



Dear Friends,
Is there anything more central to our faith than prayer?

Many years ago a gorgeous elderly lady, Madge, gave me a 'prayer box': a small cardboard box decorated in bright yellow sunflowers. She said, 'Virginia, each day put all those people you want God to watch over in your prayer box. Ask God to hold them in his hand so you can stop worrying about them. You need to do it every day.' I did. It worked. I learnt to pray and gradually let go of worrying.

Prayer is the constant contact I make with God in my thoughts and words. It is one of the most powerful medicines for my spirit. Some would say that prayers for guidance are the most potent of all, providing I keep myself open to God's will and am prepared to act according to His inspiration.

Thomas Merton says it perfectly:

"All true prayer somehow confesses our absolute dependence on God. It is therefore a deep and vital contact with Him. . . . It is when we pray that we really are."

(Thomas Merton: *No Man Is an Island*)

It is challenging to make a regular time for prayer in our busy lives. Here are a few ideas about how to create a prayer routine:

- Turn off the radio in the car and decide to use that time for prayer
- Pray when you are exercising
- Pray in the shower or bath each day
- Pray while you're mowing or vacuuming
- Pray before an important meeting, during the meeting and at the end of the meeting
- Pray while you're ironing, cooking or bathing the children
- Have a prayer bracelet to wear when you know you are going to need to extra spiritual support. Use it as a reminder to return to prayer throughout the day
- Pray before evening meal, it's a great example for the children
- Pray on queue; any and every queue you find yourself in throughout the day
- Pray for people you find difficult to love
- Have your favourite prayers printed in your diary for quick access
- Have your favourite prayer in a frame at your desk
- Have The Bible by your bed; read it every day
- Have The Bible on CD in the car and listen to it when you're driving
- Make a decision to tell your family and friends that you are praying for them
- Make a decision to learn favourite prayers or scripture off by heart
- Make a decision to go to Mass during the week
- Make a decision to pray the rosary when you need the gentle rhythm of the Hail Mary

Competition: I'd love you to share with me your favourite prayer and write in 33 words or less why it is important to you. We have 6 wonderful books to give away to the six published responses. Please send me your prayer and response to my email address.

This is one of my favourite prayers, which has been on our fridge for years. I love this prayer because it reminds me of my absolute dependence on God and fills me with the hope that I don't have to struggle with anything alone.

“Lord, help me to remember that nothing will happen to me today that you and I together can't handle.”

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