

About this Resource

Artwork

A choice of art intended to illustrate the theme for meditation and contemplation

WE DARE TO SAY



The Madonna Lactans (c.1415) by Giovanni Verrochi / Verrocchio English College, Rome

Theme Box

A short paragraph outlining the broad theme of each session, useful for preparation

Opening Prayer

The same prayer is used in all five sessions and participants are invited to pray for one another and for the needs of the world

SESSION 1 / OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE THY NAME

To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12)

Theme: The Lord's Prayer, found in Matthew's Gospel at the heart of the Sermon on the Mount, shows us our new inheritance in Baptism.

Welcome to Pray and to Share (15 mins)

O God,

send forth your Holy Spirit into our hearts that we might perceive, into our minds that we might remember, into our souls that we might meditate. Inspire us to speak with love, holiness, tenderness and mercy. Teach, guide and direct our thoughts and senses from beginning to end. May your grace help us to see with your eyes and to act with your love and light in our hearts. May we be strengthened with wisdom from of high for the sake and glory of your kingdom. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

In a period of calm and a space of trust, each one of us is invited to share one thing that has happened in the past week. It could be one thing that has given you cause for concern, something shared during the last time you met as a group or something that has given you cause to celebrate. In this moment of peace and fellowship, we pray for the good of the group. Each member is invited to offer up any personal intentions. We also pray for the good of the Church, for wisdom in our country and for the common good. Let us also bring to mind the poor, the sick and those who have died. We join together in praying Our Father.

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Read the Word 1 John 3:1-6, 11, 16-24 (15 mins)

None John's first letter advises readers on how to discern that teachers - by their model of life, by their love and by their proclamation of Jesus. This passage. A variety of short prayers before the reading of Scripture can be found on page 46.

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God, and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has ever seen him or known him.

For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. As this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Let us love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God, and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

Read the Word

The Scripture passage around which the session is built.

Here you will also find a brief introduction. A selection of prayers before reading the passage is on p.46

Meditate on the Word

A series of questions to encourage prolonged meditation on the Word of God in the pages of the Bible

Explore and Reflect on the Theme

A reflection, containing references to the Church's teaching and to Scripture, designed to unfold the theme

Additional Material for reflection, from the Saints and Catechism, are signposted throughout in gold/purple text boxes

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Meditate on the Word 1 John 3:1-6, 11, 16-24 (20 mins)

Once the Scripture passage has been read you are asked to choose a word or phrase that has struck you. Underline it with a pen or you might wish to simply hold it in mind. You will be invited to share the word or phrase with the group.

Another person will then read the passage. While you listen attentively repeat the process of holding onto a word or phrase, making a note and sharing it. In doing this, you are invited to consider the following questions:

How have these words or phrases resonated in my heart and in my mind?

What is the Lord saying to me at this very moment in my life?

In what way might my reading of this passage of Holy Scripture change me?

How might it help me to resolve to be more Christ-like in the coming days?

You are encouraged to re-read the Holy Scripture during the coming week, revisiting these questions.

Explore and Reflect on the Theme (25 mins)

When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we are addressing the all-powerful, transcendent God of the universe creator of all that is and ever has been. When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we call God, 'Father.' The enormity of this is so rarely lost on us.

In contemporary society, there is often a sense that fatherhood is repressive and problematic – see for example, the derogatory use of the term 'patriarchy.' So many fathers are no more than 'togethers', having little to do with the children they help to bring into the world. It is this difficulty with fatherhood that has led to the salt cry for changes to this most familiar of prayers.

God the Father, as Olivier Clément, the French theologian reminds us, transcends sexual duality (see the Catechism (CCC 239). The 'series Bible' he writes, evokes the 'bosom of mercy,' ruminates in the sense of the words: this Father is mercy. He 'senses' his children as a mother 'senses' her own, with her whole being, with all her flesh and within her bosom (cf. John 1:18). God's love for us is total, motherly, paternal, unequalled, unconditional. The

Timings

Timings for each of the different sections have been suggested. They are intended as a guide only.

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Responding to what has been heard

By committing ourselves to action we are saying that we want to make a difference to our lives and in the lives of others. We are committing to make the words of the Lord's Prayer resonate in our lives. What have you heard today that you find challenging? What do you find affirming? What is your response to God's offer of eternal life? Please share if you feel comfortable. What are you going to do about what you have heard today?

