

How we pray together

Prayer Station

Introduction

Here are some more suggestions of things you could use to make a place of prayer for the third of our Synod Themes.

How we pray together

How to use this resource

This pack contains many ideas for a prayer station.

Please do not use everything!

Think about what space you have available and how much material you will need to create a good Prayer Station in that space. You need enough to give a variety of things to think and pray about but not so much that people feel overwhelmed.

- Have a look through the pack and perhaps select 6 – 10 pages that you find most helpful.
- Ensure you have a variety of text / images / prayers.
- What other physical resources (candles, symbols, cloths, rosaries, books) could you use?
- Is there someone in the parish with a creative eye who can help you put together the prayer station? – perhaps the Parish Office can suggest or approach a parishioner to support you? Remember the Parish Office is a busy place so do not leave it until the last minute!
- Make sure there is a place for people to leave their suggested proposals.



On Keeping the Lord's Day Holy

The fundamental importance of Sunday has been recognised through two thousand years of history and was emphatically restated by the Second Vatican Council: "Every seven days, the Church celebrates the Easter mystery. This is a tradition going back to the Apostles, taking its origin from the actual day of Christ's Resurrection — a day thus appropriately designated 'the Lord's Day'."

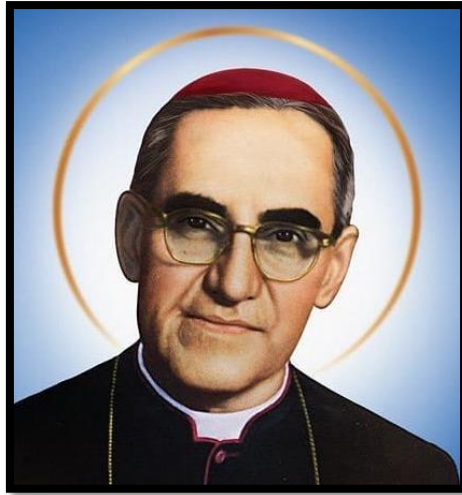
Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 106

Until quite recently, it was easier in traditionally Christian countries to keep Sunday holy because it was an almost universal practice and because, even in the organisation of civil society, Sunday rest was considered a fixed part of the work schedule. Today, however, even in those countries which give legal sanction to the festive character of Sunday, changes in socioeconomic conditions have often led to profound modifications of social behaviour and hence of the character of Sunday.

Sunday is a day which is at the very heart of the Christian life. I would strongly urge everyone to rediscover Sunday: Do not be afraid to give your time to Christ! Yes, let us open our time to Christ, that he may cast light upon it and give it direction. He is the One who knows the secret of time and the secret of eternity, and he gives us "his day" as an ever-new gift of his love.

Excerpts from 'Dies Domini' by St John Paul II, 31 May 1998





How beautiful will be the day
when all the baptised understand
that their work, their job,
is a priestly work,
that just as I celebrate Mass at this altar,
so each carpenter celebrates Mass at his workbench,
and each metal worker,
each professional,
each doctor with the scalpel,
the market woman at her stand,
is performing a priestly office!
How many cabdrivers, I know,
listen to this message
there in their cabs;
you are a priest at the wheel, my friend,
if you work with honesty,
consecrating that taxi of yours to God,
bearing a message of peace and love
to the passengers who ride in your cab.

St Oscar Romero in 'The Violence of Love', p 10-11





Prayer is, for me, an outburst from the heart; it is a simple glance darted upwards to Heaven; it is a cry of gratitude and of love in the midst of trial as in the midst of joy! In a word, it is something exalted, supernatural, which dilates the soul and unites it to God. Sometimes when I find myself, spiritually, in dryness so great that I cannot produce a single good thought, I recite very slowly an Our Father or a Hail Mary; these prayers alone console me, they suffice, they nourish my soul.

St Therese of Lisieux

Whoever has not begun the practice of prayer, I beg for the love of the Lord not to go without so great a good. There is nothing here to fear but only something to desire.

Prayer in my opinion is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us. The important thing is not to think much but to love much and so do that which best stirs you to love. Love is not great delight but desire to please God in everything.



We need no wings to go in search of God, but have only to find a place where we can be alone and look upon Him present within us.

St. Teresa of Avila



The Word of God and the Eucharist

The Word of God is in no way less than the Body of Christ; nor should it be received less worthily. I ask you, brothers or sisters, tell me: which to you seems the greater, the word of God, or the Body of Christ? If you wish to say what is true you will have to answer that the word of God is not less than the Body of Christ. Therefore just as when the Body of Christ is administered to us, what care do we not use so that nothing of it falls from our hands to the ground, so should we with equal care see that the word of God which is being imparted to us shall not be lost to our soul, while we speak or think of something else. For he who listens carelessly to the word of God is not less guilty than he who through his own inattention suffers the Body of Christ to fall to the ground.

