

God's Love Poured Out...

*... into our hearts through the Holy Spirit
that has been given to us.*

Romans 5:5



PRAYERS AND REFLECTIONS

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Introduction

Pope John Paul II, in his letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente (As the Third Millennium Draws Near)*, stated that the task of preparation for the Jubilee includes “*a renewed appreciation of the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit*” (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente* 45).

These prayers and reflections are offered in the hope that they will help us to rediscover and deepen our appreciation of the meaning of that “presence and activity of the Holy Spirit” in our lives; they are simply aids to reawaken our interest in, and deepen our sensitivity towards, Christian prayer. They are offered with confidence in the guidance of that profound interior Teacher – the Holy Spirit.


The reflections are not tied to any specific time or season – like Lent – though readers may feel free to make their own seasonal connections (and, for example, use the ‘Rosary’ and ‘Hail Mary’ reflections during May).

The individual reader will also determine how best to use these reflections; some possibilities would be:

- as personal meditations
- as reflections shared in a group gathered prayerfully for the purpose. There is no specific

structure presented for this; groups may decide to meet for 90 minutes and agree on the material for each following meeting (e.g. “Let’s look at Dadirri and The Gift of Wisdom next time.”

- as prayerful accompaniment to a group study on the Spirit. If the group is using the *Themes for Discussion* book, they may choose one of these prayers or reflections to begin their meeting.
- as focal points for prayer at special times (eg the nine Fruits of the Spirit in a novena of preparation for Pentecost)
- as points of prayerful reflection for those recently welcomed into the Church through the Catechumenate (RCIA).

Whatever path is chosen, our hope is that it will prove nourishing and lead to that deeper appreciation of the Spirit’s presence and activity in our lives that Pope John Paul spoke of. Most of all, we hope that it will help the reader to know of “*God’s love poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us*” *Romans 5:5*. 



Prayers

A Morning Prayer

Holy Spirit of God,
grant that I may meet the coming day
with spiritual tranquility.

Grant that in all things I may rely upon your holy will.
In each hour of the day, reveal your will to me.

Whatever news may reach me this day,
teach me to accept it with a calm soul,
knowing that all is subject to your holy will.

Direct my thoughts and feelings in all my words and actions.
In all unexpected occurrences,
do not let me forget that all is your gift.

Grant that I may deal firmly and wisely with every member
of my family and all who are in my care,
neither embarrassing nor saddening anyone.

Give me the strength to bear the fatigue of the coming day
with all that it shall bring.

Direct my will and teach me to pray, to believe,
to hope, to be patient, to forgive, and to love.

Amen.

*This prayer comes from the Monastery of Optino,
an important centre of spiritual life in Russia
in the nineteenth century.*



Prayers

A Prayer to the Spirit

We give you thanks, Spirit of wisdom,
for you speak to us in ways
that often surprise us.
You uncover truths that
we had kept hidden from ourselves
and support us in tasks we fear to undertake alone.

We give thanks
for your invitations
to growth and intimacy and fullness of life,
and for the comfort you extend
in our often uphill struggle
to be faithful.

Inspire us. Encourage us.
Fill us with enthusiasm
for the mission of your Church.
Transforming Womb of God,
Conceive in us.
We ask you, create life anew:
Faith, the confidence to bear,
Hope, continuously expectant,
Love, the true beginning.

More Than Words

Janet Schaffran, Pat Kozak
Meyer-Stone Books. 1988



Prayers

Prayer to the Spirit

All-loving God,
by water and the Holy Spirit
you freed us from sin
and gave us new life.

Send your Holy Spirit upon us
to be our helper and guide.

Give us the spirit of *wisdom* and *understanding*,
the spirit of *right judgement* and *courage*,
the spirit of *knowledge* and *reverence*.

Fill us with the spirit of *wonder* and *awe* in your presence.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Adapted from: Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults 228



Dadirri



by Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr

What I want to talk about is a special quality of my people. I believe it is the most important. It is our most unique gift. It is perhaps the greatest gift we can give to our fellow Australians. In our language this quality is called *dadirri*.

It is **inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness.**

Dadirri recognises the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and it calls to us. This is the gift that Australia is thirsting for. It is something like what you call “contemplation”.

When I experience *dadirri*, I am made whole again. I can sit on the river bank or walk through the trees; even if someone close to me has passed away, I can find my peace in this silent awareness. There is no need of words. A big part of *dadirri* is listening. Through the years, we have listened to our stories. They are told and sung, over and over, as the seasons go by. Today we still gather around the campfires and together we hear the sacred stories.

As we grow older, we ourselves become the storytellers. We pass on to the young ones all they must know. The stories and songs sink quietly into our minds and we hold them deep inside. In the ceremonies we celebrate the awareness of our lives as sacred.

The contemplative way of *dadirri* spreads over our whole life. It renews us and brings us peace. It makes us feel whole again.

The Holy Father spoke to us in Alice Springs. This is what he said: “*You lived your lives in spiritual closeness to the land, with its animals, birds, fishes, water holes, rivers, hills and mountains. Through your closeness to the land, you touched the sacredness of the human’s relationship with God, for the land was the proof of a power in life greater than yourselves.*”

You did not spoil the land, use it up, exhaust it, and then walk away from it. You realised that your land was related to the source of life.”

Quiet listening and stillness – *dadirri* – renews us and makes us whole. There is no need to reflect too much and to do a lot of thinking. It is just being aware.

My people are not threatened by silence. They are completely at home in it. They have lived for thousands of years with Nature’s quietness. My people today, recognise and experience in this quietness, the great Life-Giving Spirit, the Father of us all. It is easy for me to experience God’s presence. When I am out hunting, when I am in the bush, among the trees, on a hill or by a billabong; these are the times when I can simply be in God’s presence. My people have been so aware of Nature. It is natural that we will feel close to the Creator.

And now I would like to talk about the other part of *dadirri* which is **the quiet stillness and the waiting.**

Our Aboriginal culture has taught us to be still and to wait. We do not try to

hurry things up. We let them follow their natural course – like the seasons. We watch the moon in each of its phases. We wait for the rain to fill our rivers and water the thirsty earth. When twilight comes, we prepare for the night. At dawn we rise with the sun.

We watch the bush foods and wait for them to ripen before we gather them. We wait for our young people as they grow, stage by stage, through their initiation ceremonies. When a relation dies, we wait a long time with the sorrow. We own our grief and allow it to heal slowly.

We wait for the right time for our ceremonies and our meetings. The right people must be present. Everything must be done in the proper way. Careful preparations must be made. We don't mind waiting, because we want things to be done with care. Sometimes many hours will be spent on painting the body before an important ceremony.

We don't like to hurry. There is nothing more important than what we are attending to. There is nothing more urgent that we must hurry away for.

We wait on God, too. His time is the right time. We wait for him to make his Word clear to us. We don't worry. We know that in time and in the spirit of *dadirri* (that deep listening and quiet stillness) his way will be clear.

Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr is an artist and teacher at the Daly River, NT. These thoughts of hers were part of an address she gave at a liturgical conference in Hobart. It was printed in *Compass*, Autumn 1988.

- *What are some ways in which dadirri is "perhaps the greatest gift to our fellow Australians"?*
- *What have been dadirri times ... places ... for me?*
- *What are some things that get in the way of my listening?*
- *Have there been times ... places ... where I have been "in spiritual closeness to the Lord"?*
- *What are some things that block my awareness?*
- *Does it work when I try to "hurry things up"? Why? (Why not?)*
- *When something or someone is lost or left behind or changed, do I give the sorrow of leaving time to heal?*
- *How good am I at "waiting for God"?* 🌿

Fruits of the Holy Spirit



Introduction

This group of reflections is based on Galatians 5:22-23 where Paul names nine qualities of a life where the Spirit is fruitful – qualities that thrive under the benign influence of the Holy Spirit.

They are: **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.**

Paul did not intend the list to be prescriptive or exhaustive, but rather to suggest some of the ways that the Spirit's powerful presence can effect a deeper conversion in us.

In Paul's "hymn to love" in 1 Corinthians 13, there is another list of such qualities that flow from the great central gift of love. Here he names: **patience, kindness, humility, gentleness, unselfishness, forgiveness, compassion, tolerance, trust, hope and endurance** (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

These two lists are a way of saying that everyone is different, that each spiritual journey has its own particular strengths, and that these strengths are made manifest in people – and in the church – in many and varied circumstances.

It is also a way of saying that – as we experience conversion of heart and a re-orientation of our life in response to God's gracious goodness – we will do it in a variety of ways, with a variety of "fruits". And these fruits of conversion, though profoundly personal, have a way of showing themselves and becoming life-giving for others.

The next few pages have reflections on each of the nine fruits named in Galatians. 🌿



And the fruit of the Spirit is ... Love



Each of us can easily go back in our minds to times when we became acutely aware of God's presence to us and God's great and abiding love for us. The miracle of a child's birth, the crisp beauty of an autumn dawn on a hill-top, the first sight of the Pacific ocean ... and of our own love welling up in response.

This being loved by God (or being-in-love with God, which is itself a gift of God's love) flows easily and naturally into a love for others.

Love and appreciation seem profoundly human when they are at work in our minds and hearts, and yet – in origin – they are gifts of God.

Every time I experience the joy of being loved by another, and every time I let my love flow out to another, I am experiencing the fruitfulness of the Spirit's gracious and abiding presence.

"... because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."

Romans 5:5

"We love, because God first loved us."

