

# Praying Together as a Board of Trustees

## What is Christian Prayer?

*For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.*  
(St Thérèse of Lisieux)



*Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.* (St John Damascene)

*Prayer is a vital and personal and true relationship with the living and true God.*  
(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2558)

*True prayer is nothing but love.* (St Augustine)

*Prayer is the inner bath of love into which the soul plunges itself.* (St John Vianney)

*Everyone of us needs half an hour of prayer each day, except when we are busy – then we need an hour.*  
(St Francis de Sales)

*Prayer is Christian insofar as it is communion with Christ and extends throughout the Church, which is his Body. Its dimensions are those of Christ's love.*  
(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2565)

***From your own experience how would you describe prayer?***

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## **The Focus of Christian Prayer**

Christian prayer is always Trinitarian. It leads us towards the Father, to whom we gain access through Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who helps draw us near to Jesus.



The Church loves to pray in communion with the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. We join Mary in praising God for his great gifts to her and we seek her prayerful intercession on our own behalf and on behalf of others. Likewise, we honour and seek the intercession of the saints –

models of Christian prayer.

## **Aspects of Christian Prayer**

### **Adoration**

Adoration flows from an attitude that acknowledges we are creatures in the presence of our Creator. It is an act by which we glorify the God who made us. We adore God from whom all blessings flow.

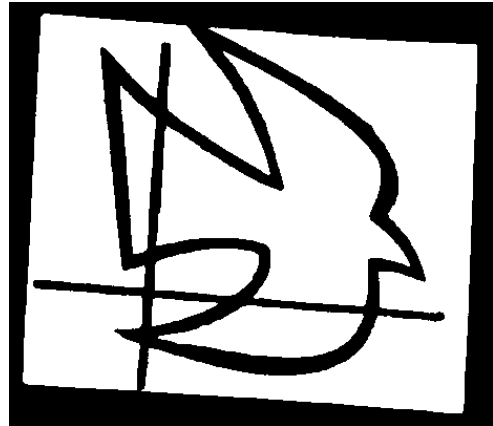
### **Petition**

Petition takes many forms – to ask, to implore, to plead, to cry out. Prayer of petition acknowledges how much we depend on God for our need, including forgiveness and persistence in seeking Him. When we practice the prayer of petition we remember Christ's instruction to ask in order to receive, to seek in order to find, and to knock in order that the door may be opened (see Matthew 7:7).

The first movement of the prayer of petition is asking forgiveness for our sins. Humility and repentance return us to communion with Christ.

### **Intercession**

Intercession is the prayer that we make on behalf of the needs of others. Jesus Christ is always interceding for us. God calls us also to intercede for one another – even for our enemies.



### **Thanksgiving**

Every moment or event can become an opportunity for thanksgiving. We are called to thank God for all the gifts we have received, including our joys and sorrows, all of which, through love, can work for our benefit. The Mass, the celebration of the Eucharist, is the Church’s greatest prayer of thanksgiving.

### **Praise**

“Praise is the form of prayer which recognises most immediately that God is God . . . . It shares in the blessed happiness of the pure of heart who love God in faith before seeing him in glory” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2639). Scripture is full of outpourings of praise for God. When we praise God with simplicity and an open heart, we obtain a glimpse of the joy of the angels and saints in heaven.

***Which of these aspects of prayer are most important to you? / Which do you find most challenging?***

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***How might these different aspects of prayer be included as part of a Board of Trustees meeting?***

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## **Prayer and Special Character**

*The Catholic school recognises that every person has a spiritual dimension. As with the physical, intellectual and other dimensions, our spiritual aspect needs guidance and nurturing.* (Handbook for Boards of Trustees, Principals and Staff of New Zealand Catholic Integrated Schools 2014, section 3.2.2)

***In regard to prayer, what are the implications of this statement for Boards of Trustees of Catholic schools?***

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***What challenges does praying together as a Board of Trustees present?***

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***What strategies / structures / supports / resources do you need for your Board of Trustees to pray well?***

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## **Prayer: Gathering, Opening, Transforming, Sending . . .**

### **Prayer Gathers**

*Where two or three are **gathered** together in my name,  
there I am in the midst of them (Matthew 18:20)*

When We Pray God Gathers Us In Communion . . .

