

# **Prayer and ongoing Conversion – Growing in Holiness**

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“Transformed people lead to Transformed parishes”.

A fundamental component of parish renewal is for each parishioner to grow in holiness.

This workshop will look at this and focus on growing your life of virtue –holiness - through prayer and Scripture in the ways of meditation and contemplation - to encounter Jesus Christ more deeply through the scriptures.

Let us pray

*God of power and love,  
look kindly on the tasks we have begun,  
and at this hour renew your grace within us:  
make good our defects,  
and bring our work to that fulfilment which  
accords with your will.  
Through Christ our Lord.*

**What does holiness mean for you?**  
**discuss**

**What does prayer mean for you?**  
**discuss**

**What do the Scriptures mean for you?**  
**discuss**

## **Holiness**

*Jesus said to his disciples,*

*“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower.*

*He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit.*

*Every branch that bears fruit*

*he prunes to make it bear more fruit...*

(John 15:1 - 3 )

# ***Holiness***

- ❖ the grace of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives
  - ❖ The new life
  - ❖ The life of Christ
  - ❖ Baptised into Christ
- ❖ Unless a person is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God
  - ❖ The Church is at once holy but always in need of reform
  - ❖ The divine life
  - ❖ The perfection of charity
- ❖ dying to self and living for Jesus -taking up our cross and following him
  - ❖ Growing in a life of virtue

# Prayer

- ❖ Reaching out to God
- ❖ Calling on God – the divine – acknowledging that there is a higher authority
- ❖ Worshipping a deity

**What is Christian prayer?**

*A new heart I will give you,  
and a new spirit I will put within you:  
and I will remove from your body the heart of stone  
and give you a heart of flesh.  
I will put my spirit within you,  
and make you follow my statutes  
and be careful to observe my ordinances.*

Ezekiel 36: 26-27

## **Christian Prayer**

- ❖ The work of God and our free response

  - ❖ A gift

    - ❖ Consciously turning to and responding to the life of divine grace

    - ❖ Worshipping as the Body of Christ - supremely in the Most Holy Eucharist

    - ❖ Worshipping in the Holy Spirit in the liturgy, small groups and on our own

      - ❖ Taking time to be still before the Lord

        - ❖ Asking for our needs – for the needs of others - interceding

        - ❖ Thanking and praising God for his gifts, his goodness and care

          - ❖ A personal relationship with Jesus Christ

- ❖ Pondering on the Word of God – savouring it and responding in the heart
- ❖ Allowing the Scriptures to guide and lead us and challenge us by pondering them in our hearts
  - ❖ Praying the Prayer of the Church – the Divine Office
    - ❖ Devotions and set prayers

*God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.....We love because he first loved us. ! John 4:16, 19*

*I pray that according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.. Eph 3:16-17*

*Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness;  
for we do not know to pray as we ought,  
but the very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.  
And God, who searches the heart,  
knows what is the mind of the Spirit,  
because the Spirit intercedes for the saints  
according to the will of God.* Rom 8:26-27

# Scripture

- ❖ The Old and New Testaments
  - ❖ The Word of God
    - ❖ The word of the Word

*When your words came, I devoured them: your word was my delight and the joy of my heart; for I was called by your name, Lord, God of hosts.* Jeremiah 15:16

In Sacred Scripture,  
the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength,  
for she welcomes it not as a human word,  
“but what it really is, the word of God.” (1 Thess 2:13)

“In the Sacred books,  
the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children,  
and talks with them. (DV 24)

Each of Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then.....make present  
and fruitful in the Church, the mystery of Christ, who promised to  
remain with his own “always, to the close of the age.” Matt 28.20

So how do prayer and the holy Scriptures  
lead us to grow in holiness

- to grow in love for God and neighbour
- and so be missionaries to others?

## ***A few points about prayer***

The best way to pray is to pray!!!

As we spend time in prayer, led by the Holy Spirit we must be open to experiencing the way God is leading us in prayer.

Over time our prayer can change – it is really important that we allow this to happen - we must not remain in one place in prayer if the Lord is drawing us on.

We must stay in the prayer of dryness and trusting faith if God wants us to remain in the place.

We pray to grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ.

We pray so that we will build into our lives  
a habit of always doing the will of God  
in every circumstance.

We pray so that we will become more attuned to the ways of God.  
Prayer is the place of consolation and strength.

Prayer is a resting in God's love in Christ,  
listening to his voice so as to find strength from him

God waits for us,  
God is there before we come to him.  
Jesus Christ, is the doorway – through his suffering,  
death and resurrection -  
to the outpoured love of the Most Holy Trinity.  
A disciple of the Lord needs dedicated times of prayer to remain a  
disciple and to spread the Good News

*But whenever you pray,  
go into your room and shut the door and pray  
to your Father who is in secret;  
and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.* Matt 6:6

A humble and contrite heart is necessary when we pray and read the Scriptures.

*Thus says the Lord: heaven is my throne and the earth my footstool;  
what is the house that you would build for me,  
and what is my resting place?  
All these things my hand has made,  
and so all these things are mine, says the Lord.  
But this is the one to whom I will look,  
to the humble and contrite in spirit,  
who trembles at my word.*

Isaiah 66:1-2

## Scripture

Scripture should be a constant companion in our lives.

We need to read it – but where we start and how much we read each day will be different for different people. As a suggestion as a beginning read the Gospels and the Letters of St Paul, St Peter and St James.

When we are reading the Scriptures peacefully, prayerfully, God will enliven our lives – advise and correct us – console and strengthen us.

Lectio Divina

The Scriptures are integral to the celebration of the Sacraments.

Reading the Sunday Readings slowly and prayerfully  
is an excellent way to read the word of God.

To have pondered the readings,  
particularly the Gospel before coming to the Eucharist,  
which is the *source and summit of the Christian life*,<sup>1</sup>  
is a wonderful help  
to hearing the word of God at Mass.

<sup>1</sup> Par 11, Lumen Gentium: Vat II Documents

As we soak up the word of God,  
as we are converted and renewed  
in the Holy Spirit through the Sacraments,  
as we weave prayer  
into our lives in real and concrete ways,  
as we pray with each other, and for each other,  
as we step out and practice works of love and justice  
***we grow in a life of virtue.***

*Therefore, since we are surrounded on every side  
by so great a cloud of witnesses,  
let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely,  
and let us run the race that is set before us,  
looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith,  
who for the sake of the joy that was set before him  
endured the cross, disregarding its shame,  
and has taken his seat  
at the right hand of the throne of God.* Hebrews 12:1 -2

*Be strong, let your heart take courage,  
all who hope in the Lord.* Ps 30

Questions.....

Let us take some time to pray with each other....