St Caesarius, Bishop of Arles, 5th century



Hapag ng Pag-asa (Table of Hope)

Joey A Velasco



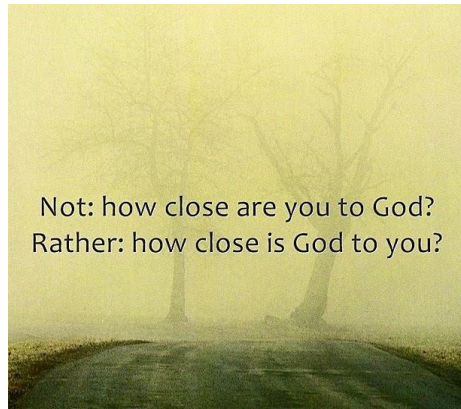
At the entrance of the Major Seminary of the University of Santo Tomas in Manila, you will see a painting. It is the "Last Supper" of Joey A. Velasco. It portrays poor children from Manila, all between the ages of 4 and 14, at the Last Supper with Jesus. The painting is called "Hapag ng Pag-asa", the table of hope.

“Hapag Pag-Asa” shows Filipino street children in loose tattered clothing eating with Jesus. One child is clutching a handbag, true to Leonardo Da Vinci’s original painting that showed Judas Iscariot holding a bag of money.

Another child eats on the ground alongside a cat. A girl and a boy are astride on a huge drum while facing Jesus. The table isn’t really a table. It’s a big delivery box, knocked apart and nailed together again as a table.

Joey Velasco revealed that he looked for his models in places where street children often stay - on the sidewalks, under the bridges and by the riverbanks. Each figure is modelled after a real street child. He has since raised funds to help these street children get a better chance in life. He said: "This painting reveals a story of greater hunger than a plate of rice could satisfy. What these children are starved of is love."





Suppose the Lord were waiting in the next room:
waiting to spend some time with you,
waiting to listen to you,
waiting to speak with you...
waiting to be with you...
waiting for you...

Well, he's not waiting in the next room:
he's much closer than that:
he's already with you,
waiting for you in your heart...

You don't have to move an inch
to spend time with him,
to speak to him,
to listen for his word of peace...
to be with him...

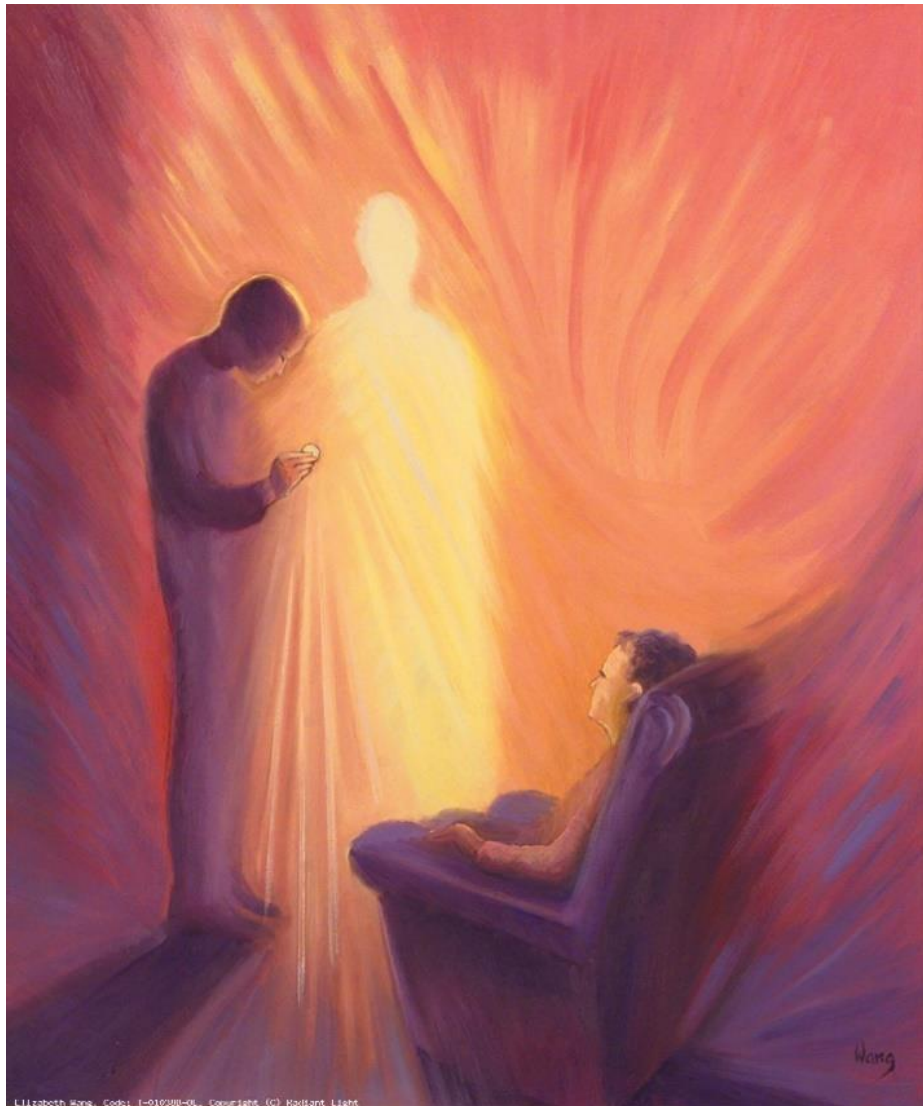
Lord, slow me down, close my eyes
and open my heart
to your presence within me, now...