- with the persons of the holy Trinity
- with the family of God
- with the angels and saints
- with the entirety of God's creation
- with our brothers and sisters in the Church
- with us as we celebrate the Eucharist
- with our family and friends
- with those for whom we pray and intercede

### **A Gathering Prayer**

God of Love

Gather us into the Body of Christ  
in communion with the angels and saints  
to be your holy people

Gather in faith those who don't know Christ  
Gather in hope those in despair  
Gather in love those who are lonely  
Gather in joy those who suffer  
Gather in wisdom those who live without purpose  
Gather in peace those who are troubled  
Gather in forgiveness those who are bitter  
Gather in unity all Christians.

St Thérèse of Lisieux  
whose heart of love embraced the world  
*pray for us.*

## Prayer Opens

*Were not our hearts burning while he spoke to us and  
**opened** the Scriptures to us (Luke 24:32)*

When We Pray God Opens Us . . .

- to the depths of His love for us revealed in Christ
- to Jesus' life-giving vision for ourselves and our world
- to a deeper understanding of ourselves, our life journey and our life choices
- to honesty and personal vulnerability
- to examine our attitudes, values, habits feelings, decisions and lifestyle
- to trust and discern God's call and purpose in our lives

### An Opening Prayer

God of Wisdom

Open us through the Holy Spirit  
to embrace your Living Word  
allowing its riches to permeate our being

Open our ears to hear your Gospel proclaimed  
Open our minds to understand how you speak into our lives

Open our hearts to recognise you in the goodness of others

Open our eyes to see you in the beauty of our world

Open our hands to offer you praise and worship

Open our emotions to the joy of your presence

Open our lives to the breath of your Holy Spirit.

Mary Mother of God,  
always open and obedient to God's Word  
*pray for us.*

# Prayer Transforms

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be **transformed** by the renewal of your mind (Romans 12:2)*

When We Pray God Transforms Us . . .

- through intimacy of relationship with the One who loves us in the depths of our being and human character
- through growth into who we are meant to be according to God's vision and purpose
- through reflection on our behaviour and actions
- through our acceptance of God's gifts
- through the ordinary circumstances of our lives

## A Transforming Prayer

God of Change

Transform us into the image of Jesus  
through the power of the Holy Spirit  
at work in us

Transform our anger and resentment into love  
Transform our indifference into compassion  
Transform our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh  
Transform our shallowness into integrity  
Transform our inaction into the pursuit of justice  
Transform our pettiness into generosity  
Transform our selfishness into service  
Transform our timidity into courage.

St Bernard of Clairvaux,  
whose wisdom came from knowing God in prayer  
*pray for us.*

## Prayer Sends

**Go** into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15)

When We Pray God Sends Us . . .

- with a renewed heart of love for others
- with the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit
- with a vision to renew and transform our world
- with an energy and passion flowing from the Divine
- with gratitude for who we are and what we have received in Christ
- into our own sphere of influence where we can make a difference

### A Sending Prayer

God of Action

Send us into our world  
empowered with the gifts and presence of the Holy Spirit  
to build your kingdom and draw others to Christ

Send us to proclaim the Gospel through our life witness  
Send us as healing to a broken world  
Send us as love just as Christ loves us  
Send us as the hand of care for the poor  
Send us as a voice against injustice  
Send us to share our faith with those we meet  
Send us as menders of Christian unity  
Send us as intercessors for the needs of the world

St Mary of the Cross MacKillop  
pioneer of new ways to live the Gospel in our land  
*pray for us.*

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<sup>i</sup> This model of prayer is adapted from the Pray 2010 Prayer Card – Prayer and Spirituality in the Catholic Tradition (Brisbane).