



PRAYERFUL SPACES: INFUSING PRAYER INTO CATHOLIC ONLINE LEARNING

Catholic Virtual Learning Resource



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Opening Prayer	3
Introduction	4
The Purpose of Prayer	5
Students and Prayer	6
Forms of Prayer	6
Traditional Prayers	7
Praying through the Intercession of Saints	10
Incorporating and Selecting Prayers	11
Composing Prayer	11
Incorporating and Selecting Prayer	13
Sample Prayers from Courses	14
Closing Prayer	15



OPENING PRAYER

Peace Prayer

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

Originally attributed to St Francis of Assisi who lived in the 13th century, this powerful prayer is now believed to have been written at the start of the 20th century on the eve of WWI. Although the author is not known, it reflects St Francis' charism of peace, compassion and solidarity and is often referred to as the Prayer of St Francis or the Peace Prayer. It has given strength to millions over the years and exemplifies the power and sacredness of prayer.

The Peace Prayer has been put to music and a search of the internet provides a number of videos to help bring students born in the digital age even more deeply into prayer.



“Then [Abram] removed to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east;; and there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.” (Genesis 12:8)

INTRODUCTION

The story of Abraham (Abram) calling on the name of the Lord after travelling in the land east of Bethel is the oldest reference to prayer in the Holy Bible. Significantly, Abraham’s act is not a one-time event; throughout his travels around Bethel, Abraham repeats the act of prayer several times over.

In the New Testament, Jesus prays before teaching the disciples about prayer. First, Jesus provides the Our Father as a model of what to “say” when praying. Then, Jesus offers counsel on the need to persist with prayer, since, “how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke: 11:13). By consistently incorporating prayer into our lives, we commit to developing, nourishing and sustaining a deep relationship with God. We come to know God and God more fully enters our lives in a meaningful and truly blessed way. Through prayer, we are transformed.

This resource offers inspiration and guidance on writing and incorporating prayer for students in Catholic schools, especially those who are engaged in online learning. Beautifully, prayer involves being in relationship — with God, with one or more saints, with others who pray, as some examples. By entering and remaining in prayerful conversation, students engaged in online learning in solitude, away from others, are never alone. Students may learn in different contexts, but as children of God, prayer ensures they remain in relationship with Him.

Prayer may be shared in many ways. While the written and spoken word remain the foundational essence of shared prayer, images, audio, video, and music posts may also help move young people into the quiet space necessary for an encounter with God. These prayer prompts may also lead to invitations for students to step away from their technology and spend time in silence or appreciating the gift of creation before returning to study. While invitational, it is important to model the importance of this time and space in a Catholic learning environment. There are times where it might be appropriate to gather the prayers or prayer intentions of a class together as a community. Also, sometimes simply including a meaningful passage of scripture, or allowing time for meditation to words, music or silence, can open the heart and mind into prayer. Prayer is sometimes complex but need not be complicated. Prayer, in all its forms, is holy, engaging the whole person.



How can a spirit of prayer be infused into the online learning environment?



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

THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER

Prayer is both a response to God and a reaching toward God. It is conversation, presence, exaltation, comfort, communion, love, gift - all wrapped together. As Son of God even Jesus prayed because prayer gave sustenance and courage to the aspect of him that was fully human even as he was fully God.

To offer our students prayer is to offer them the life-gift that Jesus describes to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4). The water Jesus offers here is no longer the earthly kind that the Samaritan woman draws from her well. It is life itself - a deep, moving, joyous and unfailing life only possible from a God who loves humanity and each individual beyond imagining. We experience that water tangibly at baptism when we begin our journey as witnesses to our faith in solidarity with the rest of humanity. We experience again when we allow ourselves - and offer our students — moments of prayer. As Pope Francis says, "We need the daily water of prayer, we need time dedicated to God, so that he can enter into our time, into our lives; consistent moments in which we open our hearts to him so that he can daily pour out on us love, peace, joy, strength, hope, thus nourishing our faith." (Angelus address, October 16, 2022)

When we teach our students to pray, we offer them both an experience of the Divine and a path to find their way towards Christ's life-giving water. We offer them courage to face the challenges in their own life, solidarity for their journey, and a taste of the love of a God who will never let them down.



