

WHY DO WE PRAY?



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WHY DO WE PRAY?

Rupert's Land News is published 10 times per year (September - June) by the Diocese of Rupert's Land, in the Anglican Church in Canada. It connects churches and communities from Portage la Prairie, MB, to Atikokan, ON, by offering news, events, opinions, and ideas to 4,000 readers per month. RLN is available in a variety of formats: [Website](#) • [Facebook](#) • [Twitter](#)

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RLN exists to explore issues at the intersections of faith and life. In doing so we solicit and publish a range of opinions, not all of which reflect the official positions of the Diocese.

We acknowledge that we meet and work in Treaty 1, 2, and 3 Land, the traditional land of the Anishinaabe, Cree, and Dakota people and the homeland of the Metis Nation. We are grateful for their stewardship of this land and their hospitality which allows us to live, work, and serve God the Creator here.

RLN welcomes story ideas, news items, and other input. If you want to be involved in this media ministry, please email the editor.

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Faith Matters:

Why Do We Pray?

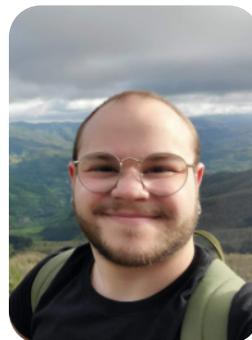
Prayer is one of the most beautiful gifts that God has given us because it is accessible at any given moment. God is always with us, and we are always able to communicate with Him. It is not merely recitation or reading without thought; it is intentional time to listen, talk to, and be with God. It may be easy to give a relatively straightforward definition of prayer, but one can (and should) spend a lifetime discerning what their prayer life looks like. How does it change over time? How does it shape your relationship with God, with those around you, and with the way you view the world?

An Eastern Orthodox monk once shared that whenever he greets one of his brothers, he does not ask how they are. Instead, he asks, “How is your prayer?” Not only does this simple question aid in producing a more fruitful conversation and a more genuine answer, but it leads one to evaluate how they are *and* how their life fits into relation with God. Like prayer should, this question causes one to shift their perspective. We pray to communicate with God, yes. Yet, let us not forget that we communicate with God to become who we are meant to be in His sight. This process, through continual prayer, allows us to draw ever closer to who God, and becomes who He knows we are meant to be.

As we conclude the first three-part series of *Faith Matters*, I would like to reiterate the purpose of this endeavour. Every

person who reads this magazine has some kind of relationship with God and with the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Rupert’s Land. As such, each one of you has knowingly (or unknowingly) encountered a church community, engaged with the Eucharist, and participated in prayer—the topics of these last three magazines. Each is a crucial element of one’s faith.

These questions aim to fulfil the motto of Rupert’s Land News: to connect church and community. *Faith Matters*, and the magazine as a whole, serve to help you delve deeper into your faith—both as an individual, and as a member of a larger community. As a part of this community, I hope our four authors have given you a glimpse of the diverse and rich thought that animates our life here. I am immensely grateful for their participation because their efforts have allowed us to view a wide range of answers to each question and to come to know another person in our Diocese a little bit better. In reading their responses, I hope that you can see how wisdom is born of thoughtful care, study, lived experience, and openness to the love and mystery of our God.



CINNA BARAN

Editor of Rupert’s Land News

Author Biographies



Amanda McKenzie

A warm hello to all the RLN readers. I'm Amanda McKenzie, and I am one of the Elders to the Bishop of Rupert's Land (since February 2021). I have been a devout Anglican all my life, baptized and confirmed in a small Anglican-United Church in Lynn Lake, Manitoba. I follow a bloodline of the Cree people, am a member of the Peter Ballantyne Band, treaty #6, and my reserve is in Pelican Narrows, Saskatchewan. I was born in Winnipeg, but raised in Lynn Lake, Manitoba. I am swampy Cree. My traditional teachings and understanding of our "way of life" come from my granny, father, and mother. I am a knowledge keeper and harvest our traditional medicines.

My hobbies and interests are painting and drawing Indigenous art, crocheting, fishing, traditional medicine picking, and teaching others about our Indigenous culture such as harvesting medicines, 7 Sacred Teachings, medicine wheel, dream catcher making, etc.

My passion is spreading the word of God's love and grace, and to bring understanding of the Holy and undivided Trinity to whomever I meet. I am so grateful to Creator for all He has done in my life, and for always guiding my path forward. It is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that make me the person I am today.