You're here by my side,
waiting to spend time with me,
waiting to listen to me,
waiting to speak your word of peace:
you are with me and waiting for me, now...

Be with me, Lord, and hear my prayer:
right here, right now,
in my heart of hearts...

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*Jesus Christ comes to us
in communion
when we are sick or housebound*





*Mary is a tender mother
to all who love her Son:
we can turn to her
and rest in her love at any time*



The Last Supper

Fr Sieger Koder



I have found it helpful to use four words
Taken, blessed, broken and given.....

These words summarise my life as a priest...
As a Christian....

I am called to become bread for the world
Bread that is taken, blessed, broken and given

... they summarise my life as a human being.

Because in every moment of my life
Somewhere, somehow

The taking, the blessing, the breaking and the giving
are happening.

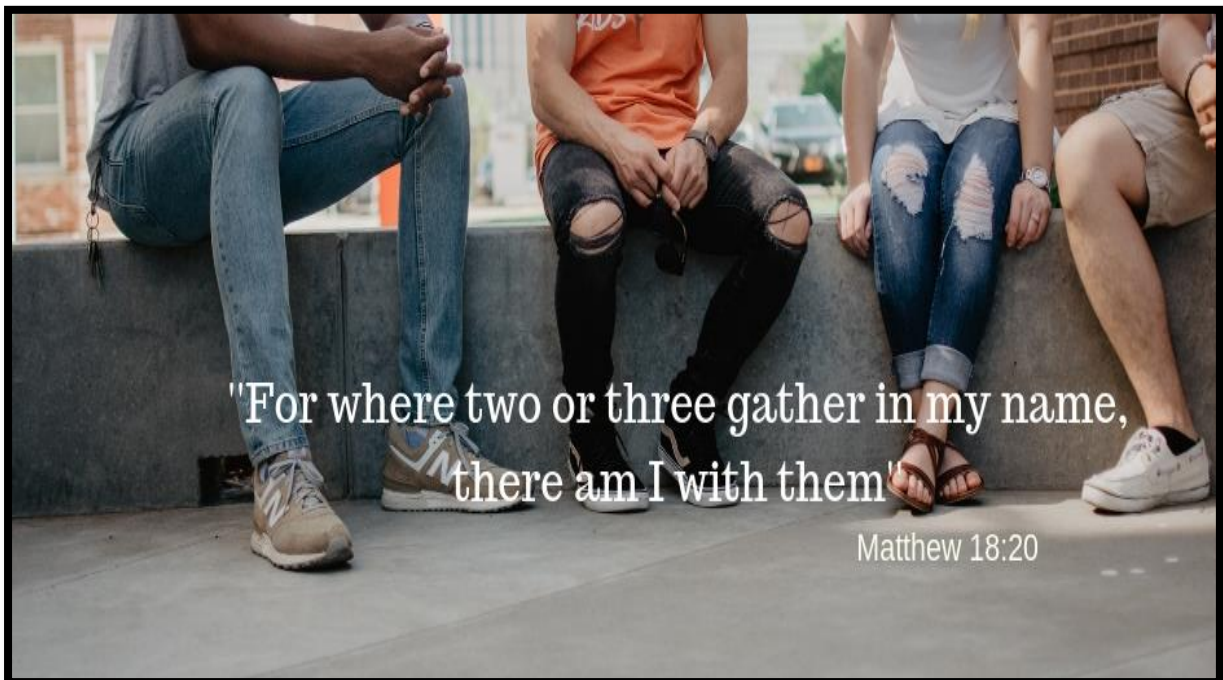
These four words have become
The most important words of my life ...
I feel I won't ever know their full profundity.
They reach high as well as low.
Embrace God as well as all people.

