



Oh My God, I'm On Prayer!

Staff Formation Afternoon Thursday
13 July 2023



Why Do We Pray?

- Prayer is an experience through which we encounter God as individuals and community. In the Gospels, we read about the importance of prayer in Jesus' life. His experience of prayer speaks resoundingly of: his desire to be in relationship with God, his love for justice, compassion and for all of creation.

Introduction

- It is an expectation that we **pray each day at All Hallows' School**. This ensures that we offer our staff and students opportunities to celebrate their faith, contemplate life, grow in relationship/discipleship with Christ and deepen their awareness of God's loving presence.
- Prayer is always **invitational**.
- Prayer is our response to God's love that is found at the heart of our Creator's cosmic reality.
- Catherine McAuley said:

“Prayer will do more ... than all the money in the Bank of Ireland. Let us pray well and never grow weary.” (1841)



Today's Session Will Provide Information On:

- AHS culture of prayer
- Types of prayer
- Prayerful occasions
 - Prayers for meetings
 - Classroom prayer
 - Assembly prayer
 - Liturgies
- Resources for Prayer



The All Hallows' Context – Our Culture of Prayer

- As a school that celebrates diversity, promotes inclusion and the full participation of women in society as well as the Church, we are conscious of the power of language in prayer
- Our of respect to Jewish practice, we avoid the use of Yahweh in prayer and song
- We try to balance the masculine references to God and society where possible by using gender neutral language. God has no gender and is often referred to using feminine metaphors and symbols in scripture. We try to privilege the feminine references to God where possible.



Blessing Before and After Prayer

During the official Mass, we use:

- “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen”

At school events we begin with a blessing:

- “In the name of the Creator, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Amen.”
- This still references the Trinity but in a more inclusive way.
- We could also use:
 - In the name of the Creator, the Word and the Spirit ...



Kingdom Language

The traditional language of the Church has reflected its medieval roots – it tends to overuse hierarchical language such as ‘Lord’ and ‘Kingdom’.

This language was certainly relevant to the cultural and historical context that Jesus lived in and even the early monastics, but it doesn’t really speak to our more egalitarian context here. It certainly doesn’t speak to our largely female audience either.

So what does this mean for prayer at All Hallows’?

- We need to think about how often God is referred to in terms of monarchical language.
- We should try to find other ways of referencing God as “Lord” if we can – is it more relevant to say, “Merciful God”, “God of Compassion and Love”, “Creator God”, “Ever loving God”
- There is always a challenge when presenting scripture but we can make relevant changes to soften the hierarchical language where necessary.



Have a Go:

Let us give glory to the Father
Through the Son
In the Holy Spirit,
For Yahweh has made us His people, His
Church,
And calls us to sing His praises.

All honour and glory and thanks are His,
And praise and worship belong to Him.
To God be glory in His Church
For ever and ever!

Amen!



A photograph of hands clasped in prayer, with a semi-transparent blue box overlaid containing the title text.

Types of Prayer

- Formal prayers of the Church (Our Father, Hail Mary, Rosary)
- Prayers of Gratitude
- Prayers of Thanksgiving
- Prayers of Petition
- Ignatian Examen
- Lectio Divina
- Visio Divina
- Meditation
- Reflections using poetry or song

Prayers for Meetings – Thematic Focus

Can be contextual to the focus of the meeting. eg. a prayer about teamwork, a prayer about being open to each other, a prayer about the sacredness of work, celebrating success

Can be linked to what is happening globally. Eg natural disasters, famine, wars, joyful moments such as community efforts to assist one another

Can be linked to the Church calendar: Liturgy Brisbane - [Liturgy Brisbane - 2023 Liturgical Calendar](#)

Themes listed at back of *Catholic Youth Bible*

Can be linked to social justice events: Australian Catholic Bishops Calendar: [Upcoming Events – Office for Social Justice \(catholic.org.au\)](#)

Can be linked to UN International Days (where appropriate): [International Days and Weeks | United Nations](#)



Prayer for Meetings - Structure

Meeting prayers should be relatively brief.

- **Open** with some brief **contextualisation** – what is the impetus for this prayer? Why have you chosen to focus on this topic for this particular audience?
- Begin with a **blessing**: *In the name of the Creator, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*
- Deliver the **Prayer**.
- Conclude with a **Blessing**: *In the name of the Creator, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Some Ideas for Mixing It Up

Could be read by presenter alone

Could be read by whole group

Could be read around the room where each person is allocated a line or verse

Could be a prayer and response format

Could be a recorded prayer/song/YouTube clip (not recommended for online prayers – too fiddly!)