Ben Girgis

Ben Girgis grew up in the city of Toronto, where he experienced the beauty of Christ's Church. From there, he served alongside his family in different elements in his church community. He later went to complete his Bachelor of Arts in Christian Ministry focusing on Youth and Children's Ministry and minoring in Biblical Studies from Briercrest College. While studying in Saskatchewan, he met his wife Kaitlyn and they moved to Winnipeg in 2021, rediscovering his love for cities! Currently, Ben is studying at Providence Theological Seminary, where he hopes to complete a Master of Divinity. Also, Ben has begun serving as a Parish Intern at All Saints Anglican Church. Previously, you would have found him sitting in the back pews at St. Mary Magdalene Anglican Church.



Edmund Laldin

Edmund Laldin was born and raised in Pakistan. His father was a priest in the Church of Pakistan, while his mother was an elementary school teacher. Edmund's call to ministry is rooted in Liberation Theology. He emigrated to Canada in 1991 and was ordained in 1995. Edmund has extensive experience volunteering on provincial and national Church committees and task forces. Edmund's academic interests include liturgy, preaching, and creating interdenominational, multicultural, and inclusive worshipping communities. Edmund believes that the church should purge itself of hierarchy and archaic governance models, and strive to be the church (community) of the first-century apostles.



Kirsten Pinto-Gfroerer

Kirsten Pinto-Gfroerer is a lay theologian, who is especially interested in the worshipful theology of the early church theologians and those whom one might call mystical theologians. She practices counselling, writes, and gardens near the woods on Lake Winnipeg. Her book *Anchorhold: Corresponding with Revelations of Divine Love* contemplatively explores the theology of Julian of Norwich. Her podcast, *The Viridescent Circle* exalts in the dynamics between the natural world and the Christian year. To learn more about Kirsten's work visit <https://www.kirstenpintogfroerer.com/>.

What do I hope for the church? That we can truly worship, that we can realize the beauty and magnificence of the love of the Trinity and respond with awe and wonder, and that we can remember the joy of the life of the church.



Why Do We Pray?

AMANDA MCKENZIE

Photo: Cinna Baran

In order to know why we pray, it is important to understand what prayer is. Prayer is an act of communicating with our higher power. Many people have a lot of different names for this higher power—Yahweh, Allah, Abba, and so on. I refer to this higher power by many different names as well: God, Lord, Creator, Father, or Gitche Manitou (Great Spirit). When I pray, I first give thanks to God and praise Him for all His blessings. Then I ask for His help and for strength with whatever is troubling me. I tell Him my deepest thoughts and feelings with an honest heart. Usually, I ask God to forgive me for my sins at the end. All of this prayer is done with sincere intention. A prime model for prayer is found in Philippians 4:4-7: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

When I pray, I feel the presence of the Creator. I am reassured that Jesus is holding my hands, and the Holy Spirit fills me with that familiar sense of peace and comfort. If I live my life as a follower of Christ in a relationship with Creator, I should communicate with Him regularly. That line of communication is open to everyone at all times. What a blessed gift!

The traditional ways that I pray are also very similar, but there is a process. In the morning, I go outside, face the east as the sun comes up, and give thanks as I lay tobacco down. When I smudge in the morning, I wash myself with its beautiful smoke to cleanse myself. I put smoke on my head, ears, and eyes, then my mouth and my heart, and then all over me. The minute I light the smudge, I am filled with the feeling of calmness and reassurance. I smudge to think good thoughts, to see, hear, and speak only good things, and to act only from the heart.

In our traditional ways, we are taught not to be selfish in prayer and only think of our own troubles. We give thanks for all our ancestors who went before us, then we give thanks for the day. Then I pray for those who are hurting and suffering, including myself. When I pray, I usually bow my head and close my eyes—as a sign of respect—and speak out to God. But prayer can look and sound different in many ways for many people. To anyone just starting to pray, don’t worry too much about what to say or what your posture is. But however you pray, “continue steadfastly” (Colossians 4:2) with thanksgiving.

Now when I pray at church, it’s different. Before COVID, we used to hold hands for the Lord’s Prayer, and it brought a good, loving energy to all of us, I think. The Peace of Christ was also a moving time for me. I always received a warm smile and firm handshake or a nice hug. When it’s time for



Photo: [Chanhee Lee](#)

the prayers of the people, I quietly bow my head and close my eyes, just as I do in my morning prayer, but this time in community. Our personal prayers foster an intimate relationship with God, while communal prayers build up the spiritual community. They reinforce faith through shared experience, and they have the added benefit of collective strength and mutual support. I still feel the Holy Spirit and Jesus all around me, but in a different way. “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” (Matthew 18:20).