Go in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord (10 mins)

You are invited to close with a time of meditation on Psalm 139 (18). Read it slowly, pause between verses, reflect on its meaning for your life and your journey in faith, hope and love. You may also wish to conclude with the Lord's Prayer, silent or another prayer of your own choosing.

- A. O Lord, you search me and you know me, you know my resting and my rising, you discern my purpose from afar.
- B. Before ever a word is on my tongue you know it, O Lord, through and through. Too wonderful for me this knowledge, too high, beyond my reach.
- A. For it was you who created my being, knit me together in my mother's womb. I thank you for the wonders of my being, for the wonders of all your creation.
- B. O search me, God, and know my heart. See that I follow not the wrong path, and lead me in the path of life eternal.
- AB. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

A blessing taken from the Liturgy of the Hours is included here. May the Lord bless us and keep us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

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Meditate on Sacred Art: Visio Divina

Describe what you can see, what is happening? What does this picture say about the relationship within the Trinity? In Baptism, we enter into this relationship of love. How do I respond? How might I deepen my knowledge and love of God in the coming days?

Explore and Reflect on the Theme

Our reflection, continued with references to Church teaching and Scripture, unfolding the theme

Responding to what has been heard

A short paragraph with an encouragement to make the explicit connection between what has been heard in the Scripture, reflection and in daily living

Go in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord

To conclude the session we invite you to slowly pray the session's psalm together and end with the blessing

Text Box

Quotes from Saints and Catechism references are included for group or personal meditation with each session

Visio Divina

An optional opportunity to reflect on the pictures used to illustrate each section of *We Dare To Say*, with questions to support your reflection. This mode of prayer is becoming increasingly popular

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relationships that we have with our own family, with our friends, are but shadows of this. Indeed, even when our own relationships with family, our own Fathers, are weak or damaged, acknowledging God as Father offers healing and sanctuary.

The heretics had a sense that God was Father of his People (e.g. Exodus 4:22) but rarely would an individual address God as Father. Yet, remarkably, Jesus invites us to do just that. In the Aramaic – it is likely that Jesus would have taught this prayer in his native tongue – the word is Abba, more plain to 'Dad'. The relationship is familiar, that is of the family, and intimate.

Baptism introduces us to this familial relationship. By virtue of our Baptism we are united to the Father, as his children, and to each other as brothers and sisters. This reality is often obscured by our sin. We see fierce competition and experience jealousy; we see conflict and act with pride. The reality that all we have is a gift, provided by God, is often invisible to our hearts that only see our own effort; that frequently see growth as possible only when others are diminished. We need to recover our sense of divine sonship – when this happens other relationships, with each other and the created order will start to be restored.

We are presented with two truths in this part of the prayer. One, the loving fatherhood of God for each one of us, inviting intimacy and communion. Two, the hallowing of the name of God, the need to respect and worship his greatness and majesty (cf. Psalm 138, 97:12, 103:1, 115:13, Exodus 20:2-7, Isaiah 52:6, Genesis 32:26-29). Jesus taught us this prayer to draw us closer to God the Father, to recognise our precious 'spirit of sonship' and dignity. And because we are sons and daughters, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba! Father!' (Galatians 4:6, Romans 8:15).



By virtue of Baptism we are united to the Father, as his children, and to each other as brothers and sisters. This reality is often obscured by our sin.

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By his design and grace we are Children of God

Our awareness of our status as slaves would make us sink into the ground and our earthly condition would dissolve into dust. The authority of our Father himself and the Spirit of his Son had not impeded us to this cry – 'Abba, Father'... When would a mortal dare call God 'Father' if man's inmost being were not animated by power from on high?

St Peter Chrysologus

The expression God the Father had never been revealed to anyone. When Moses himself asked God with his face, he heard another name. The Father's name has been revealed to us in the Son, for the name 'Son' implies the new name 'Father'.

Irénéeus

[The prayer is accomplished] by the contemplation of God alone, and by the warmth of love, through which the soul, melted and directed to love him, speaks very familiarly to God as to its own Father with special devotion.

Our Father, at this name love is aroused in us... and the confidence of obtaining what we are about to ask... What would he not give to his children who ask, since he has already granted them the gift of being his children?

St John Cassian

[See Catechism 2777-2815]