1 John 4:19

- *Think of some of these times when you have been loved by others – times when they wished wellness on you with no thought of gain ...*

And of times when love for another has welled up in your heart and you have wished wellness on them with no thought of gain ...

Were these times of the Spirit's fruitfulness for you?

- *Love has been described as both tough and tender. Think of times when love, as commitment to the good of another, demanded that you spoke or acted in a way that was seen as hurtful or disturbing to the other. How did you feel this as the fruit of the Spirit in your life? What was that like?*

- *Think of someone you've known who was a very loving person, whose love seemed to overflow and spill out to everyone they encountered. What effect did the person have on your life? On the lives of others? Was this a "fruitful" person?*

- *What have I learned – what has the Spirit taught me – from my own lived experience?*

- *What have I learned from the Scriptures?*

*Come, Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts
of your faithful
and enkindle
in them
the fire
of your love. ✨*



And the fruit of the Spirit is ... Joy



The joy of a woman who has found a lost coin. The joy of a shepherd with one chance in a hundred of finding his lost sheep – and he does! The joy of a father whose waiting is rewarded when his son comes home.

Jesus, who enjoyed the company of outcasts and sinners, is a self-portrait of the God who “delights in showing mercy” (Micah 7:8). To know the God of Jesus Christ is to share in God’s joy.

To experience such joy, not only in knowing the delight of God’s mercy but in enjoying all the pleasures God’s gifts bestow, is to be buoyed up by the Spirit of Joy.

If God – the Source of all Life – is the Dance, and Jesus is the Dancer, then the Holy Spirit is the Dancing.

If God the Father is the one who delights, and the Son is the object of that joy, then the Holy Spirit is the joy between them. The Holy Spirit is Divine Enjoyment.

It is this joy which overwhelms us when the Spirit springs to life within us. To live in the Spirit is to know a deep contentment, a sense of well-being and gladness which can only be described as Christian joy.

Spirit of Joy, I know it is you when, after being empowered by you to forgive another who has hurt me, I am filled with a strange joy in realising that it is your recreative energy which has flowed through me, making me somehow new and different.

I know it is you I meet when, in being drawn to delight in a beautiful sight or a

pleasurable taste, I am allowed to share in the divine enjoyment that fills all creation.

I know it is you when, in sharing a meal and company with friends, I experience the joy of living. Through you, I experience a God constantly touching my ordinary, daily life.

I am certain it is you when, despite disappointment at my life’s daily failures, I can still be gladdened in knowing the joy I give you through my faithfulness.

Spirit of Joy, the fruit of your indwelling is joy, leading us to rejoice in your constant recreation of our lives.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).

- *Recall a time of deep joy when you were overwhelmed by a deep sense of well-being in God’s presence.*
- *Think of some close friends who bring joy to your life and whom you experience as means for the Spirit to touch your life.*
- *What things in life do you en-joy most? Do you experience them as God-given?*
- *Joy and happiness are not always the same. We can lose a loved one who has been suffering, and feel the joy of the Spirit in the certainty of their happiness, but we might not feel happy ourselves ... a joy deeper than the happiness which the ‘world’ can give. Can you recall such a time? 🌿*



And the fruit of the Spirit is ... Peace



Peace

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). To walk the walk of the Spirit is to walk the way of peace which Jesus chose.

Only God’s Spirit can empower us to walk the seemingly impossible road which Jesus chose: to love my enemy and to “turn the other cheek” when hurt or violence comes my way. The only way such peace can become a reality is through the Spirit teaching us to love like God.

Peace is not just an absence of conflict. Peace *stands between* love and violence. To choose violence is to choose to destroy. To choose violence is to find oneself fighting against the God of Life. The way of peace rejects destruction of the other as a way to win. The real winner is a human being who acts and loves like God.

The Dalai Lama can teach us something of Jesus’ way of peace. In refusing the way of violence against China who has almost destroyed his own Tibetan people and their culture, he says: “My enemy is my greatest teacher. He teaches me tolerance”.


The way of Christian peace says this and more: to be a peace promoter is to be working with God. God’s Spirit can only work *through us* to bring about God’s reign of justice, love and peace. The way of Christian peace is to claim that Jesus’ way is the only way if our world is to survive (let alone become what God has created it to become).

Jesus’ death on the cross is God’s most poignant plea to humanity to choose peace rather than fight evil with

evil. But what appears to be God’s weakness is indeed a revelation of God’s strength – the strength and power of love. Such divine strength is not a “power over” others, but a “power for” others. Only through God’s way is there hope of peace for our world. We are called to be God’s instruments for creating such a world.

In the Eucharistic prayer for Masses of Reconciliation, we worship our God ever at work in human history silently forming “peacemakers”:

“In the midst of conflict and division, we know it is you who turn our minds to thoughts of peace. Your Spirit changes our hearts: enemies begin to speak to one another, those who were estranged join hands in friendship, and nations seek the way of peace together. Your Spirit is at work when understanding puts an end to strife, when hatred is quenched by mercy, and vengeance gives way to forgiveness. For this we should never cease to thank and praise you.”

- *What are the things within me which prevent me from being a person of peace?*
- *Is there a race or class of people whom I would not welcome, if marrying into my family?*
- *Think of a time when I was freed within myself to forgive another who had hurt me? Did this bring peace and reconciliation to the situation? What was at work in my life there?*
- *It has been said that “joy is peace dancing and peace is joy resting”. What meaning does this carry for you?* 



And the fruit of the Spirit is ... *Patience*



Patience has many qualities – forbearance, endurance, mercy, compassion to name a few – in a virtue that we quickly recognise in another. It is the quality we love and admire in God:

*“But you,
O Lord are a God
merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding
in steadfast love and faithfulness.”*
Psalm 86:15

And it is a quality that encourages us to deepen our relationship with this loving God:

*“Do you not realise that God’s
kindness (and forbearance
and patience)
are meant to lead you
to repentance?”*
Romans 2:4

Patience is a virtue that comes gradually and sometimes painfully, and always as a gift of God. When we meet it in another, we are struck by three things –
*the Tranquility, Gentleness and
Strength in the one who is patient.*

It comes as no surprise to note that St John of the Cross says that every quality or virtue that the Spirit produces in us has these three characteristics.

- *Revisit in your mind the image of someone who was patient with you or with another or in some situation.*

- *What are the qualities of this person that stand out for you, as you reflect upon their patience?*
- *How did you benefit from their patience?*
- *Was their patience a “fruit of God’s Spirit” as you now reflect on it?*

- *Recall times in your life where you were patient with another or with some situation.*

- *How did this patience differ from a shrugged indifference?*

- *At other times, when patience was absent in your dealing with another, were the outcomes “happy”?*

- *Was there tranquility, gentleness and strength in my life then?*

*“Love is patient;
love is kind;
love is not
envious or boastful or rude
It bears all things,
believes all things,
hopes all things,
endures all things.”*
Romans 13:4 



And the fruit of the Spirit is ... Kindness



Kindness

I am one with the Spirit. As I acknowledge and make contact with that divine source, I become ever more aware that this is the source that energises me and guides my every moment.

I naturally give out this Spirit by my every thought, word and action, and it is these thoughts, words and actions that increase the activity of the Spirit in my world.

As I give out this power of love to others, the more it flows *to* me and *through* me. The gift of kindness energises all my activities.

The Spirit of God *indwells* our humanness. This *is* the invisible Spirit. As I give love expressed by acts of kindness, more love and kindness is drawn to me to give again, and I find I cannot ever deplete the supply.

We often hear people talk about the power of the spoken word. Our words are potent, and so are our thoughts. When we drop a pebble into a pond, the vibrations caused when the pebble contacts the water radiate from that centre in continuously forming circles, each widening as the newer ones form.

Every thought, every action and every word we speak, has the potential to carry love expressed by kindness from a life-giving and spirit-filled relationship with God. So too, when we act, it is the Spirit manifesting love and kindness.

Kindness can be difficult at times. However it can be in these moments that we become more aware of God's gracious activity in our lives.

- *Think of some times when you were aware that your thoughts, words, actions,*

were not coming from a centre of kindness. What was at the centre of your motivation at those times? Revisit the situation and fill the words and actions with love and then let it go. Like the pebble in the water, what was the 'ripple effect' of these

thoughts, words, actions, on those around you?

- *Think of someone who treats others in the spirit of kindness. How is their kindness shown and what effect does it have on others?*

- *Reflect on some simple images or symbols that show the potency of the Spirit in revealing the fruit of kindness, (eg the oil of human kindness, warmth). What images are helpful for you?*

"She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue."

Proverbs 31:26

"I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them."

Hosea 11:4

"... but kindness is like a garden of blessings ..."

Sirach 40:17



And the fruit of the Spirit is ... Generosity



The Greek word used here for *generosity* may also be translated as *goodness*, and carries with it overtones of *spontaneity* and *selflessness*.

It is this generosity that is the sense of “growing with Christ” that the apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote to the Philippians:

“So if in Christ there is anything that will move you, any incentive in love, any fellowship in the Spirit, any warmth or sympathy – I appeal to you, make my joy complete by being of a single mind, one in love, one in heart and one in mind. Nothing is to be done out of jealousy or vanity; instead, out of humility of mind everyone should give preference to others, everyone pursuing not selfish interests but those of others. Make your own the mind of Christ Jesus.” *Philippians 2:1-5*

It is also the generosity Jesus was addressing when he said:

But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous ... Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” *Matthew 5:44-48*

And Anne Frank once wrote: “No one has ever become poor by giving”.

One opposite of *generosity* is any attempt to “feel good” at the expense of

someone else, or “feeling good” because someone else is doing badly.