Whether it’s by myself or it’s in church, prayer is something that helps me in so many ways. One of my favourite prayers to say is the rosary because I am chanting, building a bridge to the Holy Mary, Mother of God. She knows what pain is as a mother. Sometimes I cry because of the pain that I feel for my daughter. But before I am halfway through, I start to feel the presence of the Holy Spirit, and reassurance and peace wash over me. I know no matter what I face in life, I am not alone. I know Creator is listening to me and that He knows my heart. He doesn’t answer our prayers on our time or exactly the way we want, but He does answer them. If you pray for His will to be done, your prayers will be answered, and you will be blessed. I can bear witness to this. The Lord has given me strength, wisdom, and peace. I must be at peace in order to do God’s work. It truly is a peace that surpasses all understanding.

A broken person will isolate from loved ones and rely solely on their own will. I know this as I have been broken many times in my life. I used to carry my own storms inside me and never get true rest. It can be exhausting both mentally and physically. Frustration became my closest companion, and I felt the weight of it all. It was too much to carry. The overthinking was awful. It can feel as though you are

drowning. Where were comfort and peace? I had to go back to building my relationship with God, our Creator. He is the only one who can take all my burdens away.

I have dropped to my knees more than once, and every time I am filled with humility that I did God’s will, not mine. I give Him everything now. And I let Creator see and hear me cry. He knows the love I have for my girl and the pain and anxiety I feel. To anyone starting to pray, I say, “please do so.” Our loving God and Lord and Saviour is waiting. You can keep it simple if you want. “God help me,” or “Please guide me; help me be the person you want me to be.” Thank Him for what you already have. Seek peace. Always pray in faith and trust in the Lord—He is listening. I pray quite a lot and talk to Creator all day long and He continues to guide me. I set my alarm for 5:00 a.m., so I don’t usually miss my morning prayer. I have alarms so that my phone reminds me to do my Bible reading and prayer. I give thanks at every meal, and I pray at night. Sometimes I have missed my prayers and failed to do God’s will, but I know I’m forgiven, because we have such a loving and forgiving God. For me, without prayer, I would be lost and carry all my weight alone. I am blessed that I don’t. Praying is one of the most powerful things I know.

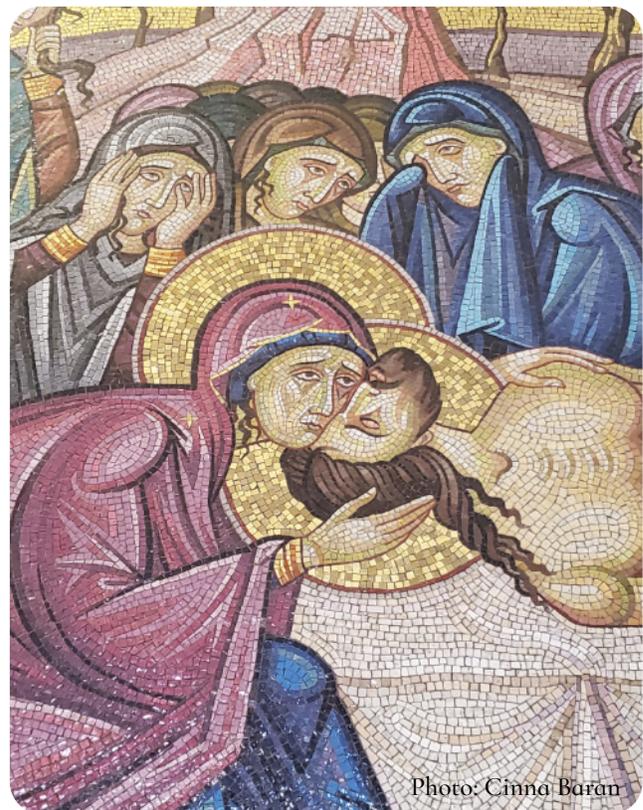


Photo: [Cinna Baran](#)

Why Do We Pray?