Anything else?

Class Prayer or Liturgies – Possible Structure

Centering:

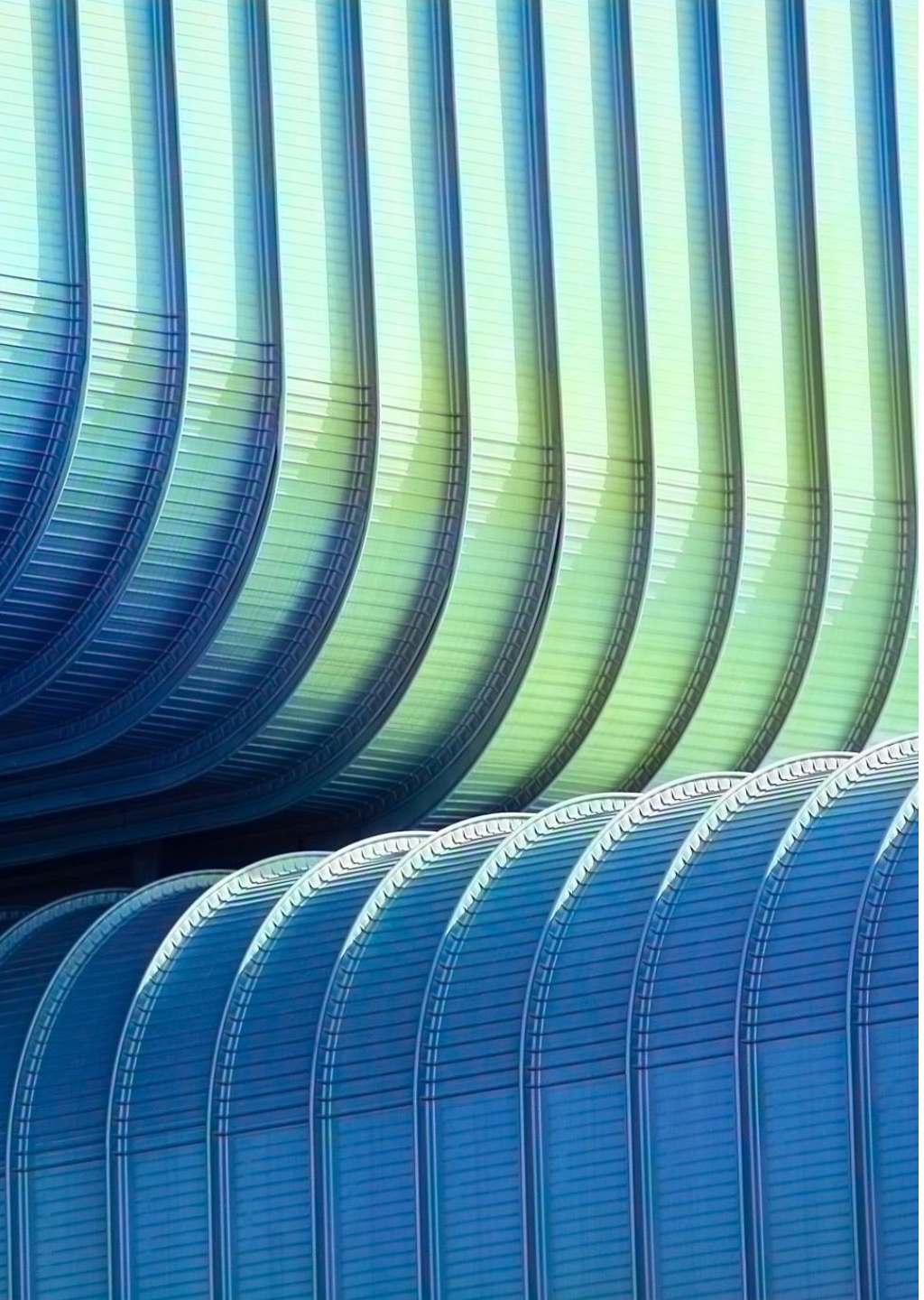
- *Let's take a moment to still ourselves for prayer (pause)*
- *Becoming aware of our bodies, minds and hearts (pause)*
- *Breathing in God's loving presence (pause)*
- *Breathing out all that takes us away from God (pause)*
- *Savouring the gifts God gives us today (pause)*

Acknowledgement of Country

Welcome/Contextualisation – why are we gathering?