In another sense it is my being preoccupied with myself and my own interests to the detriment of the issues and the interests of others.

- *Think of times when you enjoyed the generosity of others in their dealings with you.*

What effect did their generosity have on your life? Does it still “bear fruit” in your life?

- *Recall a time when you were “generous” to another – not for your own advantage but entirely for theirs.*

How difficult is it to be honestly generous with another, with no strings attached? Is it worth it?

- *Recall a time when it was necessary for you to be preoccupied with your own interests and affairs.*

When does such (necessary) self-preoccupation block the call to be generous?

How can you tell? Can others spot the difference?

“The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all and is compassionate over all of creation.”

Psalm 145:8,9



And the fruit of



the Spirit is ... Faithfulness

Faithfulness

When we say that we have faith in another person, often we mean that we believe that they will do for us, not necessarily what we *want* them to do, but what is perceived to be *good and right*. That bond between us assists us to grow in faith and in love.

What is faithfulness? Faithfulness is ...

The friend who ...

The partner who ...

The parent who ...

The God who ...

The driving, motivating force displayed by Moses leading his people to freedom is one of the great examples of faithfulness in our history. Moses had an unflinching faith in a God who loved and liberated the people of Israel. He was drawn on by a promise of fidelity by a loving God.

The sheer determination of a person like Gandhi in working peacefully for harmony and liberation was a powerful display of faithfulness in a God who stands beside those who seek justice. Mary MacKillop is another who stayed faithful in the face of great adversities.

The lone man holding his briefcase who stood in the path of an oncoming tank in Tiananmen Square is a picture that many of us will not forget. Both the man and the tank driver were pushing each other to the limit. For the protesting man it was an incredible act of faithfulness in the goodness of God and the hope that the soldier driving the tank had a deep respect for human life. He was 'full of faith' that his God of justice would prevail and intervene for him.

Our faithfulness in God's Holy Spirit, who loves unconditionally and lives within us guiding our lives, can be liberating for us in many ways. We then have the confidence to go through any adversity with a deep and abiding knowledge that we do not stand alone.

God sees, God hears, God loves, God leads. For many of us it is also at the happy times, those moments of great joy and celebration, that our faithfulness in God is made manifest.

- *Think of some times when your faithfulness in a person ...
in a situation ...
in God ...*

has been tested or shaken. How did you react? Would you act any differently now?

- *Try to describe what it actually feels like to be 'full of faith'? Think of some stories which carry the meaning of 'faithfulness' for you.*
- *When thinking of someone who has really made the fruit of faithfulness manifest in their life, what qualities or deeds make them 'faithful' for you? This could be someone you have read about or seen on television, perhaps a relative or friend, someone you know personally.*
- *What can I do that will allow me to truly accept the fruit of the spirit which is faithfulness in my own life? How can I show this quality to others?*

"What if some were unfaithful? Will their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means."

Romans 3:3-4



And the fruit of



the Spirit is ... Gentleness

Gentleness

What comes to mind when you hear the word 'gentleness'? A gentle breeze cooling a hot summer day, or gentle rain falling, just enough to quench a thirsty earth?

Like the ocean which can at one time send powerful waves pounding and crashing against the shore, and at another time produce the gentle caress of waves lapping at the shoreline, we have within us the potential for both these displays of energy. We have the choice to respond to every situation in a gentle manner or in a harsh and aggressive way.

Jesus showed us how to go gently when the children flocked around him while the disciples stood by and watched disapprovingly. He treated the woman caught in adultery with great gentleness and compassion instead of scolding her with a harsh rebuke.

People who display gentleness are those who have a permanent air of serenity about them. They walk and talk with a certain peacefulness.

Leaders who work with gentleness empower others to achieve their highest good. By employing gentleness they allow others to grow in an atmosphere of compassion and love.

Those whom we would call gentle are by no means automatically labelled weak and fragile. We always have a choice in what we do and how we do it; the gentle ones choose to act in a more peaceful and loving way.

Gentleness is an essential ingredient for the artist who skilfully and delicately places a brush stroke on a beautiful porcelain vase. In this instance, gentleness is revealed as a powerful attribute indeed. We are God's work of art. "We are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand" Isaiah 64:8.

- *Recall a time when you chose to show gentleness when it was difficult to be gentle. What were the consequences of this action? How different would it have been to act otherwise?*

- *Who are the gentle ones in your life? Why did you choose these people? What do they give you?*

- *How do you respond when experiencing gentleness within your relationships, your work, and your home?*

*"But we were gentle among you,
like a nurse tenderly caring
for her own children."*

1 Thessalonians 2:7

*"Blessed are the meek
for they will inherit
the earth."*

Matthew 5:5



And the fruit of the Spirit is ... *Self-control* *Self-Control*



Self-control is one of those difficult attributes that is very often associated with the activities of our social world. In this sense we may name it temperance or will-power. Some may say 'spirit-power'. Yet it is not simply over-indulgence that leaves one feeling less than sparkling the next day.

Many serious effects such as road rage, addictive gambling, eating disorders, drug addictions and alcoholism stem from some level of loss of self-control. The consequences of our actions during these times touch many other lives as well as our own. These are the actions, the habits, of a self crying out to be liberated from past pain and conditioning, from the burden of one's own expectations of oneself.

When we exercise self-control we not only take responsibility for our actions, we build within ourselves a strong sense of ownership. We are in charge of our lives and are acting independently of the authority of another person. At these times we may equate self-control with the empowering love of the Spirit.

How liberating it is to touch that freedom of self possession. We could even say that at those moments we chose to not give away our own power, but to act with presence of mind and level headedness. Why is self-control considered to be an attribute for a Christian, a fruit of the Spirit?

Perhaps it is because a person who displays self-control is one who is also centred, and stable, not wavering or off the path. Or maybe it is because they seem focussed and poised, ready for anything that life may present. It is the Spirit who teaches us and empowers us

with the gift of self-control. To gain control of the self requires a trust in a power greater than ourselves, requires trust in the unwavering faithfulness of a loving God.

To act with self-control is to act out of composure and self-discipline. When we lose self-control we notice that our source of energy has shifted and we react and respond from a different place within us. At those times we find that we fall easily into making emotionally-charged choices and decisions. These choices and decisions often, later on, do not reveal themselves to be the best ones we could have made. Empowered by the Spirit, we stand firm in these decisions made from love.

- *Recall a situation where someone acted with great self-control. What were the immediate, and long-term, consequences of these actions? How different might the outcomes have been if that person had not exercised self control?*
- *Recall a time when someone you know lost self control. How did you feel? What did you think? What, if anything, were you able to do at that time?*
- *Recall a time when you lost self control. What would you do differently now in a situation like that? What are some ways, times, or places in your own life where a little more self-control may be of benefit?*

"For this very reason you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness."

2 Peter 1:5-6



Discernment of Spirits



‘Discernment’ is defined in the dictionary as “insight, keen perception; distinguishing good from bad, distinguishing between good and bad” (Concise Oxford).

The ‘discernment of spirits’ is a term that recognises:

- that the Spirit of God is at work in the lives of people – and so in situations where human error is possible;
- that, under the guidance of the same Spirit, it is possible to determine which of these experiences lead towards God and which lead away from God.

It is our Christian expectation that we will be guided by the Spirit, and so naturally we look for and value ‘religious experiences’ – what we see as the Spirit at work in our lives.

But such experiences are often ambiguous. I can be so subjective or so excited in my enthusiasm for what I have experienced that I can overlook or disregard the need for discretion, for critical reflection on what has occurred, or for assessing whether this or that is in harmony with the content of Christian faith.

Our history is littered with sad examples of people who have valued the intensity of an experience more than the All-wise God who may have approached them through that experience; they give *their experience* priority over *God* and *God’s mysterious dealings with them*. They have – in their excited enthusiasm – sometimes led individuals or entire communities astray. It is ‘discernment of spirits’ that helps us to distinguish – in the ambiguity of the experience – what is of God and what is not.

This sense of ambiguity is found in our earliest experiences as a Church gifted with the Spirit.

Paul advises:

“Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.”

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

And later on, the first letter of John counsels:

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

1 John 4:1

They are reminding us that all these events or experiences need to be tested prayerfully to determine their authenticity. Paul, in fact, included ‘the discernment of spirits’ in his list of important charisms given for the ‘common good’ of the community (1 Corinthians 12:10).

Paul responded to different situations in the young churches by pointing to various criteria for “discerning the spirits”:

- **judging the fruits of an action**
(Galatians 5:19-23)

“... By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

Galatians 22, 23

So for example:

- **peace** (1 Corinthians 14:32,33; Romans 8:6; 14:17)

“... for God is a God not of disorder but of peace.”

1 Corinthians 14:33

- **love** (Philippians 1:9,10; Ephesians 4:14,15; 2 Corinthians 6:4-7)

“... and this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you determine what is best.”

Philippians 1:9

- **judging the effect in building up the Church** (1 Cor 14:4,12,26)

“... Let all things be done for building up.”

1 Corinthians 14:26

These were all helps to “living in the Spirit” or being “guided by the Spirit” in the development of the whole christian life. As Paul summed it up:

“If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.”

Galatians 5:25, 26

And this follows upon the basic, fundamental understanding of discipleship:

“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.”

Romans 8:14

Jesus is the perfect embodiment of Christian discernment and his Spirit makes it possible for us to continue his way of discerning – vulnerable as we so often are to the possibility of error and the possibility of failure in recognising and following the Spirit.