BEN GIRGIS

Photo: [Inés Álvarez Fdez](#)

I often think of the words of Christ, “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.”¹ Do not be like the “hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others.”² It is better to be alone with God, than to make a display of your prayer with pride. These passages exemplify so much of what Christ was doing. He healed in private; He spoke to people in private; He went to the Father in private. He shuts the door to the outside world and says, “Let’s be alone, for I see you in secret and I have your reward.” St. Gregory of Nyssa, a Cappadocian Church Father, says, “Prayer is intimacy with God and contemplation with the invisible. It satisfies our yearnings and makes us equal with the angels. Through it good prospers, evil is destroyed, and sinners will be destroyed.”³

In this intimacy, we enter into this passionate, fiery relationship with God, who becomes our lover like in the Song of Songs. We become the beloved, saying, “Draw me after you; let us make haste. The king has brought me into his chambers.”⁴ Alone in the bedroom, we begin to experience a new form of fellowship with God—one where we come to intimately know the Father, and we learn to trust Him in

inward knowledge about ourselves. You see the true beauty of God and remark, “Ah, you are beautiful, my love; ah, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves. Ah, you are beautiful, my beloved, truly lovely.”⁵ But it is not us who starts this relational prayerful life—God is the one who initiates it first. For God, the Spirit dwelling in us plants the seed of prayer in us to simply respond. Hans Urs von Balthasar speaks of this seed by saying, “this seed has the power to become a mighty tree bearing blossoms and fruit, if only I would plant and tend it.”⁶ How might we tend to it? By going to the gardener who first taught Adam how to tend. Go to the Father and learn to pray through simple dialogue:

“There is no such thing as solitary speech; speech implies reciprocity, the exchange of thoughts and of souls, unity in a

¹ Matthew 6:6

² Matthew 6:5b

³ Hilda C. Graef, “St. Gregory of Nyssa - the Lord’s Prayer,” *Ancient Christian Writers - The Works of the Fathers in Translation* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1954), 24.

⁴ Song of Songs 1:4a

⁵ Song of Songs 1:15-16

⁶ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Prayer* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1986), 13.

common spirit, in a common possession and sharing of the truth. Speech both demands and manifests an I and a Thou. In prayer, moreover, man speaks to a God who has long since revealed Himself to him in a Word which is so stupendous and all-embracing that it can never be 'past tense'.⁷

In our intimate conversations with God, we open our hearts and our ears to His word. But it is not only us who offer these words to God. The Spirit leads our discussion to the Son who advocates on our behalf, being like a prophet to the people of Israel in the Old Testament. The Spirit relates our needs, wants, and desires to the Most High who sits on the throne.

Origen of Alexandria states, "For our mind cannot pray unless the Spirit prays first, as it were within earshot, just as it cannot sing out with rhythm and melody and tempo and harmony, hymning the Father in Christ, unless the Spirit which searches all things, even the depths of God."⁸ The Spirit, being our translator, searches our hearts and offers up our supplications before we have the words to put together, helping us to be honest and truthful with the one true God. The Spirit helps us to offer up not only thanks, but also grievances, like Habakkuk and David, being bold in their prayers, causing violent remarks to God. Habakkuk begins his prophetic remarks:

*"O LORD, how long shall I cry for help,
and you will not listen?
Or cry to you 'Violence!
and you will not save?"*⁹

*And David speaking,
"O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger
or discipline me in your wrath.
For your arrows have sunk into me,
and your hand has come down on me."*¹⁰

If I may offer up my confession, dear friends in Christ, I have struggled in being so bold in my prayers. I have never held such grievances to God. This is not because I do not know God, but because I know our Holy God. Though He is merciful and good and has blessed me greatly, I dare not ask for more. He is mighty and frightens me. His thunderous voice, though quiet at times, ruptures my ears and causes me to throw myself on the floor of the throne room and speak the words of Job, "that it would please God to crush me, that He would let loose His hand and cut me off!"¹¹ How can I be so

bold when God has been good to me? He sat with me and comforted me at my grandfather's funeral, offering me a place to cry. It was God who led me through my darkest moments, offering me love and light with compassion. Could it be that I have not lived life if I do not blame God for the



tribulations and sins those around me cause me? Do we require to be so bold in our prayers? Why must we come to God in violence? If I may be so bold as to quote John Donne,

*"Earnest prayer hath the nature of Importunity; Wee presse, wee importune God...Prayer hath the nature of Impudency; wee threaten God in Prayer...and God suffers this Impudency and more. Prayer hath the nature of Violence; in the publique Prayers of the Congregation we besiege God, saies Tertullian, and we take God Prisoner, and bring God to our Conditions; and God is glad to be straightened by us in that siege."*¹²

How can I be intimate and not participate in a major part of intimacy: violence. This is why we say "break up" at the end of a relationship; it is the breaking of two people from one. How can we not talk about Christ's intimacy with us and disregard the gruesome act of His death—the piercing of His flesh, the fracturing of His body. The Eucharist is a violent

⁷ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Prayer* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1986), 14.

⁸ Tertullian, Cyprian, and Origen, *On the Lord's Prayer*, trans. Alistair C. Stewart (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 115.

