Prayers and Reflections

a time of grace
How to use this book
1. Begin with the Opening Prayer on page 1.
2. Select one or more prayers or reflections from pages 2-19.
3. Conclude with the Closing Blessing and Prayer on page 20.

Why do we pray?
“We pray to keep our balance, to keep our focus firmly on God, to know that whatever happens, God journeys with us.”

Liturgical Commission – Archdiocese of Brisbane

What is this prayer for?
This prayer invites participants to explore their experiences of moments of Grace within their lives, using diverse and multimodal styles.

How do we pray?
We can pray in many different ways. In gathered prayer, it is useful to follow the suggested model – we gather, we listen, we respond, we go forth – to remind us of the need to have a beginning and an ending, the inclusion of sacred texts and the active participation of all present. This prayer resource is made up of three areas, a common opening prayer, a selection of reflective experiences and a closing prayer.
Leader: In the words of St Paul, “Grace to you and peace from God Our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 1:7)

“Grace...comes through the powerful acts of those around us: the acts of love, selflessness, forgiveness and affection. This grace of which Jesus was full, this grace is the life of God.” (Bill Huebsch, Grace: God’s Greatest Gift, p.43)

As we gather in prayer today, we acknowledge the traditional owners of this land. We recognise that as a community, we are called to follow the dream of Jesus and to reaffirm the reign of God.

With this in mind, we pray together...

All: Gracious God,
You gift us with abundant and unbounded love.
Open our eyes
to the moments and movements
of your grace in our lives,
and open our hearts
to know the wellspring of gratitude that arises within us.
We make this prayer through Jesus, your gift of grace.
Amen.
Contemplating the Face of Christ

Viewing:
The Leader invites the group to contemplate each of the images of the face of Christ on the opposite page.

*Take a few minutes to consider what attitude or attribute is portrayed by each image.*

Response:
The Leader invites the group to choose an image that conveys a particular message or meaning for them today.

*You are invited to share why you have chosen that image.*

You are invited to turn to page 20 for the Closing Blessing and Prayer.
Young Jew as Christ, c. 1656, Rembrandt Van Rijn

Christ Carrying the Cross, Tiziano Vecellio (Titian) 1485-1576

Christ Pantocrator - c. 13th Century  Detail of a mosaic icon of the Deisis, Hagia Sophia, Constantinople.

The Face of Christ, Detail from the Isenheim Altarpiece, Matthias Grünewald, c. 1512-16
A God Who Never Gives Up On Us

Reading:

He was a young man. He was crouched over the wet mud in the dug-up
Market Place. Very intently, he was scraping away the dirt from every
deeply-embedded stone. In his hand was something that looked like a
small spoon. Most of the stuff he would throw away, but every now and
then he paid special attention to some tiny fragment, placing it carefully
to one side. ‘Excuse me, what are you doing?’ I ventured to ask him.
Graciously he explained. ‘I’m an archaeologist from Durham University,’
he said, ‘and I’m trying to find something of value here; something worth
keeping.’

As I crossed the road to Woolworths for a passport photograph, I was
smiling to myself. I was remembering the words – ‘something of value;
something worth keeping.’ In my mind’s eye I saw myself, after I had died,
thrown out of heaven by St Peter, as a piece of worthless scrap, unfit to
live with the saints. Then I saw God running out through the pearly gates,
bending down over me, with a small spoon, like the university student in
the Market Place.

So there was God, carefully sifting and scraping through my life, throwing
away the dirt and the mistakes and the sins. I could hear God whispering,
‘There must be something of value here; something worth keeping. Even
if it kills me (again!), I’ll find the golden part of Daniel, the shiny bit that is
made in my own image. Even Daniel cannot destroy that!’
I was smiling because this image of God was not the one I was brought up with. As a child I was told about a hard God, who searched for my bad bits, not my good bits; a God of fear rather than joy. I was smiling because I do not believe any more in a God who punishes – only in a God who loves and laughs and weeps. These days I only believe in a God who never, ever gives up on me.

(Daniel O’Leary, Prism of Love, p.25)

Response:

The Leader invites the group to take a few moments to look again at the reading from Daniel O’Leary.

Allow a particular phrase or sentence to capture your attention. Sit with those words and allow God’s voice to respond to them.

Share aloud the phrase or sentence that captured your attention.

You are invited to turn to page 20 for the Closing Blessing and Prayer.
God’s Grace Knows No Limits

Reading: Matthew 8:1-3

When Jesus had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed him; and there was a leper who came to him and knelt before him, saying, ‘Lord, if you want to, you can make me clean.’ He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, ‘Of course I want to. Be made clean!’ Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Response:

Leader: Jesus’ response to the leper’s request, “Of course I want to,” reminds us that God’s grace knows no limits. Whatever we might ask of God, the answer will always be, “Of course I want to.”