- *Reflect on a time in your life when you were at a “crossroad”.*

- *How did you find new direction for your life?*

- *What was particularly difficult for you in this searching time?*

- *What did you find helpful?* 🙏

Gifts of the Holy Spirit



Introduction

The starting point for any reflection on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit is that – however we may have learned to name or number them in the past – they are immeasurably rich and diverse. St Paul addresses this richness and diversity in these terms:

*“Now there are varieties of gifts,
but the same Spirit;
and there are varieties of services,
but the same Lord;
and there are varieties of activities,
but it is the same God who activates
all of them in everyone.
To each is given the manifestation
of the Spirit for the common good ...*

*All these (gifts) are activated by one and
the same Spirit, who allots to each one
individually just as the Spirit chooses.”*
1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11

The diversity has some pattern, of course. Genuine gifts can be recognized by their conformity to Christian faith (1 Cor 12:1-3), and all the gifts – diverse as they are – come from the one Source and are directed to the one aim: the ‘common good’.

There are also two complementary aspects which we can distinguish.

1. One is that the gifts can all be placed in the context of a *love relationship* with a personal God –

as when a person feels or knows quite strongly of God’s love. Paul, again –

*“... because God’s love has been poured
into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that
has been given to us.”*

Romans 5:5

It is this experience that can change the way we see things, the way we come to make decisions and commitments. Paul’s own conversion outside the walls of Damascus was like that and his life was changed forever.

2. The second aspect of these gifts, which complements the first, is that they are also experienced in the context of *community* – of church. Since all Christians receive the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit through the Sacraments of Initiation, the Spirit is now operative, not just in individuals, but in the hopes and efforts of a Pilgrim church in the ups and downs of life in today’s world.

It is necessary that we keep both these dimensions – the individual and the communal – in mind when we reflect on the gifts so freely and richly given to us by the Spirit.

The gifts are for *me* and for *us*, as nourishment for the work of the Reign of God in our world. Joan Chittister once said: *“The gifts of the Holy Spirit are*

not for getting and keeping ... They are gifts for giving and doing ... They commit; they compel; they cost; they cry out for creative change."

Another rich aspect of our Tradition concerning the Gifts of the Spirit originates from the Old Testament, especially in Isaiah, where the prophet describes the gifts by which the coming Messiah will be recognised.

"A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord."
Isaiah 11:2-3

The ancient translation of the Old Testament into Greek (the Septuagint) added "*piety*" to the list as an interpretation of the repeated "*fear of the Lord*." This brought the number to seven (and the biblical notion of *fulness*).

It is this list of "the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit" that many of us will recognise. It is powerfully incorporated into the liturgy of Confirmation, where the celebrant invites the outpouring of the Spirit in these words:

*"All-powerful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
by water and the Holy Spirit
you freed your sons and daughters
from sin and gave them new life.
Send your Holy Spirit upon them
to be their helper and guide.
Give them the spirit of
wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of right judgement
and courage,
the spirit of knowledge and reverence.
Fill them with the spirit of
wonder and awe in your presence.
We ask this through Christ our Lord."*

(Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults 301)

The next few pages have reflections on the first three of these gifts, and prayer reflections on all seven. They are meant as opportunities for us to go deeper into a recognition of God's great and abiding love for us and to become more open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit within us. 🕊

Note: The prayers which accompany these reflections are adapted from *Come Holy Spirit*, the document issued from Rome by the Liturgical Commission of the Central Committee for the Great Jubilee.



Gift of the Spirit ... **Wisdom**

Wisdom concerns the choices of daily living and coping with life's challenges. To speak of wisdom as a gift of the Spirit is to speak of being enlightened with the wisdom of Jesus.

The central imagery used when speaking of wisdom is "the way", "the path" or "the road". To walk in the Spirit is to walk the way of wisdom. Like all wisdom teachers, Jesus spoke of two ways in life, a wise way and a foolish way. One leads to life, the other to destruction. The former is the road less travelled.

The way chosen by the majority is the common sense, conventional wisdom of a culture. Saint Paul calls it "human wisdom". Contrasting human wisdom and divine wisdom, Saint Paul spoke of Jesus as "the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24). To human standards of thinking, Jesus-Wisdom often seems foolish. Jesus' death on the cross would seem to be the ultimate in foolishness and weakness.

Jesus, in his teaching and ways of acting, overturned the human standards of wisdom of his day, to reveal the wisdom of a seemingly foolish God. He turned their world upside down. A world where this wisdom rules he called the "reign" or "kin(g)dom" of God.

In that different kind of world, the first are last and the last first. Here the humble are exalted and the exalted humbled. The poor are the rich ones. Wealth is an impediment to being important in God's eyes; having honour has nothing to do with status in the community.

Jesus brings this world about in his own actions. Those thrown to the margins of society are brought into the middle and made the centre of God's loving attention.

He brings a small child into the inner circle of his select group. He crosses over cultural and religious barriers of exclusion by touching the so-called religiously unclean: haemorrhaging women, lepers, possessed people. He tells stories of people being paid, not according to what they deserve, but according to the foolish generosity of the employer.

The world where Jesus-Wisdom rules is the reverse of human standards of wisdom. As Saint Paul reminds us, Jesus' shocking death on a cross is the ultimate jolt to our understanding the ways of God's wisdom.

It is the Spirit Jesus has sent who *enlightens us to see* our own world and culture with the eyes of Jesus-Wisdom. It is the gift of this Spirit which then *empowers us to act* to bring about a new world according to the wisdom of God.

- *What are some conventional wisdoms of our Australian culture? How does Jesus challenge those "wisdoms"?*
- *Who are some people who are classed as "outsiders" in our Australian society (who, according to the wisdom of God, are "insiders" in the reign of God)?*
- *Can you recall a time when you "saw" what to do or where to go – when the wisdom of God was revealed to you as the best way to act in a situation?* 🌿

Gift of the Spirit ... *Understanding*

As the kookaburra understands when the rain will come and heralds its arrival, the squirrel knows when the time is perfect to gather. The birds understand deeply when they must fly to other regions and they do so in perfect formation. The whales understand when the time is right to move to different waters. No-one has to tell any of them when to do these things.

Understanding is a deep inner knowing. It is a beautiful connection with the Spirit within every being.

Understanding is not found in the head or the mind. It is the place where we comprehend those beliefs which, at times seemed like 'givens', but which we had not made our own. This is where the Spirit leads us more deeply and ever gently into ourselves.

When we reach the point of real understanding about a person, or a situation, we feel a certain change inside. We have all had times when we have sighed and exclaimed "ahh! Now I see ...". Something shifted within us at that moment. The Spirit was again, as always, at work, perhaps this time in a more noticeable and tangible way.

It is this feeling of deep inner knowing that is the wonderful gift of the Spirit St Paul named 'understanding'.

If we play around with the word itself a little, we may gain a different insight into the experience of *understanding*. Place yourself, or more specifically, stand within a situation. See that issue surrounding you. Now focus on the word 'under'. Go underneath the

surface, look within, lift the lid if you like. Chances are that what lies within is far different from what floats on the surface. Peel back as many layers as you need to, until that feeling of real knowing is evident deep within you. Now give thanks to the Spirit for the gift that leads us to that deep insight and true understanding. It is at this point that we become more aware of becoming one with the divine within us.

Why are Christians called to nurture this gift of understanding? Perhaps it invites us to become more compassionate, more allowing of others. We can then allow, absolutely, another to be who they are without feeling threatened by their beliefs.

- *Recall times when you found it difficult to understand a situation, or the actions of a person close to you. During your reflection, put on the other's shoes and walk in them a while to gain a deeper insight into their actions.*

- *What things help us to really understand something or someone eg. symbols, later experiences, reflection, listening etc?*

- *Can I learn from the patient listening of Aboriginal spirituality?*

"... no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God".

1 Corinthians 2:11b-12 

Gift of the Spirit ... Fortitude

So often we associate the meaning of fortitude with words such as courage, fearlessness, heroism, boldness and bravery. That 'strength of steel' calls to mind public actions which display great power.

Fortitude is the courage we find within, of which often we are quite unaware, during those times when we face pain and adversity.

Some people describe fortitude as that great gift of moral strength and the 'charge of the light brigade' attitude. Yet fortitude need not only be present in a public display. The courage of the entombed Thredbo survivor, Stuart Diver, speaks of the blessing of this inner fortitude.

The quiet achiever who privately works through with strength of mind and heart and is resolute against temptation is fortitude in action. It is also that inner strength that we acquire when we remember the words "Be still, and know that I am God" Psalm 46:10.


And what of the baby born ten weeks premature lying in a humidicrib with tubes and life lines abounding. Where does that silent, private, sheer determination come from that makes the newborn hang on resolutely to life? The wellsprings of the reservoir of fortitude are revealed. That is the power of the Spirit at work filling the child with strength and comforting the parent waiting in hope.

The survivors of the Nazi Germany concentration camps could no more show power and strength than visit the local movie theatre for a night out.

Their lives would be cut short at the hint of such action. These people endured tremendous cruelty, mental and physical, yet somehow they managed to keep strength of mind; they found great tenacity and courage deep within themselves that allowed them to survive. Their gift of fortitude kept them focussed on a liberating God.

- *Think of someone you know, have read about, or seen on TV etc, who in your opinion displays the gift of fortitude in a public way or in a quiet, private way.*
- *What qualities do they display and what actions of theirs led you to choose these particular people as examples of great fortitude?*
- *Recall a time when, given another chance, you would change your actions in the light of the gift of fortitude. Reflect on the details of the situation, the people present, the issues arising. Ask yourself "What would I do differently today if faced with the same situation?"*
- *What are ways you can draw more deeply on this gift of fortitude in your everyday life?*
- *What is the difference between 'power over' another and the 'strength for' another which is fortitude?*

"The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord".