⁹ Habakkuk 1:2

¹⁰ Psa. 38:1-2

¹¹ Job 6:9

¹² *The Sermons of John Donne* ed. Potter and Simpson, (Los Angeles, 1953-1962) vol. V p.364.



Photo: Josh Eckstein

scene: the breaking of the body before all to see. Prayer, at times, is violent; we *demand* that God be God. We hold His Son ransom by speaking, for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ. “God, if you do not do this, think about how Jesus will be seen.” Our boldness does not come from us—it comes from God. If Origen is correct and the Spirit lifts up our prayers, then God is lifting our violence to Himself. The Son, who is our advocate, speaks violence on our behalf, being like Moses after the Golden Calf in Exodus 32:12-15:

“Moses said to the LORD, “See, you have said to me, ‘Bring up this people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, ‘I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.’ Now if I have found favor in your sight, please show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favor in your sight. Consider, too, that this nation is your people.” He said, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” And he said to him, “If your presence will not go, do not bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth.”

Moses reminding God of the covenant that was agreed upon is putting up himself to be bold to God on behalf of the

people of Israel. Likewise, Christ is our boldness and our strength. In the times when we may not be bold, the Spirit relays to Christ our need for His boldness. May we let Him be so bold on our behalf. May we also be like the widow in St. Luke’s Gospel, “In that city there was a widow who kept coming to Him and saying, ‘Grant me justice against my accuser.’” May we cry out, “God of justice, do what you do, I beg of it.”

In intimacy with God, we shut the door to be alone with the Father as Christ was alone with the Father. We become passionate as we begin to know Him better, offering up thanks for the daily things He does for us, but also, being bold to speak up when we need because, “will not God grant justice to His chosen ones who cry to Him day and night? Will He delay long in helping them? I tell you, He will quickly grant justice to them.” Our beautiful, amazing, mighty God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—invites us to be bold. We have been reconciled with God because of Christ, so we can go to the King of kings and speak boldly and intimately to Him. He knows our needs, wants, and desires, and gives to us abundantly in His loving grace.

God, may we be so bold to come to you openly, and you are so bold to come to us first.



Why Do We Pray?

EDMUND LALDIN

Photo: [Eugenia Clara](#)

The premise of this article is to articulate and present a cogent submission on prayer and our need to pray. Furthermore, it will explore what our prayers should be and whether God answers them. The conclusion will endeavour to connect with my previous articles on attending the church and partaking in the Eucharist.

Before we delve into our need to pray, let's look at an example of immaturity in approaching God in prayer. My home parish in Karachi, Pakistan, used to have parish picnics during the summer. The parish would invite families to register and hire buses, after which members would go to a public beach for a day of fun and fellowship. At one such picnic, a young person was missing. The assumption and the fear were that he had drowned. His father, overcome with emotion and concern, was kneeling, crying, and praying. The father prayed to God, asking if he could see his son one last time—then God could drown him. Thankfully the young man was with another group and was found safe, alive, and well. The father's prayer is paradoxical, expressing both faith and despair. He made a plea to see his son even at the cost of the son's life.

If we juxtapose children's letters to Santa Claus with their wish lists and some of our prayers, we will be astonished at the parallels and similarities. Letters to Santa, printed in newspapers or shared on social media, enlist an improbable and expensive list of toys, clothes, electronics, and surprises from Santa. Likewise, in our prayers, we ask God to fulfil our desires and expectations. Instead of listening to God and asking for directions, we sometimes tell God what to address and when to do so, as if we were giving a wish list.

The above examples are shared to highlight our immaturity in the way we pray to God. We believe God to be all-powerful, all-knowing, and the writer of our lives and fates. Therefore, we should accept every condition and, like an obedient servant, take it as the will of God. But, by praying to God, we are asking God to intervene in our lives and to guide us through encouragement, peace, and by helping us let go of our worries and concerns.

Does God answer prayers? This is the first question we should address, as it will help us understand our prayer life and the content of our prayers. The simple, somewhat naïve answer,

to some readers, is that God does answer prayers, even if our lives take a 180-degree turn or the wish is granted in its proper time.

Bishop James Cruickshank, the last bishop of the Diocese of Cariboo, once shared in his sermon that he prayed earnestly to be sent to the parish of St. George's in Lytton, British Columbia, before his diaconal ordination. Years went by, and Bishop Cruickshank went on to be a professor at a theological college, and later the dean of the Diocese of New Westminster, before becoming the Bishop of Cariboo. On a starlit, moonlight-drenched night, during his drive from Lytton to Kamloops, after a heartrending gathering with Residential School survivors and their families at St. George's, Lytton, Bishop Cruickshank looked at the dancing Northern Lights. He discerned that God had taken him to Lytton in God's own time to minister to the broken souls and be an agent of healing and reconciliation. God answered Bishop Cruickshank's prayers according to God's plan.