Blessing

Opening Prayer



Scripture Reading (one or two)

- *When from Hebrew or Christian Scriptures and NOT one of the Gospels conclude with:*
 - *This is the Word of the Lord to which people respond:*
Thanks Be to God
- *When a reading is from one of the Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, conclude with:*
 - *This is the Gospel of the Lord to which people respond:*
Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ

Reflection on Scripture: Some possible questions

- What strikes you or stays with you from this reading today?
- How are you challenged by this reading today?
- What can we learn from Jesus' encounter with others in this reading?
- How does this reading challenge our current global reality?
- I wonder how you are called to live this Gospel message today.



Reflection or Ritual Action:

- *Could reflect with a piece of music and a suggested topic to think about*
- *Could reflect with an appropriate song on YouTube – maybe one with lyrics printed*
- *Could ask those gathered to dialogue on a topic nominated by you*
- *Could write a word or short reflection and offer it up into the sacred space*

Prayers of the Community:

- *The usual invitation has been: Lord Hear Us to which we respond: Lord, Hear Our Prayer*
- *BUT we can mix it up to suit the context and theme of the prayer:*
 - *God of Mercy; R: Hear Our Prayer*
 - *God of Love; R: Hear Us*
 - *Generous God; R: Pour Out Your Love*
 - *Compassionate God; R: Give Us Hearts for Mercy*

Final Prayer or Sending Forth Blessing

- *Try to end on a positive note where everyone is sent forth to bring the message of the Gospel to life*

Lectio Divina

This prayer has a extensive history in our Catholic tradition. Lectio Divina means '*divine reading*' in Latin. It is a diligent reading of Scripture where the text is read slowly, repetitively and contemplatively. These are the steps of this prayer practice:

Choose a scripture text

1. *Lectio* The text is read for the first time, with the intent of reverent listening

Pause

2. *Meditatio* The text is read for a second time, with the intent of focusing on a word or a phrase from the text. This time we are going more deeply into our prayer experience.

Pause

3. *Oratio* The text is read for a third time giving us an opportunity to share a word, phrase or prayer that resonates from Scripture. Dialogue may be with the whole group or a partner

Pause

4. *Contemplatio* The text is read for a fourth time, with the intent of allowing the text and its message to rest within our heart, in that sacred space of ultimate silence.

Pause



Visio Divina – Praying With Our Eyes

Similar process to Lectio Divina but using an image:

Choose a relevant image – usually related to scripture or a religious theme:

1. *Visio/Look*: The image is presented, with the intent of reverent contemplation. Read the scripture related to the image slowly.

Pause

2. *Meditatio/Meditate*: The reading and image is for a second time, with the intent of focusing on a word or a phrase from the text and elements of the image. Ponder the words, then gaze, look, observe, ask questions, and ask God to help you see what he wants you to see or what he wants you to notice. What stirs within you?