Isaiah 11:2 



Prayer for Wisdom

The pouring out of the Holy Spirit increases the gift of wisdom that helps us and accompanies us along the journey of life. The Spirit of God is the one who gives wisdom to the hearts of the simple and opens them to accept the word of Jesus Christ, Wisdom of the Father.

Greeting:

All-Holy One, Consoler Spirit,
Spirit of Truth,
Present everywhere and
filling all things,
Treasure of all good and
Source of all life,
Come dwell in us,
Cleanse and save us,
You who are All-Good!

(Byzantine Liturgy)

Prayer:

Creator God,
in your wisdom you created us,
by your providence you rule us:
penetrate our inmost being
with your holy light,
so that our way of life
may always be one of faithful service
to you.

Intercessions:

Let us pray to God, that we may be
given the grace to know, love and
practise that which is pleasing to him.

R: *Give us, O God, your spirit of wisdom.*

For the Church, spread throughout the
world: may the wisdom of the Gospel

guide her words and actions, so that she
will make Christ the Saviour known
throughout the world, let us pray:

R: *Give us, O God, your spirit of wisdom.*

For legislators and politicians: may the
wisdom that comes from above guide
them in their search for the good of the
person and society, let us pray:

R: *Give us, O God, your spirit of wisdom.*

For those in sorrow: may the wisdom
of the cross open the way for them to
meet Jesus in the mystery of his
suffering, let us pray:


R: *Give us, O God, your spirit of wisdom.*

For ourselves, that in communion with
Mary, we may prepare for the Great
Jubilee of the year 2000: may the
wisdom of Christ be the light and
blessed joy of our daily lives, let us pray:

R: *Give us, O God, your spirit of wisdom.*

Concluding Prayer:

O God, who in the folly of the Cross
manifests the distance between the
mind of Christ and the wisdom of this
world, fill us with the wisdom of the
Gospel, so that, animated by the hope
of the Spirit, we may become the light
and salt of the earth.

Through Christ our Lord. 

Prayer for Understanding

Understanding is the gift of the Holy Spirit that reveals to us the will of God. Who can know the mind of God unless they are guided by the Spirit of Christ?

Let us ask God to light the way of the human race towards the year 2000. May we receive spiritual understanding to perceive the signs of God's presence in history.

Greeting:

All Holy-One,
Consoler Spirit, Spirit of Truth,
Present everywhere
and filling all things,
Treasure of all good
and Source of all life,
Come dwell in us,
Cleanse and save us,
You who are All-Good!

(Byzantine Liturgy)

Prayer:

God of love, hear our prayers. Help us to know your ways and to follow in courage and faith.

Intercessions:

Let us pray that God may give us the grace to understand and to live in a manner worthy of our vocation.

R: *Give us, God, your Spirit of understanding.*

For the Church, that, imitating Mary, we may hear the word of God and faithfully put it into practice, let us pray:

R: *Give us, God, your Spirit of understanding.*

For the men and women of our time, that they may not lose sight of the spiritual value of their existence, let us pray:

R: *Give us, God, your Spirit of understanding.*


For parents, educators and catechists, that the younger generation may learn from them how to use the gift of understanding for the good of themselves and of others, let us pray:

R: *Give us, God, your Spirit of understanding.*

For ourselves, that the Spirit we receive in confirmation may teach us, in the light of the Gospel, how to read both the events of our lives and those of the history of the world, let us pray:

R: *Give us, God, your Spirit of understanding.*

Concluding Prayer:

O God our loving Creator, you who are revealed in Christ, instill in us the gift of understanding, that penetrating the depths of your word, we may experience its sweetness and strength. Through Christ our Lord. 

Prayer for Fortitude

Fortitude is the divine gift that makes us firm in the faith, strengthens us to resist evil and gives us the courage to witness to the crucified Christ in word and deed.

We welcome into our midst the Cross: it is the sign with which God has manifested, in Christ, full participation in our weakness, and also of the immeasurable power that comes from above.

Greeting:

All-Holy One, Consoler Spirit,
Spirit of Truth, Present everywhere and
filling all things, Treasure of all good
and Source of all life,

Come dwell in us,
Cleanse and save us,
You who are All-Good!

(Byzantine Liturgy)

Prayer:

O gracious God, who in the Cross of
your Son has revealed the
unconquerable power of your love,
confirm our hearts in fortitude that,
animated by the Holy Spirit, we may
fight courageously the assaults of evil.
Through Jesus Christ.

Intercessions:

Let us turn our prayers to God, our
shield and bulwark, so that in the
power of the death and resurrection of
the Son, our footsteps will be firm on
the way of goodness.

*R: Loving God, give the Church your
Spirit of fortitude.*

That God may illumine our way with the
light of the Cross of Christ, let us pray.

*R: Loving God, give the Church your
Spirit of fortitude.*

That God may give to those of our
brothers and sisters who are persecuted
for the Gospel, an experience of the
strength of the Holy Spirit, let us pray.

*R: Loving God, give the Church your
Spirit of fortitude.*

That God may increase in all of us the
courage to preach the Gospel and the
honesty to witness to our belonging to
Jesus Christ, let us pray.

*R: Loving God, give the Church your
Spirit of fortitude.*


That God may enable us to overcome
laziness and strengthen in us the
practice of the Christian virtues, let us
pray.

*R: Loving God, give the Church your
Spirit of fortitude.*

That God may give those confirmed
with the seal of the Holy Spirit the
courage to carry out their Christian
duty, following the example of Mary
and the Saints, let us pray.

*R: Loving God, give the Church your
Spirit of fortitude.*

Concluding Prayer:

Almighty God, our hope and strength,
without you we falter. Help us to
follow Christ and to live according to
the virtue of fortitude
Through Christ Jesus. 

Prayer for Counsel

The gift of counsel, which may be described in the biblical terms of light and spiritual guidance, is opened up to us by means of the inexhaustible well-spring of the Word of God.

Let us ask God by means of prayer, that the Spirit of Counsel may never be lacking to believers in Christ, so that at the threshold of the new millennium they may set out on paths of justice and peace.

Greeting:

All-Holy One, Consoler Spirit,
Spirit of Truth,
Present everywhere and
filling all things,
Treasure of all good and
Source of all life,
Come dwell in us,
Cleanse and save us,
You who are All-Good!
(Byzantine Liturgy)

Prayer:

O God, who has sent us your Son, the word of truth, confirm us with your spirit of counsel, so that we may be ready to answer whoever should ask us for the reason for the hope that is in us. Through Christ Jesus.

Intercessions:

Let us invoke the Holy Spirit,
acclaiming:

R: *Come and give us your counsel!*

Holy Spirit, voice of the prophets.

R: *Come and give us your counsel!*

Holy Spirit, guide to the truth.

R: *Come and give us your counsel!*

Holy Spirit, interior teacher.

R: *Come and give us your counsel!*

Holy Spirit, breath of life.

R: *Come and give us your counsel!*


Holy Spirit, inspirer of holiness.

R: *Come and give us your counsel!*

Holy Spirit, living reminder of the Gospel.

R: *Come and give us your counsel!*

Concluding Prayer:

Almighty and merciful God, make us attentive to the voice of the Holy Spirit, and give us the grace of your counsel in troubled times, the light of your guidance in suffering, the joy of your comfort in sorrow, your friendship in solitude. Through Christ Jesus. 

Prayer for Knowledge

With this gift, the Holy Spirit introduces us to the knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God. It is not so much intellectual knowledge that is meant here as an experience of God in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit teaches the words of Jesus, writes them in the hearts of the faithful, brings them to mind in those who have strayed and teaches how to live in a Christian way in the world.

Greeting:

All-Holy One, Consoler Spirit,
Spirit of Truth,
Present everywhere and
filling all things,
Treasure of all good and
Source of all life,
Come dwell in us,
Cleanse and save us,
You who are All-Good!

(Byzantine Liturgy)

Prayer:

Loving God, you call your children to walk in the light of Christ. Free us from darkness and keep us in the radiance of your truth. Through Christ Jesus.

Intercessions:

Let us lift up our prayers to God to guide us towards the third millenium, invoking and following the teachings of the Spirit of Christ.

R: *Hear us, O God.*

Preserve in us the light of the Holy Spirit which we received in Baptism and Confirmation.

R: *Hear us, O God.*

Increase in us the knowledge of your will and the experience of your mysteries.

R: *Hear us, O God.*

Bless our efforts to enter into the unfathomable riches of the love of Christ.

R: *Hear us, O God.*

Give us clear vision to contemplate in your creation your beauty and your providence.

R: *Hear us, O God.*

Free us from ignorance and strengthen us in our resolve to know you more deeply.

R: *Hear us, O God.*

Concluding Prayer:

Loving God, keep before us the wisdom and love you have revealed in Jesus. Help us to be like him in word and deed, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. ✠

Prayer for Reverence

The spiritual gift of piety or reverence expresses an attitude that guides our intentions and actions towards God and our neighbour according to the mind of God. It is opposed to all "impiety", the various manifestations and consequences of which are often described in the psalms and wisdom books.

Greeting:

All-Holy One, Consoler Spirit,
Spirit of Truth,
Present everywhere and
filling all things,
Treasure of all good and
Source of all life,
Come dwell in us,
Cleanse and save us,
You who are All-Good!