Photo: Cinna Baran

Jesus' life was a balance between interaction with people and time in the wilderness for meditation and prayer. The Gospel authors have recorded several instances where Jesus left His disciples to pray and spend time in the wilderness. In fact, Jesus began his ministry by spending forty days and forty nights in the wilderness, where he discerned God's will while being tested by the devil. Towards the end of his ministry, Jesus retired to the garden of Gethsemane to pray and seek direction from God. In the garden, Jesus even asked God to take the cup of suffering and miserable death on the cross from Him. These two instances reveal Jesus' vulnerability, honesty, and openness to God's will and decision. Furthermore, Jesus accepted God's judgment, even though submitting to it led him to the cross. Instead of telling God what to do, Jesus listened to God and followed it with faith and trust in God's judgment and plan for him.

The above discussion can be summarised as follows:

- Prayer is not Santa's wish list to God.
- Prayer is not a monologue where we talk to God and leave before we discern God's will.
- God always answers prayers, even though the answer may be contrary to our wishes.
- In prayer, we submit to God through vulnerability, honesty, and willingness to listen to God speaking to us in the silence and solitude.
- Jesus, through his prayer life, set an example for us to follow.

The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. In response, Jesus gave them the Lord's Prayer. We recite the Lord's Prayer in our worship services. However, if we examine it, we will realise that the prayer encompasses our petitions and expectations from God. Let's examine the lines individually to appreciate the magnitude and the beauty of the Lord's Prayer.

Our father who art in heaven: It is self-explanatory. It proclaims that God lives in heaven.

Hallowed be Thy name: We are called to hallow God's name. This petition is rooted in the first and the second commandments (Exodus 20). We are called to worship God and to have no other god in our lives.

Thy kingdom come: Here we pray for God's kingdom to be in the world. The precepts of God's kingdom are peace, justice,

equality, and life lived in obedience to God's commandments. This petition also asks God to transform the world's political, social, economic, and religious systems. Furthermore, theologians and spiritualists have submitted that Jesus' ministry ushered in the kingdom of God on earth. The term used is 'Realised Eschaton'.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven: In this petition, we pray for God's will to reign in the world. It is closely connected to the previous sentence. God's kingdom will come to the world through God's will, becoming the primary influence. God established human beings (Adam and Eve) as the stewards of the created order. This implies that human beings, through fair stewardship of creation, are following God's will.

Give us this day our daily bread: Asking God to take care of our daily sustenance. Jesus spoke about God showering his children with blessings. Additionally, God provided the Israelites with manna and quails in the wilderness. However, Jesus, in many parables, cautioned against greed and hoarding resources. The prayer moves from the worries and concerns of the world towards our personal needs, highlighting our dependence on God.

Forgive us our trespasses: We confess our sins to God to receive God's absolution. Confession is the epitome of humility and brokenness. We present our broken selves to God, asking him to restore us to wholeness by forgiving our sins and wrongdoings. The challenge for us is to accept God's forgiveness instead of ruing our sinfulness.

As we forgive those who trespass against us: Jesus, in one of his parables, spoke about an enslaved person who owed an enormous amount of money to his master. The slave approached the master and asked for forgiveness of his debt, given his meagre resources. The master forgave the slave's debt, but the slave refused to write off the debt of a fellow servant. The master called in the servant and restored his debt because the slave did not show generosity to a fellow servant. Thus, God forgives our sins because we forgive those who have sinned against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Again, we place ourselves in God's mercy by asking for God's guidance and protection from day-to-day temptations. God shows us the way and gives us a choice to choose between

good and evil. The petition implores God to guide us to make the right decisions.

For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever: We proclaim God's kingship and power in the world. All authorities, governing structures, Presidents, and kings are under the might of God.



Photo: [Photos of Korea](#)

Jesus taught the disciples to pray so they would learn the intentions (petitions) in their prayer life. The Lord's Prayer covers every aspect of our dependence on God. We pray for God's intervention in the world through the establishment of God's kingdom in the world. We pray for the world before we pray for ourselves. Thus, praying for the transformation of the world is our responsibility.