Life of the Beloved by Henri JM Nouwen (Hodder and Stoughton 1992)

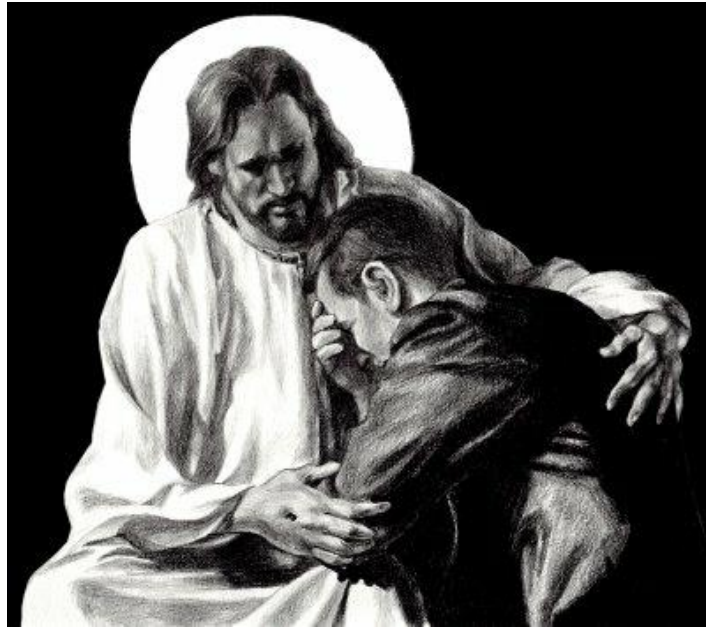


In truth I tell you once again,
if two of you on earth agree
to ask anything at all,
it will be granted to you
by my Father in heaven.
For when two or three
meet in my name,
I am there
among them.

Mt.18:19f



The Empty Chair



“A priest went to visit a patient in his home. He noticed an empty chair at the patient's bedside and asked what it was doing there. The patient said, " I had placed Jesus on that chair and was talking to him before you arrived....For years I found it extremely difficult to pray until a friend explained to me that prayer was a matter of talking to Jesus. He told me to place an empty chair nearby, to imagine Jesus sitting on that chair and to speak with him and listen to what he says to me in reply. I've had no difficulty praying ever since."

Some days later, so the story goes, the daughter of the patient came to the rectory to inform the priest that her father had died. She said, "I left him alone for a couple of hours. He seemed so peaceful. When I got back to the room I found him dead. I noticed a strange thing though, his head was resting not on the bed but on a chair that was beside the bed."

Sadhana, a Way to God Anthony de Mello S.J. (1983)



Take a moment to ponder these questions:

- Think of a time when you felt fully engaged in praying with others. What helped this to happen?
- How did you learn to pray? How have your ways of praying changed over time?
- What helps you to pray now?
- What different styles of prayer appeal to different groups of people?
- How does the regular Sunday liturgy relate to your daily life?
- How well do the sermons you hear at Mass connect with your experience and your concerns?

Prayer

Loving God,
Give us hearts that desire to be open to you.
May our lives be a prayer of offering.
May our worship remind us of our need of you.
May we know the truth that wherever we gather,
you are present in our midst.
Fill our hearts with a love and need for prayer
that we might be more effective
in the world in which we live.
We ask this through Christ our Lord
Amen.



Questions to help you prepare proposals

- In 1990 137,000 people came to Mass each weekend, last year the number was 40,000. Why have so many stopped praying with us on Sunday?
- If you wanted to learn more about prayer or scripture who/where would you ask?
- How can we make our churches places of prayer through the week?
- Can our churches be left open during the week?
- How can we celebrate the sacraments in a way that helps those who don't regularly attend Mass?
- Is your home (school) a place where you find it easy to pray? What might help you to pray more at home or at school?
- Does the celebration of Mass in your parish help you to grow in how you live your faith through the week?
- How are the sick and housebound included in the prayer and worship of your parish? Do they know that they are valued members of your parish?



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This is what you said

(Taken from the Synod Listening)

“Sunday Mass is central to everything.”

“People respond to different styles of prayer and liturgy.”

“Liturgy needs to support families as they strive to nurture the faith of their children.”

“Prayer is a source of strength.”

“It is a joy to have children at Mass.”

“Living and working patterns can make Sunday Mass attendance difficult.”

“Liturgy and Worship are central to the mission of our Catholic schools.”

“Our Church buildings are deeply valued as places of prayer.”

And much more!



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