(Byzantine Liturgy)

Prayer:

Loving God, our help and guide, make
your love the foundation of our lives
May our love for you express itself in
our eagerness to do good for others.
Through Christ Jesus.

Intercessions:

Animated by the Holy Spirit and filled
with zeal to dedicate our whole
existence to the praise and glory of God,
let us turn our hearts to God.

*R: Let my prayer come before you, O God,
like incense.*

Grant that believers in Christ may
never lose a sense of God permeating all
existence.

*R: Let my prayer come before you, O God,
like incense.*

May all sacred ministers express in their
lives what they celebrate in the
sacraments.

*R: Let my prayer come before you, O God,
like incense.*

Grant that governments may promote
freedom of religion and respect for
human life.

*R: Let my prayer come before you, O God,
like incense.*


Illuminate the life of every family with
the blessing of your living presence.

*R: Let my prayer come before you, O God,
like incense.*

May men and women of today be open
to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

*R: Let my prayer come before you, O God,
like incense.*

Concluding Prayer:

Loving God, help us to seek the values
that will bring us lasting joy in this
changing world. In our desire for what
you promise make us one in mind and
heart. Through Christ Jesus. 

Prayer for the Holy Fear of the Lord

"Holy Fear" or "fear of the Lord" is a spiritual attitude that is not reducible to fear before the Transcendent and Divine Holiness. It expresses instead the awareness of how, feeling the love of God, one cannot live outside the logic and demands of the "Covenant".

To live in holy fear is to realize that God has pitched his tent amongst us, still remaining totally other from us: only God is God; we are creatures defined by the creator, upon whom depends the happiness of all. For this: "the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord" (Sir 1:12), as also: "the fullness of wisdom is the fear of the Lord"

Sirach 1:14

Greeting:

All-Holy One, Consoler Spirit, Spirit of Truth, Present everywhere and filling all things, Treasure of all good and Source of all life, Come dwell in us, Cleanse and save us, You who are All-Good!

(Byzantine Liturgy)

Prayer:

Gracious God, your love for us surpasses all our hopes and desires. Forgive our failings, keep us in your peace and lead us in the way of salvation. Through Christ Jesus.

Intercessions:

United in prayer as the Apostles with the Mother of the Lord, let us pray that God may confirm in all believers an openness to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

R: Blessed, O God, are the children who hope in you.

Protect and guide the catechumens who are preparing to be reborn in baptism.

R: Blessed, O God, are the children who hope in you.

Make ready the hearts and minds of all those you desire to confirm with the seal of the Holy Spirit.

R: Blessed, O God, are the children who hope in you.

Increase the faith of those who are preparing to participate in the eucharistic feast.

R: Blessed, O God, are the children who hope in you.

Protect the sacredness of the marriage bond in Christian families.

R: Blessed, O God, are the children who hope in you.

Help children and young people to grow in the experience of your love.

R: Blessed, O God, are the children who hope in you.

Concluding Prayer:

O God, creator of the heavens and the earth, you who have called all into existence through your word, pour out upon your Church the power of your Spirit so that you may reveal to everyone the wonders of your new creation inaugurated with the resurrection of your Son. He who lives and reigns, for ever and ever. ✠

Praying with the Spirit



At the very beginning of Part Four of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* – on Christian Prayer – in response to the question *What is Prayer?* is this word from St Thérèse of Lisieux:

For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy. (2558)

A little later comes this reminder of the need for *discipline* if we are to come to Thérèse's *simplicity*:

Prayer cannot be reduced to the spontaneous outpouring of interior impulse: in order to pray, one must have the will to pray. Nor is it enough to know what the Scriptures reveal about prayer: one must also learn how to pray. (2650)

And this – to remember who is our mentor:

"No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit." Every time we begin to pray to Jesus it is the Holy Spirit who draws us on the way of prayer. That is why the Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action. (2670)

There are many ways in which we can call upon this Spirit. We pray set formal prayers of the church, the Psalms, verbal prayers we form ourselves and prayers of doing and being (as the Aboriginal people saw their hunting). Another way of praying – which has been part of the Tradition for many centuries – is through 'breath prayers' or 'aspirations'. They are simple prayers that can accompany our breathing throughout the day, as we "take them to heart".

The association of breath and the Spirit has long been part of our rich tradition:

- At the first moment of creation, when "darkness covered the face of the deep, a wind (breath) from God swept over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2);
- the Spirit is seen in the wind blowing back the sea during the great Exodus event;
- the breath blowing through the valley of the dry bones, breathing life back into them: "Thus says the Lord God: come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they might live ... and the breath came into them and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude" (Ezekiel 37: 1-10);

- and again in the wind that blew through the house where the men and women disciples were gathered at Pentecost.

And as the very word *Spirit* means the *breath / wind of God*, so too is the Spirit breath / wind in my own life.

As Pope John Paul put it in his Encyclical letter *Lord and Giver of Life*:

“The breath of the divine life, the Holy Spirit, in its simplest and most common manner, expresses itself and makes itself felt in prayer.

It is a beautiful and salutary thought that, wherever people are praying in the world, there the Holy Spirit is, the living breath of prayer.” (65)

Hence the notion of associating my own life-giving breath with God’s life-giving Spirit is very sound. It also brings the discipline and simplicity that our prayer needs.

The breath prayers that follow all have the same pattern of two parts, each of which has four syllables. This helps us fit the prayer into a normal breathing pattern. You may find a different pattern more helpful.

If you are sitting quietly or lying down – with gentle breathing – the prayer could be breathed thus:

*Spi-rit of God (while inhaling)
help me to pray (while exhaling).*

If breathing is more vigorous – eg while walking, jogging or mowing the lawn – it may be more helpful to have a 4-2-4 pattern:

*Spi-rit of God (while exhaling)
INHALE
help me to pray (exhaling).*

Some also find it helpful to match the syllables to the rhythm of their steps.

Here is a list of breath prayers for you to use and to adapt to suit your own style. Probably a few on either side will emerge as “better” for you and you will stay with them. Soon they will be as natural as breathing! Or, as Paul says:

“In all your prayer and entreaty, keep praying in the Spirit on every possible occasion.”

Ephesians 6:18

<i>Spi-rit of God</i>	Help Me To See
	Help Me To Hear
<i>Ho-ly Spi-rit</i>	Help Me To Love
	Give Me Your Peace
<i>Giver of Life</i>	Give Me Your Joy
	Strengthen My Faith
<i>Com-for-ter God</i>	Strengthen My Hope
	Strengthen My Love

Ad-vo-cate God Be With Me Here
Be With Me Now

*"If we live by the Spirit, let us also be
guided by the Spirit."
Galatians 5:25*


Coun-sel-lor God Stay With Me Here
Stay With Me Now

*"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our
weakness; for we do not know how to
pray as we ought, but that very Spirit
intercedes with sighs too deep for
words.*

Sanc-ti-fi-er Be Thou My Guide

*And God, who searches the heart,
knows what is in the mind of the Spirit,
because the Spirit intercedes for the
saints according to the will of God."*

Soon you will develop your own
prayers, addressing particular parts of
your life. Then you may find yourself
with a pattern like:

Romans 8:26,27 

Spi-rit of Love Give Me Your Love
Help Me to Love ...
and so on.



Mary and the Spirit



Mary and the Holy Spirit

“Mary, who conceived the Incarnate Word
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
and then in the whole of her life
allowed herself to be guided
by that Spirit’s interior activity,
will be contemplated and imitated
during this year above all
as the woman who surrendered
to the voice of the Spirit,
a woman of silence and attentiveness,
a woman of hope who, like Abraham,
accepted God’s will ‘hoping against hope’
(cf Romans 4:18).

Mary gave full expression
to the longing of the poor of Yahweh
and is a radiant model
for those who entrust themselves
with all their hearts
to the promises of God.”

Towards the Third Millennium
(John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* 48)



Mysteries of the Rosary

Five mysteries of the lives of Jesus and his mother Mary are proposed for prayerful meditation. In these mysteries the action of the Holy Spirit is especially evident.

These meditations are suitable for communal or private use.

The proposed schema consists of:-

- Announcing the mystery
- Reading of a text from scripture
- A short reflective silence
- Decade: Our Father, ten Hail Marys, Glory be to the Father
- Concluding prayer.

The Hail Mary may also be recited in the following way, adding a phrase relevant to the mystery:

*Hail Mary full of grace,
the Lord is with you
Blessed are you among women
and blessed is the
fruit of your womb, Jesus –
conceived by the power
of the Holy Spirit.*

The second part, Holy Mary ..., is only recited at the end of the decade of ten Hail Marys.

1. The power of the Holy Spirit overshadows Mary of Nazareth

Reading: Luke (1:28-35)

Pause

Decade: Our Father, ten Hail Marys,
Glory be ...
Hail Mary ... and blessed is the

fruit of your womb,
Jesus, *conceived by the power of
the Holy Spirit*

Prayer: O God,
you chose that at the message
of an angel
your Word should take flesh
in the womb
of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
Grant that we who believe
that she is the mother of God
may receive the help
of her prayers.
Through Christ Jesus.

2. Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, praises the mother of the Lord

Reading: Luke (1:39-45)

Pause

Decade: Our Father, Hail Mary ... and
blessed is the fruit of your
womb, Jesus, *bearer of the Spirit
of holiness.* Glory be ...

Prayer: Jesus,
Saviour of the human family,
you brought salvation and joy
to the home of Elizabeth
through the visit of the
Blessed Virgin Mary,
the ark of the New Covenant.