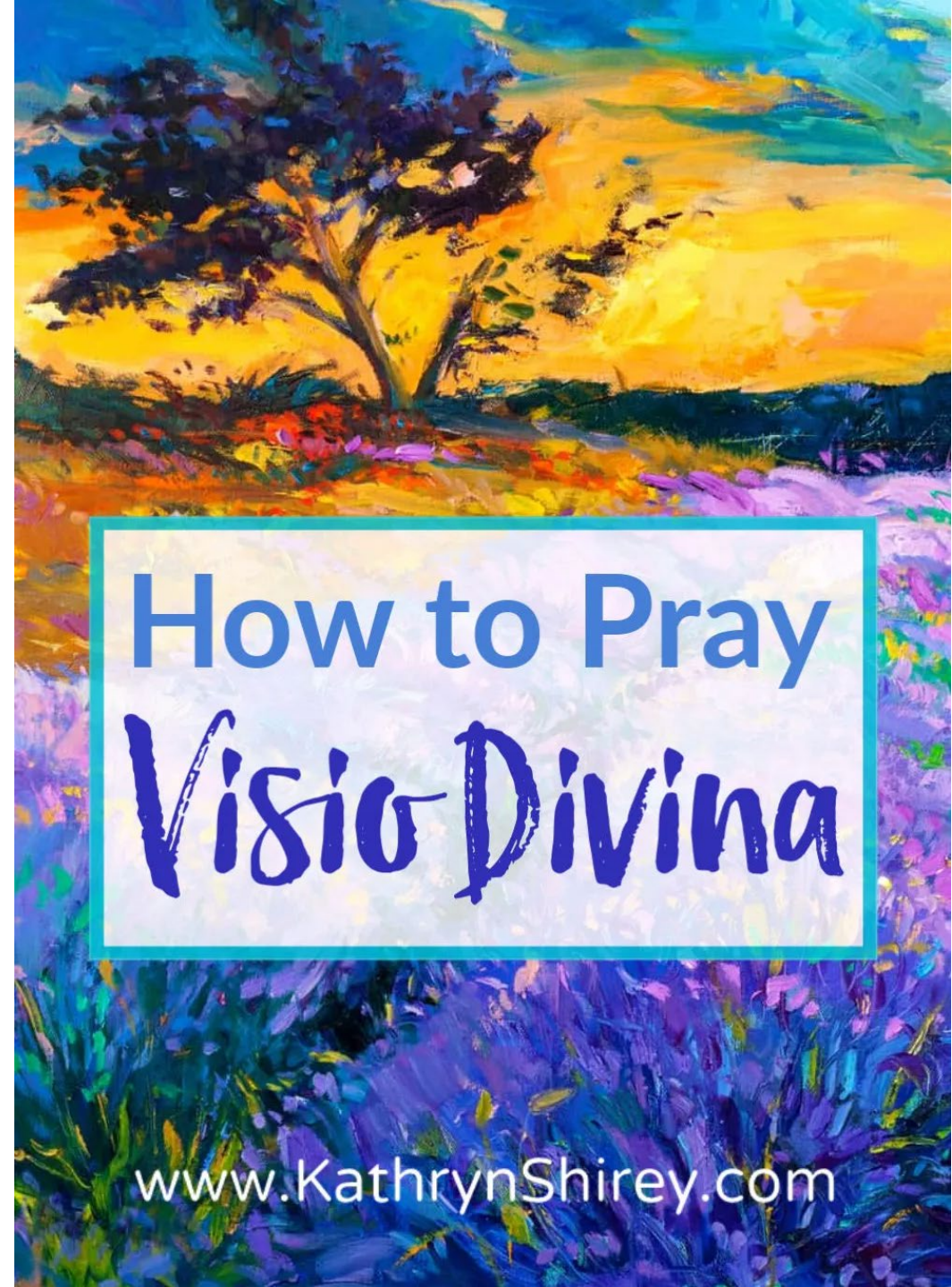
Pause

3. *Oratio/Pray*: The image is considered for a third time giving us an opportunity to share a response to some of these questions: What caught your eye? What do you notice? Reflect on the structure: color, lines, shadows, values, intensity. What is the mood of the painting? How do you react to it? Do you sense an invitation from God? What did you learn about God's nature and character? Does anything else strike you? . Dialogue may be with the whole group or a partner

Pause

4. *Contemplatio/Contemplate*: We live the text. A contemplative spiritual exercise is meant to lead us to gospel action in the world and deeper connection with God.