*In the stillness of our hearts, take a few moments to acknowledge where we need God’s grace in our lives right now … knowing that the answer will always be, “Of course I want to.”*

Viewing:


You are invited to turn to page 20 for the Closing Blessing and Prayer.
The Face of Christ

Viewing:
View the following YouTube clip, *The Face of Christ*, Chris Rice http://goo.gl/yHUHn (3 mins 39 secs) or similar clip from YouTube.

Response:
The Leader invites sharing on one or more of the following questions:

*Where is a surprising/unexpected place you have found the face of Christ?*

*How does this song speak to the concept of ‘grace’?*

*What does this mean for you when you contemplate the face of Christ?*

You are invited to turn to page 20 for the Closing Blessing and Prayer.
The Face of Christ
Fall in Love
Attributed to Fr Pedro Arrupe, SJ (1907-1991)

Reading:
Nothing is more practical than finding God; that is, falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude.

Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.

Response:
The Leader invites the group to take a few moments to look again at the prayer attributed to Fr Pedro Arrupe.

Allow a particular phrase or sentence to capture your attention. Sit with those words and allow God’s voice to respond to them.

Share aloud the phrase or sentence that captured your attention.

You are invited to turn to page 20 for the Closing Blessing and Prayer.
Faces of Christ

Viewing:
Religious art, like all art, is created within a historical cultural context. Generally this means that most artworks can be identified as belonging to a particular time and place. Similarly, artworks of Christ reflect the context in which they were created. Many images of Christ have remained powerful, devotional icons for believers over the centuries. This film, *Faces of Christ*, invites viewers to contemplate such images of Christ.

View the following YouTube clip, *Faces of Christ* http://goo.gl/TWnnr (6 mins 20 secs) or similar clip from YouTube. You may wish to use a shorter segment of the film.

Response:
The Leader invites members of the group to share one or more of the following questions:

*What image/s of Christ did you connect with?*
*How is God’s grace present in the connection?*

*What image/s of Christ evoked memories from your past?*
*How is God’s grace present in that memory?*

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12 You are invited to turn to page 20 for the Closing Blessing and Prayer.
Daily Examen - *Finding God in All Things*

The Daily Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection that helps you look for God’s presence in your life. It involves reflecting on the events of the day and praying to become mindful of the grace of God in your life.

Leader: Let us express through prayer our gratefulness for God’s grace and blessing in our lives. We call on the help of the Holy Spirit in our everyday relationships and endeavours.

*Take a few minutes to reflect on the day that has passed, looking for the times when God was present in our lives. Pause and reflect.*

The Leader invites participants to share their experiences of God’s presence or grace in their lives over the past day.

*Take a few minutes to reflect on the day that has passed to reflect on the times we missed the mark in our relationship and endeavours and ask for God’s forgiving love. Pause and reflect.*

All:

Dear God, we know that it is this loving relationship between You and us that will decide everything we need to do and be. We pray for the grace to be more available to You and to see Your grace in all things. Amen.

Adapted from - *Finding God in All Things: A Marquette Prayer Book 2009*

You are invited to turn to page 20 for the Closing Blessing and Prayer.
Sacred Places and Spaces

Viewing:
Place and space is of significant importance to our experience of God’s grace in our lives. Many great minds, great artists have contributed significantly to the place in which we gather as a community of believers, the Church.

Be it the architectural structure that shapes, protects and surrounds the congregation or the inspirational art works, these aesthetics of the church raise the hearts and minds of worshippers to God’s grace.

The Leader invites participants to spend some time exploring the Sistine Chapel as accessible http://goo.gl/R3qX (note that Adobe Flash is needed) or scan.

As you explore the Sistine Chapel allow the space to speak to you, to draw forth a reaction, to call God’s grace within you.

Response:
The Leader invites participants to share moments in which they felt God’s grace through their own connection to and experience of a place or space.

You are invited to turn to page 20 for the Closing Blessing and Prayer.
Let us love and praise God in all

Viewing:

View the following YouTube clip, *Saint Mary MacKillop* featuring Gary Pinto http://goo.gl/BqlSL or scan or similar clip from YouTube.

Response:

The Leader invites participants to reflect on Mary’s saying, *Let us love and praise God in all*, and how this saying came to life in the film clip.

All: St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, your life inspires us to be people of hope and encouragement for the lonely, poor and broken hearted. We ask that we too can live lives that love and praise God in all.

St Mary of the Cross,

Pray for us.

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You are invited to turn to page 20 for the Closing Blessing and Prayer.
Closing Blessing and Prayer

Leader: May the God of hope fill us with every joy in believing;

May the peace of Christ abound in our hearts;

And may the Holy Spirit enrich us with gifts for service, now and forever.

All: Amen.

All: Gracious God,

Day by day, you enlighten and enrich our lives by your grace.

As we embrace your gift with gratitude, may your grace flow through us to shine your love on all we meet.

We ask this through the grace and love of your son, Jesus.

Amen.