We ask that, in obedience
to the inspiration of

the Holy Spirit,
we too may bring
Christ to others
and proclaim your greatness
by the praise of our lips
and the holiness of our lives.
Through Christ Jesus.

3. The spiritual maternity of Mary at the foot of the Cross

Reading: John (19:25-30)

Pause

Decade: Our Father, Hail Mary . . . and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus, *who died for our salvation*. Glory be . . .

Prayer: All holy God,
you chose the Easter mystery
as the way of our salvation;
grant that we, whom Jesus
entrusted from the Cross
to his mother,
may be numbered among your
adopted children.
In Jesus name.

4. The Holy Spirit descends on the Virgin Mary and the Apostles

Reading: Acts (1:12-14)

Pause

Decade: Our Father, Hail Mary ... and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus, *inexhaustible source of the Holy Spirit*. Glory be ...

Prayer: Creator God,
as Mary was at prayer
with the Apostles


you poured out on her
in abundance
the gifts of the Holy Spirit;
grant through her intercession
that we too, being filled
with the same Spirit,
may persevere
with one mind in prayer
and bring to the world
around us
the good news of salvation.
Through Christ Jesus.

5. The Spirit of the Son of God, born of a woman, works in our hearts

Reading: Galatians (4:4-7)

Pause

Decade: Our Father, Hail Mary ... and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus, *firstborn of the children of God*. Glory be ...

Prayer: All holy God,
in the wonders of your
wisdom and love you decreed
that your Son should be born
of a woman, and be subject to
her guidance; grant that we
may enter more and more into
the mystery of your Incarnate
Word so that our life on earth
may lead us, escorted by Mary,
to a joyful entry into your
home in heaven.
Through Jesus Christ. 

These reflections on the Mysteries of the Rosary are adapted from *Come Holy Spirit*, the document issued from Rome by the Liturgical Commission of the Central Committee for the Great Jubilee.



The Hail Mary

To deepen our reflection on Mary and her openness to the action of the Holy Spirit, here are some beautiful thoughts drawn from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

2673 In prayer the Holy Spirit unites us to the person of the only Son, in his glorified humanity, through which and in which our filial prayer unites us in the Church with the Mother of Jesus.

2675 Beginning with Mary's unique cooperation with the working of the Holy Spirit, the Churches developed their prayer to the holy Mother of God, centering it on the person of Christ manifested in his mysteries. In countless hymns and antiphons expressing this prayer, two movements usually alternate with one another: the first "magnifies" the Lord for the "great things" he did for his lowly servant and through her for all human beings; the second entrusts the supplications and praises of the children of God to the Mother of Jesus, because she now knows the humanity which, in her, the Son of God espoused.

2676 This twofold movement of prayer to Mary has found a privileged expression in the *Ave Maria*:

Hail Mary [or Rejoice Mary]: the greeting of the angel Gabriel opens this

prayer. It is God who, through an angel as intermediary, greets Mary. Our prayer dares to take up this greeting to Mary with the regard God had for the lowliness of humble servants and to exult in the joy God finds in her.

Full of grace, the Lord is with thee: These two phrases of the angel's greeting shed light on one another. Mary is full of grace because God is with her. The grace with which she is filled is the presence of God who is the source of all grace. "Rejoice ... O Daughter of Jerusalem ... the Lord your God is in your midst." Mary, in whom God has just made a dwelling, is the daughter of Zion in person, the ark of the covenant, the place where the glory of God dwells. She is "the dwelling of God ... with humankind." Full of grace, Mary is wholly given over to God who has come to dwell in her and whom she is about to give to the world.

Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. After the angel's greeting, we make Elizabeth's greeting our own. "Filled with the Holy spirit," Elizabeth is the first in the long succession of generations who have called Mary "blessed". "Blessed is she who believed ..." Mary is "blessed among women" because she believed in the fulfilment of the Lord's word. Abraham, because of his faith, became a

blessing for all the nations of the earth. Mary, because of her faith, became the mother of believers, through whom all nations of the earth receive Jesus who is God's own blessing: Jesus, the "fruit of thy womb."

2677 Holy Mary, Mother of God: With Elizabeth we marvel, "And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Because she gives us Jesus, her son, Mary is Mother of God and our mother; we can entrust all our cares and petitions to her: she prays for us as she prayed for herself: "let it be to me according to your word." By entrusting ourselves to her prayer, we abandon ourselves to the

will of God together with her: "Thy will be done."

Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death: By asking Mary to pray for us, we acknowledge ourselves to be poor sinners and we address ourselves to the "Mother of Mercy," the All-Holy One. We give ourselves over to her now, in the Today of our lives. And our trust broadens further, from the present moment, to surrender "the hour of our death" wholly to her care. May she be there as she was at her son's death on the cross. May she welcome us as our mother at the hour of our passing to lead us to her son, Jesus, in paradise. 🌿



Spirituality for Today



There is a wave of re-awakened interest in spirituality evident in our world today. Perhaps it is because people in our highly materialistic society have recognised that there is a need for something more than, other than, “stuff”; a recognition that we have within us deep longings that “things” can’t satisfy.

This interest takes all kinds of forms, many of which we may find off-putting or disturbing, and others which seem to carry promise or merit.

*In our search for that which nourishes our spirit, we look for ‘signposts’ – for guiding principles in coming to a deeper appreciation of just what makes up a specifically Christian spirituality today. The following ten ‘signposts’ are noted by Michael Downey, in an article entitled “Orienting Principles for Christian Spirituality Today”, which appeared in the March-April 1997 edition of the journal *Praying*.*

Orienting Principles for Christian Spirituality Today

1 The term spirituality does not refer to just one dimension of the Christian life, such as prayer or the “interior life”. Christian spirituality is about the whole person, not this or that “part”. It begins with experience. As lived experience, Christian spirituality is concerned with the full spectrum of realities that shape the Christian life, the whole range of human experience as it is brought to bear on the quest for God.

Because of the wideness of its focus, spirituality is enriched by the insights gained in the larger human quest for meaning, purpose and value. What differentiates spirituality from other elements of religion is the concern for the dynamic and concrete character of the relationship of the human person to God in actual life situations. Moreover, this relationship is one of development, of growth in the life of faith, and thus covers the whole of life.

2 God comes to be known and loved first and foremost in the experience of human relationship. God’s initiative toward us is the basis for any relationship between human beings and God. The Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ, lies at the heart of this relational matrix, empowering us to ever fuller participation in the mystery of communion of persons, divine and human. Christian spirituality is a whole way of life in and through the Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ, which is itself a participation in the very life of God. This means that all Christian spirituality is necessarily trinitarian. With the Trinity as point of entry and destination of the Christian spiritual life, growth in Christian life and holiness is gauged more by the flourishing of persons in the communion of charity than by individual sanctification through the long journey inward.

3 Christian spirituality is wholly oriented to the person of Christ. Growing in the Christian spiritual life entails getting past our tendency to be self-focused, self-absorbed, self-preoccupied. Deification, growing in divine likeness, entails relinquishing the false self so that the true self, our true humanity, may flourish. Our true nature as persons lies in this process of deification, that is, being conformed to the person of Christ and united in communion with God and others in and through the presence and power of the Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ. Such conformity to our true nature entails the commitment to establish rightly ordered relationships in our lives as persons and as a people.

The nature of such rightly ordered relationships is illustrated in the gospel depictions of Jesus' relationship to God the Father and to other persons. Jesus' way of relating thus becomes the horizon for our understanding of our relationship to self, others and God. The hallmarks of this relational horizon are mercy and justice, compassion and truth, integrity and attentiveness to the weak, the wounded and all those who are last and least in church and world.

4 Because Christian spirituality is wholly oriented to Christ in and through the presence and power of the Spirit, the experience of the Christian spiritual life is grounded in the Word and shaped by the proclamation and hearing of the Word in the Scriptures. Christian spirituality is necessarily scriptural spirituality, nourished by the Word in the church's liturgy as well as in personal prayer and meditation. Even

though there is a great deal to be learned about the spiritual life from other sources, a Christian spirituality must be firmly anchored in the Christian story wherein God is revealed to be the God of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The symbols, images and concepts appropriate to a Christian spirituality emerge from the story of God's action in history and presence to creation, and ordinarily will be drawn from the Scriptures and from other Christian writings, especially the classics of Christian spirituality.

5 Because Christian spirituality finds its source and end in a communion of persons in loving relationship, it does not thrive in isolation. The liturgy is the coming together in faith and charity of those who seek to live in Christ by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. It is in and through the sacramental worship of the church that the Body of Christ expresses and receives its identity as such. Christian spirituality finds its source and summit in the liturgy, and consequently is inescapably a liturgical and sacramental spirituality. By words, gestures, actions and objects that sacramentalize God's presence in human life, history, world and church, we enter into the deepest kind of prayerful communion with the mystery of God.

6 The cloud of witnesses serves to remind us that there is no growth and development in the spiritual life without an ongoing commitment to the discipline of prayer. Christian spirituality develops through the life of prayer, which is the ongoing cultivation of relationship with God rooted in God's being toward us. Prayer enables us to see the ordinary

and the everyday as the arena of God's presence and action. In prayer we give in to the altogether irresistible beauty of the unfathomable mystery whose name is above all naming. Praying is stretching to make enough room for silence. When we pray, we gradually begin to see that the spiritual life demands that we give our lives over to God. In prayer, we do just that.