The previous two articles, "Why Do We Go to Church?" and "Why Do We Celebrate the Eucharist?" argue that the world and its citizens cannot be divided into the sacred and the profane, or the saved and the unsaved. Furthermore, it was posited that the church building provides a space for worshippers to engage with one another. The church and the worship service also bring the worshippers face-to-face with the divine (*darshan*). This audience with the sacred through the liturgy and the sacraments nourishes and replenishes the worshipper, enabling them to see God in everyone and everything. The Lord's Prayer and/or our prayers fashioned after the Lord's Prayer bring every aspect of the world, created order, political, social, and economic systems to God for blessing and transformation. Thus, we pray to be spiritually fed and comforted through vulnerability, honesty, and openness to God.

Photo: [Skyler Ewing](#)

Why Do We Pray?

KIRSTEN PINTO-GFROERER

We live between the feeding and watering grounds of migrating Canada Geese—one of many resting places on their way to the south. From early September until now, these birds have been an intimate part of our daily life. They crowd the skies, filling them with the pulsing energy of getting ready. We hear the sound of their calls and the rush of their wing beats overhead all day long, and sometimes even in the night watches. This amazingly dependable gathering of the geese, the great internal restlessness which impels all of these birds into this unifying journey, and this powerful instinct to move towards something they cannot see but which they know holds the quintessence of their livelihood speaks to me of the nature of prayer.

Imagine that the birds before flight are all the parts of the self. We have all of these varieties of impulses, all of these roles we play, all of these reactions, and each aspect of our self issues demands. There are the hurt parts; there are the parts that act like inner critics; there are the powerful parts that want success; there are the adult parts and the childlike parts, and there is the core of our being, waiting to take the

lead. Our inner life can be rather raucous and disorderly, like a flock of geese in a field: messy, noisy, and quarrelsome. Individuals who come to counselling describe the parts of their lives as fragments and compartments. They talk about being at war with themselves or feeling so lost and undirected. When I hear this, I know what they mean. I resonate, remembering the inner turmoil and inner disputes which I have experienced. We humans know the energy of unrest which the gathering geese epitomize.

But we have not been created to stay in this fragmentation. Just like these flocks of geese, the depths of our being have been implanted with an instinct. Geese, in all their awkwardness, know when it is time to migrate. Something impels them to get ready, to gather, and to fly. In humans, this instinct is the image of God stamped on the core of our being. This image makes us “restless until we rest in God.” In Psalm 139, we read of the energy of the God of love tugging at this instinct within us:

*O Lord, Thou hast searched me out, and known me
Thou knowest my down-sitting, and mine up-rising; Thou
understandest my thoughts long before.
Thou art about my path, and about my bed
and spiest out all my ways...*

*Thou hast fashioned me behind and before
and laid thine hand upon me...*

*If I take the wings of the morning
and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea;
Even there also shall Thy hand lead me
and Thy right hand shall hold me...
For my reins are thine.*

Our God is one who has searched us out and known us—who surrounds us and understands who we are. The God of all creation knows all the fragments of each of our beings and God is always gathering, seeking, and guiding. For the reins of our lives are in God's hands. Thus, we pray because prayer begins before we begin, with the act of God creating us to move towards God and surrounding us with this energy of gathering and leading—of readying us for flight.

God is praying in us before we begin to pray, but we need to join God in that prayer. We have to respond. Like the geese, we have to take flight in order to move towards the one who calls us. To take flight requires faith. Most of us begin a life of prayer by performing the act of prayer; we aren't flying yet. By saying our prayers and listening to the scriptures and receiving the Eucharist with our bodies, we are learning the truths of faith. What is offered to us is something external: physical forms of approach and intellectual content. These are very important because they create a map in our minds as to how to move towards where we need to go. But this intellectual content, these truths which faith proposes cannot be empirically proven or disproven, do not point us to a reality we can possess or control. When we pray in faith, we cannot depend on empirical results; that is not the point. When we pray, we want something that is beyond proving; we want the fullness of our life in God. Faith, claims Thomas Merton, by its very nature, will not give complete satisfaction to the intellect. Its purpose is to leave the intellect suspended (flying), knowing itself to be insufficient to the task. But faith, he continues, does not frustrate the intellect, nor destroy it or deny it. What it does is lead the intellect to a conviction, a trust that what is being offered by faith can be accepted 'quite rationally with the guidance of love.'

