the haughty he perceives from far away.

Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies;
you stretch out your hand,
and your right hand delivers me.
The LORD will fulfil his purpose for me;
your steadfast love, O LORD, endures for ever.
Do not forsake the work of your hands.

Lk 1:46-55 Mary’s Song of Praise (The Magnificat)

And Mary said,
‘My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'

Phil 1:2-11 (Paul's Prayer for his Believers)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that on the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Additional Scripture Readings:

Psalms 8 – Divine Majesty and Human Dignity.

O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,
to silence the enemy and the avenger.
When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
what are humans that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?
Yet you have made them a little lower than God

and crowned them with glory and honor.
You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,
all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Psalm 23 – The Divine Shepherd.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.

Luke 5: 15-16; 6: 12-13; 9: 28-29 Jesus Prays Alone

Luke 5:15-16

But now more than ever the word about Jesus spread abroad; many crowds were gathering to hear him and to be cured of their diseases. Meanwhile, he would slip away to deserted places and pray.

Luke 6:12-13

Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles:

Luke 9:28-29

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.

Luke 11: 1-10 How to Pray

He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” So he said to them, “When you pray, say:

Father, may your name be revered as holy.

May your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of trial.”

And he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.’ And he answers from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything out of friendship, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

“So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

Luke 22: 39-46 Jesus Prays Before His Death

He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. When he reached the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not come into the time of trial.” Then he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, knelt down, and prayed, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.” Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground. When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial.”

Major Assessment Task and Rubric

(Part 1 - Definitions)

- Think about the meaning and purpose of prayer and then create your own symbol for prayer. You may like to explore examples such as Leunig's duck or tree. <https://www.leunig.com.au/works/prayers>
- Research what others have said about prayer – your teacher will present some information, and the Internet can also be utilised. Write your own 200 word definition of prayer.

(Part 2 – Scripture, Prayer and the Contemporary World)

- Use a piece of Scripture from the suggested list and create a PowerPoint presentation that utilises images and expresses the meaning of the reading in our contemporary world.
- Newspapers, images, digital photographs may be incorporated. Leunig's cartoons could also be used.
- Give the context of the piece of Scripture (for example, the intended audience, the historical context, the setting in life, what has happened before the passage). This will require research.
- Select a song or suitable music that amplifies the meaning of the presentation. Justify your choice.

It is expected that students and teachers will co-construct an assessment rubric for this task beginning with the below. Teachers are encouraged to assess skills and knowledge from other learning areas that may be included in this task.

	Above the Expected Level	Expected Level	Working Towards Expected Level
Knowledge and Understanding	Meets or exceeds the word limit. Shows analysis of more than two sources on prayer and shows evidence of empathy for the global community.	Meets or exceeds the word limit. Considers carefully more than two sources on prayer and shows evidence of empathy for the broader and national community.	The definition meets the word limit and shows evidence of some consideration of two sources on prayer. The definition expresses some empathy of the place of prayer for the broader community.
	The presentation is very detailed with insightfully selected images and music that communicates the meaning of the Scripture in a powerful way. The context is accurate and amplified.	The presentation contains images and music that supports the meaning of the Scripture. The context is clear	The presentation contains an image or statement that makes limited connected with the Scripture. A piece of music has been selected but there is limited explanation as to why.
	Communication: High level of expertise & fluency in the religious language of prayer. Skilful use of metaphor and symbol to communicate understandings of prayer.	Communication: some experimentation with communication of the complexities of prayer. An ability to use metaphor and symbol to depth understandings of prayer.	Communication: some use of the specialised language and symbols used to write about prayer.
Reasoning	Has insightfully considered the purpose of prayer for individuals and/or communities.	Has considered the purpose of prayer for individuals and/or communities .	Is beginning to consider the purpose of prayer for individuals and/or communities.

Suggested Teaching & Learning Experiences

Focusing Activity:

- As a class, consider why people pray? When do people pray? Where do people pray? How do people pray? Students could organise ideas into a digital sticky note program such as a Jamboard.