7 The complete gift of our self in response to God's self-giving love is the central and ongoing demand of the Christian spiritual life. Giving our lives over to God requires that we do so in good times and in bad. But when we live in deep communion with the mystery of the living God, this distinction between good times and bad begins to blur. It is no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us. This is the Paschal Mystery in and by which the Christian lives. Christ lives in us and we in Christ.

From the perspective of a specifically Christian spirituality, the cross of Christ is the vital center for reflection and discernment, and provides a check against many of the pitfalls in "feel-good" approaches to spirituality, Christian or otherwise. Life in Christ calls us to integrate a whole range of human experiences, even and especially the dark and negative ones, into the redemptive mystery of Christ. The Christian way of life requires struggle with the forces of darkness, sin, suffering and death. As such it is never a free and easy ride. And because the Christian life is buoyed up by the conviction that the power of love prevails over all evil through the cross and resurrection of the Christ, the Christian spiritual life is a way of sober hope.

8 The Christian spiritual life entails some relationship with tradition. We do not go it alone. We stand in continuity with all those who have gone before us and who have tried to make life better by responding to the offer of God in Christ. In many views of tradition today there is a futile attempt to find consolation in a romanticised view of some earlier golden age untouched by the perils of our own times. More accurate readings of the Christian tradition recognise both its strengths and weaknesses, and seek to recover insights from the past in order to fashion a viable present and realistic future possibilities.

As but one example, the way in which the cross of Christ was and remains the emblem of crusaders of different types and periods presents a range of obstacles to those who otherwise would look to the cross as the center of reflection and discernment in Christian spirituality. It is precisely because persons and groups continue to recognise centrality of the cross within the Christian tradition, however, that oppressive understandings of Christ's suffering and cross are giving way to images of the black Nazarene of non-Western, non-white cultures, and of the despised and rejected compassion of God living in solidarity with the poor and the weak, unto death and into hell. Through a vibrant and critical relationship to the riches of the past, "traditional" symbols such as the cross may bespeak freedom and future.


9 An important challenge to those who seek to live in Christ today is to find ways of discerning and describing

authentic Christian spiritual experience that does not fit into inherited categories for understanding and speaking of such experience. It is the task of all who live in Christ to continually look where we might least suspect for the most compelling signs of the mystery of God with us. This requires attention to the lives of those who have been pushed and shoved to the margins of church and society, those who are last and least, wounded and weak. It also calls for attention to the interrelation of all created reality.

Christian spirituality lived out in the order of creation gives rise to a lively sense of stewardship for the goods of creation. This is fertile ground for exploring the relationship between human and non-human life in such a way as to throw light on current ecological themes such as the interdependence of various forms of life. Though the Christian tradition as a whole may not have given this a great deal of attention in the past, there are rich resources in Christian spiritual traditions for recognising that God's providential plan is not simply for the salvation of human beings, but for the redemption of the whole world – every inch and ounce of it.

10 The traditional contrast between active and contemplative forms of spirituality no longer can be upheld. Contemplation of God should lead to living action on behalf of others, and Christian action should be rooted in the insights of prayerful, indeed contemplative, living. Prayer, ascetical discipline, study, apostolic activity, the rigours of marriage and family life, the

works of mercy, and especially the celebration of the Paschal Mystery in Word and sacrament, all increase participation in the communion of the living God. The deeper our participation in the life of God, the fuller the fruits in our relationships with others.

My purpose here has been to suggest that those who seek to live the Christian spiritual life today should be cautious in the face of two currents in contemporary Christian spirituality. First, there is the tendency to allow spiritual experience to free-float. Second, there is the effort to pin down a rich array of spiritual experience in neat and tidy categories. In drawing attention to ten orienting principles for Christian spirituality today, it may be useful to recall that these will most likely need to be nuanced as the Christian spiritual tradition continues to grow and develop. Their purpose here is simply to provide some sense of direction in our movement toward the point of destination we glimpse even now in the Paschal Mystery of Christ. 

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Spirituality Today



Another View

*A whole batch of bread is made holy
if the first handful of dough is made holy.*
Romans 11:16

Jesus, first Bread blessed and broken, you ask me to be your leaven. You lift me to your Father and gift me with your loving.

I, just a handful of dough, am asked to be the leaven for a whole batch of people so that faith will rise in hearts. It is humbling to be your leaven. It is risky to be your holy. It is goodness to be your dough.

I, just a handful of dough, am called by you to be kneaded, to bear the imprints of trust, giving life shaped by daily dyings.

I, just a handful of dough, know so little about being leaven. Yet, you lift me up repeatedly, telling me that you love me, assuring me with the truth that you are my rising strength.

Jesus, first one blessed and broken, make of me a handful of dough, one who trusts enough to be kneaded, one who loves enough to be shared.

Being a "handful of dough made holy" means:

Meeting God and knowing God. It is a knowing with one's head and one's heart. It is a knowing which comes about by taking what has been given to us intellectually about our God in the

scriptures, in tradition, and in all of life and then pondering this in openness, freedom and vulnerability, taking it into our hearts and allowing it to transform us. This knowing of the other in our lives in a personal way comes about by walking through our very ordinary days, walking with a heart that is open to surprises and wonders in the simple beauty of people and events. It comes about through a listening spirit, one that is sensitive to the graced insight of the moment and aware of the feelings that accompany that insightful moment. It is based on the belief that it is out of the daily stream of busy-ness and activity, "the here and now", that we often experience the revelation of God and the blessing of sacramentality.

Giving oneself to the process of reflection. Reflection is that moment, minute, or hour, in which we pause inwardly and ponder the message that lies deeper than what is being seen, heard, tasted, touched or smelled. Reflection is an attunement of the imaginative and the intuitive parts of our inner being. It is developed by *discipline* – by using regular spaces in the day to deliberately pause to think about what is before us. We come to these reflective times believing that God dwells within and that these times are meant to free us to be receptive and responsive to this loving presence.

Trusting enough to be a servant of the Lord. This trusting means that we are ready and willing to be “kneaded,” to be open to the struggle and the pain that may come, to be transformed from a tiny handful of dough into a living loaf of bread. This trusting develops when we are praying daily to be present to others with the attitude of Jesus, when we are constantly aware of the great need to lean on the love and the strength of God. At those times we are stretched and are called on to let go, to let the rising happen. This trusting is lifelong and always needs to be encouraged by other trusting hearts who are “handfuls of dough.”

Feeding the hunger for God that is deep within us. Nourishment of our spirit takes time and discipline. Sometimes we allow our spirit to hunger and thirst for days without offering ourselves good food for inner growth. Feeding our hunger for God means not only setting aside definite time but also using good resources such as scripture for our prayer time. The food that we place in our minds and hearts greatly affects the decisions and the choices of our days.

Giving of ourselves to others with quality presence. Quality presence means we have a heart of love and a desire to care for others. It means that “being with” is just as significant as “doing for.” It means being willing to have nothing to show for our day’s work except faithfully standing by the cross of another, or giving love in a celebrative moment, or attentive perceptive listening with our heart. This kind of presence creates peace, energy, and acceptance in the heart of another.

Quality moments means forgetting about clocks and calendars.

Wanting to be holy, wanting to be a saint. Holiness is knowing we have tasted God and knowing that we can never be satisfied with just that taste. It is choosing, in spite of our fear, to go more deeply. Holiness is facing the pain of the world and crying out with its suffering. Holiness is stopping to gasp in amazement at how love stirs in the joy and beauty of ordinary events. Holiness is feeling an awesome restlessness that pursues us even though we try to run away from it. Holiness is choosing to keep on struggling and believing that there is such a thing as eternal life, that there is such a one as eternal love. Holiness is wanting to be a saint. It is knowing God as a companion on the journey of life.

Believing in one’s potential to be the handful of dough. Yes, we are the “handfuls of dough made holy so that the whole batch of bread can be made holy.”

Each time you eat bread, take a moment to pray for those entrusted to your care; remember how you are meant to be the handful of dough, the leaven of faith, for others. Use the cover from a package of yeast as a bookmark in your bible, to remind you of your call to be holy. Decide on a regular time each day when you will deliberately pause for prayer, reading, and keeping a journal. Allow that time to be leaven for you so that all of your life will be transformed in God. Thus you will become a blessing for many. 🌿

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Written from the perspective of the South American experience of basic christian community, this has some useful insights into the place and the presence of the Spirit in our theology, in our history and in our world.

William Johnston, *Being in Love – the Practice of Christian Prayer*. Fount paperback. 1988

Most of Johnston's books have a place in any bibliography on spirituality. This one is particularly good for its emphasis on practical aspects of prayer today, and how the basis of all prayer is a being-in-love.

Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is*. Crossroad. New York. 1993

A landmark book on 'The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse', speaking clearly and deeply about the mystery of God. Some beautiful sections on the Spirit.

Brian Gallagher, *Pray ... as you are*. John Garratt. 1997

A second edition of this simple but profound book. The author, for many years Director of the Heart of Life Centre in Melbourne, brings this experience to a consideration of basic issues in prayer. Beautiful and short!

Stephanie Dowrick, *Forgiveness & Other Acts of Love* Viking. Penguin Books. 1997

A best-seller in non-fiction in Australia recently, this is a book both wise and deeply compassionate. It is not written from a particular christian viewpoint, but draws deeply from christian – and other – wisdom.

Joyce Rupp, *Fresh Bread & Other Gifts of Spiritual Nourishment* Ave Maria Press. August 1995 (Seventh printing)

Many will be familiar with the work of this gifted spiritual writer. This one offers a guide for reflection on the Scriptures throughout the year. She looks at everyday experiences and leads us through them to communicate with God. 