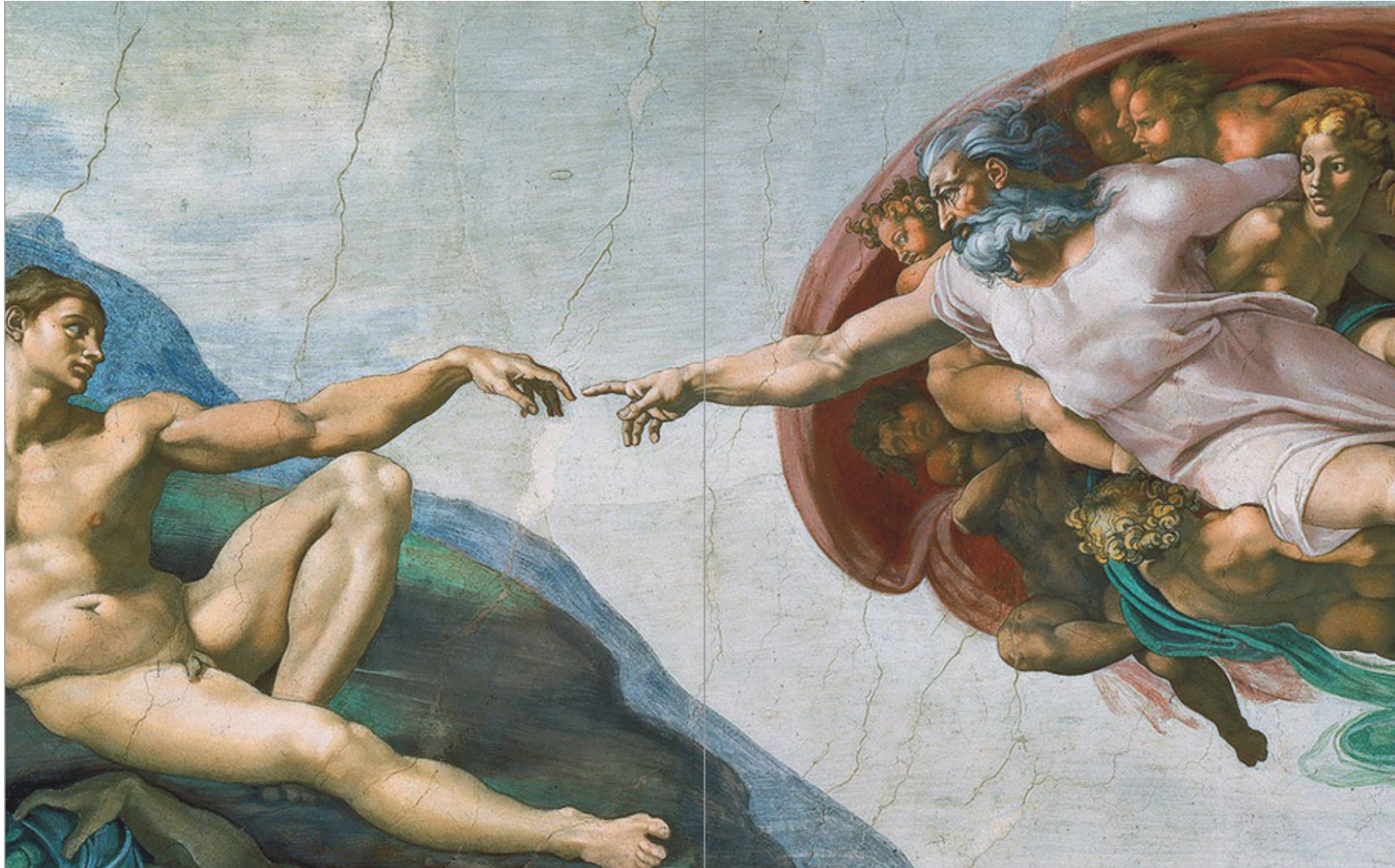
Pause



How to Pray
Visio Divina

www.KathrynShirey.com

Have a Go!



Creation of Adam by Michelangelo.

Praying with Imagery

Place a collection of images on the learning space floor and ask students to choose one that stands out for them. Invite students to discuss their reflections in small groups or sit with their image on their own. Scaffold this experience with 2-3 leading questions of prayerful inquiry. The theme of the reflection may stem from your current Religious Education unit or scripture passage from that unit.

Praying with Art

Find an artistic image of a scripture text you are using in your current Religious Education unit. Discuss with the students, the story this image represents. Invite the students to pray with this image by sitting before it in contemplation. Slowly read out some of the following prayer prompts (age appropriate) or make up your own. Students can respond accordingly.

‘What do you notice in this image?’

‘How does it make you feel today?’

‘How do you see Jesus in this image?’

‘What parts of this image comfort you, what parts of this image confront you?’

‘How does Jesus relate to others in this image?’

‘What can we learn about Jesus from this image?’

‘What does this image teach you today?’

‘How are you transformed by this image today?’

‘Can you think of a word or a phrase that you could take from this image today?’

‘What gift is God offering you from this image today?’



The Visitation by [James B. Janknegt](#) 2007

Should be religious where possible

If using secular music it needs to be suitable to the theme and if using a video clip, should not be distracting



Praying with Music

Play some quiet music, inviting the students to be with God or Jesus in their own time and their own way. Invite students to let the music enter their bodies, minds and hearts. Students can give thanks or participate in some journal writing around the chosen theme of the prayer.

Play some music that reflects the theme of the current Religious Education unit, the enduring questions or scripture text. Invite the students to respond to the music by drawing what comes to mind or heart for them. Invite students to reverently dialogue with others about their prayer response.