We pray in faith, trusting in the guidance of love. Flying is like faith; it is to leap into the air trusting that you are intended to move through it and to be held up by it. The air that holds up the life of faith is the ministry of the Holy

Spirit. In John 3:5-8, Jesus speaks of the life of faith saying,

Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

To pray is to let the wind of love carry you where it will; it is to fly. I want to note here that these are hard words. It seems impossible for a human to fly, and we don't like losing control. Flying requires a letting go, a trust, a stillness which does not come naturally to humans who have come into much brokenness. But for God nothing is impossible. John 3 continues to tell us of God's great love in sending his son Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, as God and man, comes into our humanity and takes us into his life, death, resurrection, and ascension—into his flight from God to God. Christ carries us to the Father in the wind of the Spirit. The art of flying is to acknowledge that we do not fly well or easily and to wait for the wind to do the work. Waiting on God is part of prayer too.

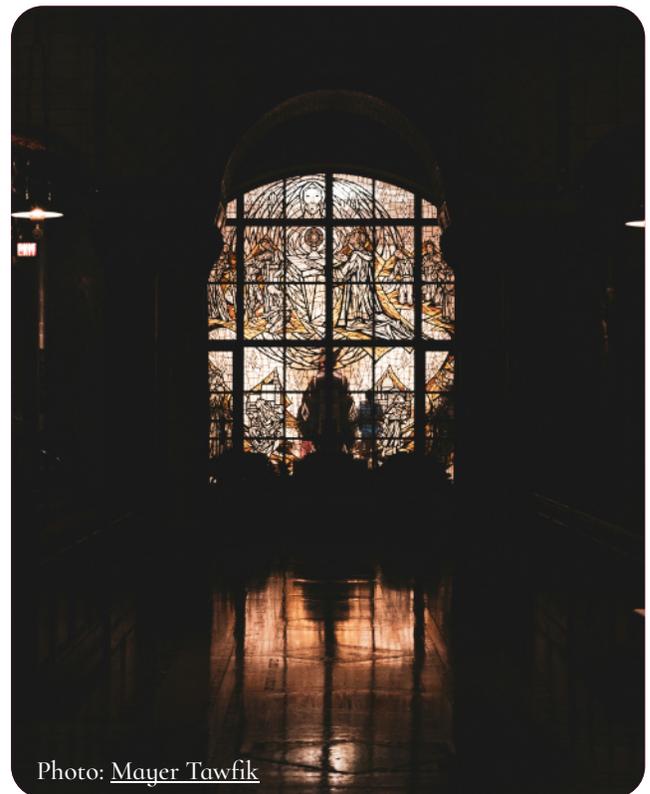


Photo: [Mayer Tawfik](#)



Photo: Patrick Fore

Canadian geese are most beautiful in their flight. But not in fragmented flight. A goose flying alone always looks and sounds a bit panicked. It is the unity of the great flock in formation which is the great glory of the autumnal heavens. The large V headed south, stretching out against the sky, all of them beating their wings in time with one another. In watching the geese this year, what has struck me deeply is the way in which an errant bird joins a formation. They do not always join at the rear, instead it seems as if their task is to move into the wake of the great V formation. Then, slowly, they are drawn into one of the lines. This integration is so fluid and beautiful.

This brings me to the final thing I want to say about why we pray which I learned looking at the migrating geese. Let us imagine all these birds as parts of our personhood: the part that was hurt by our parents, the part that loves to be the centre of attention, the part that worries all the time about money, the part that has always been insecure, the part that wants to be the smartest person in the world, the part that is sooooo stressed, and on and on and on. When we pray, all of those parts exist, and we point the core of being towards God and seek to move with the wind that wants to carry us home. In so doing, we are attuning all of the fragmented parts to the God who is calling us into formation, into a particular shape that is who we are meant to be. This is a long process. One of the flock of our personhood will always be errant, but the V formation of the geese, led by the core, creates an ease, a wake of air which pulls each wandering goose into line with our being. It requires great energy and attention to stay in formation, to follow that pointing. But just like the geese, our lives depend on it.

Prayer is pointing oneself to God and moving towards God. It is moving in flight by means of trust, and in that flight coming into the beautiful shape of our personhood. It is not simple. Some parts of our self will die along the way. The conditions will be very difficult, and the skies may often be stormy, but we are headed where we were always meant to go—and what is better than flying?

I leave you with a poem by Mary Oliver, who in her love of the natural world seems also to feel the pull of prayer.

Wild geese

*You do not have to be good.
 You do not have to walk on your knees
 For a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
 You only have to let the soft animal of your body
 love what it loves.
 Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
 Meanwhile the world goes on.
 Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
 are moving across the landscapes,
 over the prairies and the deep trees,
 the mountains and the rivers.
 Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
 are heading home again.
 Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
 the world offers itself to your imagination,
 calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting --
 over and over announcing your place
 in the family of things.*