Outcome 1 Recognise that experiences of joy, hope, grief and gratitude are springboards to different forms of prayer,

- Use quotations, e.g. from the YouCat p258/259, and ask students to choose one of the quotes which relates most to their own understanding of prayer. Students articulate their response in writing. Present individually or in pairs. Discuss responses in a small group and develop a class definition of prayer.
- Students read formal prayers (see Appendix 1) together. Teacher explains archaic or unknown words as needed. Ask individuals to select particular words, lines or phrases to which they most relate. While still keeping the meaning, students rewrite one of these traditional prayers of the Church in their own words.
Note: The YOUCAT Youth Prayer Book contains an excellent collection of traditional Catholic prayers
- Review, why do people pray? Create 4 groups (e.g. divide the whiteboard into 4) and categorise these reasons into experiences of joy, hope, grief or gratitude.
- Link these experiences to the 4 main types of prayer being petition (hope), praise (joy), thanksgiving (gratitude) and sorrow (grief). Provide the students an example of each form. Have the students research and identify other examples.
- Have the students find or create visual images that reflect the different forms of prayer. Display these.
- Ask students to reflect on their own experiences of joy, hope, grief and gratitude and write prayers in response to all four types.
- Create a book of prayers for younger children. Include the traditional prayers and a few sentences about the meaning of each. This could be taken home to younger siblings, used in junior classes (if available) or donated to the children's groups in the parish.

Outcome 2 Appreciate the ways that creation invites a response to God by drawing on examples from Hebrew and Christian Scriptures.

- Students spend some time on their own outside in a space suitable for contemplation on creation. Ask students just to sit and enjoy their surroundings. Individually, students make an artistic or written response to their feelings. How do they respond to creation?
- Students contemplate images that demonstrate the majesty of the earth and creation in all its diversity. Students collate photos (students may use photos they have taken or found online) to include in a digital presentation.
- Read and illustrate Psalm 148 ; for example insert photos you have taken or other images (or your own pictures or symbols) to accompany the text on a poster or in a powerpoint or collage.
- Students examine the Psalms listed above in the scripture resources and record the different emotions expressed.
- Students read selected Scripture references then reflect and record what each suggests about prayer and praying.
- View video "The Man who Planted Trees" and comment on how this example reflects our call to be co-creators https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aY_zuNtf3_g

Outcome 3 Analyse and experience a variety of prayers in the Catholic tradition, including meditation, Eucharist, reflection, litanies, Marian prayer.

- Teacher leads the class in meditation (Christian), a litany, prayer reflection or a prayer to Mary.

- Develop a guided meditation based on a piece of Scripture.
- As a class, read the Magnificat (Luke 1: 46-55). Divide the Scripture into sections, and ask small groups to re-write one section and explain, in today's language, what Mary is saying. Consider using the students' transcriptions in a class prayer service.
- Design and conduct interviews with people who are willing to speak about their prayer lives.
- Examine prayers written by a variety of people and discuss the image of God that is reflected in each of them. Present a response to the image of God in poster form for display.

Outcome 4 Appreciate elements of prayer including ritual, symbol, sacred space, music and movement.

- Use the categories of voice, listening, movement, music and symbol to explore ways of participating in prayer and ritual. List examples appropriate to each category.
- Students create and decorate a sacred space in preparation for a class liturgy. This could include the preparation of a prayer focus within the classroom.
- Students prepare a liturgy that involves the preparation of space and the use of symbolism, music and movement.
- Allow students to experience silence within the context of a prayer service. Debrief the experience.
- Students visit the school chapel, parish church or a sacred space and identify the symbols used there and what they may mean.

Liturgical celebrations provide opportunities for connection with the prayer life of the Church for reflection and resonance. Such celebrations should be an integral part of every unit, and should be linked to the liturgical year wherever possible.

Use Phil 1:2-11 (Paul's Prayer for his Believers)

Resources

Recommended Resources

Youcat

Youcat Youth Prayer Book

Leunig - Prayer Tree & Common Prayer

Friendly Guides - Psalms, Luke's Gospel, Prayer

Archdiocese of Melbourne (2003) *To Know Worship and Love*. 2nd ed. Year 9 James Goold House Publications.

Nolen, B. (1999). *Prayer Strategies: A Teacher's Manual*. East Melbourne: Harper Collins.

Leunig, M. (1990). *Common Prayer Collection*. North Blackburn, Vic.: Collins Dove.

Kearney, P. (Composer). (2000). The Magnificat [Compact disc]. In *As One Voice* (Vol. 1, Disc. 5, No. 7).

Brookvale, N.S.W.: Willow Connection.

Landry, C. (Composer). (1995). Hail Mary, Gentle Woman [Music]. In *Gather Australia*. Ashburton, Vic.:

NLMC Publications & GIA Publications.

Appendices

Appendix 1. List of Formal Prayers

Appendix 2. Definitions of Prayer