Music

The Ignatian Examen



The examen invites students and staff to deepen their awareness of God's loving presence in their day. The Ignatian Examen was created by Ignatius of Loyola during the 16th century. It focuses on the following:

- ***Become aware of God's presence***
- ***Review the day with gratitude***
- ***Pay attention to your emotions***
- ***Choose one feature of the day and pray from it***
- ***Look toward tomorrow in trust***

Leader: Let's take a moment now, stilling ourselves for prayer –our bodies and hearts

- Breathing in God's love, Breathing out any of our worries, Thinking back over today
- How has it been for you?
- Where did you experience God's love today?
- What feelings emerged for you today?
- What did you give and receive today?
- What do you feel grateful for from today – spend a moment thanking God for this gift.
- Take a moment to sit before God with any challenges or confusions from today-asking for an increase in God's presence for tomorrow and beyond. Knowing that God is with us in every moment of every day.

Resources

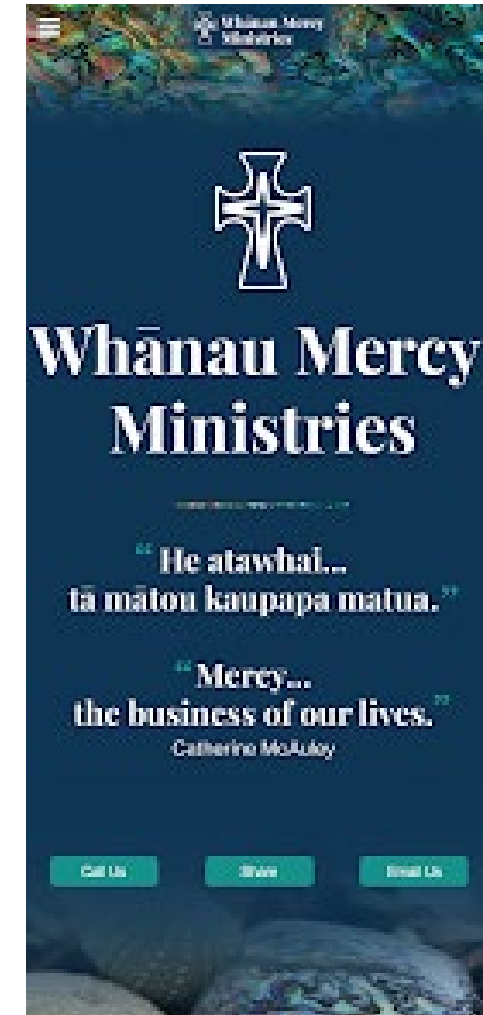
- [Prayers \(bne.catholic.edu.au\)](http://bne.catholic.edu.au)
- [Ways to Pray Calendar \(bne.catholic.edu.au\)](http://bne.catholic.edu.au)
- The Aboriginal Catholic Ministry Victoria. <https://www.cam.org.au/acmv/Liturgies>
- Aboriginal Prayers and Blessings: [Aboriginal Prayers And Blessings \(slife.org\)](http://slife.org)
- NATSICC resources link <http://www.natsicc.org.au/natsicc-resources.html>
- Joyce Rupp: [Joyce Rupp | PRAYERS & REFLECTIONS](#)
- Mary Wickham rsm: [Title | Mary Wickham \(marywickhamrsm.org.au\)](http://marywickhamrsm.org.au)
- Mercy International Prayers: [Prayers | Mercy World](#)
- [Three-Minute Retreat - Ignatian Spirituality](#) (both App for Apple and Website)
-
- [How to Pray The Rosary \[Guide for Catholics\] - 2023 | Hallow](#) (both App and Website – traditional)

Prayer is a plant the seed of which is sown in the heart of every Christian, but its growth entirely depends on the care we take to nourish it.

Catherine McAuley

Mercy Prayer Resources

- Mercy themed topical and seasonal prayers are included with each issue of [Imaging Mercy Today](#) published monthly in the news section of this website.
- More resources including the [The Suscipe of Catherine McAuley](#) in song and the songs from the [Circle of Mercy CD](#) can be accessed on the [Mercy International Association](#) website.
- Go to [Mercy Prayer Book](#) to pray the Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy.
- [Mercy Spirituality](#) is a spirituality and reflection resource.
- Prayer resources can also be found on other Mercy congregation websites including the [Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea](#) and [Sisters of Mercy of the Americas](#)



Activity

- Working with a partner, create a prayer experience in response to the card you have been given.
 - Opening prayer
 - Scripture/Reading
 - Ritual action
 - Song or hymn



Prayer Stimulus Cards



National
Reconciliation
Week



Servant Leadership

Friendship





Beauty of
Nature



World Day Against Human Trafficking

Hope





Mercy



Feast of St Francis of Assisi