How can the ways that the Saints describe and incorporate prayer provide inspiration for students in Catholic schools or engaged in Catholic virtual contexts?

"True prayer is nothing but love."
(Saint Augustine)



“Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” (*Lamentations 3:22-23*)

STUDENTS AND PRAYER

The following examples are pathways to model and inspire a prayerful approach to learning for Catholic learning communities, especially those engaged in online learning:

- Post a prayer on an appropriate cyclical basis that connects to a particular aspect of learning, a liturgical season, each of the four seasons, a Saint’s feast day, a Catholic social teaching, a Catholic School Graduate Expectation, etc.
- Post a reflection, Scripture reading or other inspirational message and invite students to write or post a personal response.
- Post prayers in a variety of modalities — written form, video, audio, visual, etc., — so that prayers in the form of psalms, songs, chants, icons, etc., can be incorporated.
- Post meditations and mindful breathing strategies that help students enter into and remain focused on prayer.
- Invite students to post their needs or petitions for themselves, for others, or that which burdens them and encourage prayer for those needs.
- Provide opportunities for self-reflection, including journaling and prayer writing, and prayerful pause such as the Ignatian examen.
- Provide one or more templates for developing prayers for different reasons and occasions.
- Provide gender-neutral descriptions and titles for God in prayer (e.g., Creator God, loving God).

FORMS OF PRAYER

The Catechism of the Catholic Church presents several forms of prayer: prayer of blessing or adoration, prayer of petition, prayer of intercession, prayer of thanksgiving and prayer of praise (CCC 2623-2649). Each form has a special place in Catholic learning communities, helping members to live in right relationship with God through the Son and in the Holy Spirit.



“He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.’ He said to them, ‘When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.’” (Luke 11:1-4)

TRADITIONAL PRAYERS

In many Catholic learning environments educators may feel uncertain about the options for leading and modeling prayer; in particular within the online context which is remote from daily interactions with students and a community of faith. As we face the choices of methods (written text, audio, an image, a scripture passage) and content we may wish, like the disciples, that Jesus was available for guidance.

In efforts to lead prayer that models the rich depth and diversity of the Catholic faith, selecting some prayers drawn from or based on our liturgical and devotional traditions can be an important component of our plans for prayer.

Students may benefit from a short introduction that sets these traditional prayers into an authentic context of their learning; this can consist of words, music or images that make a meaningful connection between the liturgical and devotional life of the Church and the lesson’s content.

The goal is not to replace or replicate these elements of the Catholic liturgical life in our parish communities but to shine a light on these connections for students and invite them into a deeper connection and practice of faith. In some cases it is most appropriate to quote portions of the prayers to introduce them to students and then complement the quotes with an invitation or simple prayer.

We can lead students in the prayer that Jesus taught us in the Our Father, in the words of the angel and Elizabeth greeting Mary in the Hail Mary as well as other sources from the Catholic tradition. Here is a small sample of prayers from the tradition of the Catholic Church:



Lord’s Prayer

Our Father Who art in heaven
Hallowed be Thy Name
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against
Do not let us fall into temptation
But deliver us from evil, amen.



"He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.' He said to them, 'When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.'" (Luke 11:1-4)



Hail Mary

Hail Mary full of grace
The Lord is with thee
Blessed art thou amongst women
And blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus

Holy Mary, mother of God
Pray for us sinners
Now and at the hour of our death,

Amen.



Glory Be

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.



Guardian Angel Prayer

Angel of God, my guardian dear,
to whom God's love commits me here,
ever this day be at my side,
to light and guard, to rule and guide.

Amen.



Morning Offering Prayer

O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart
of Mary,
I offer you my prayers, works, joys, and
sufferings of this day
for all the intentions of your Sacred Heart
in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass
throughout the world,
for the salvation of souls, the reparation of
sins, the reunion of all Christians,
and in particular for the intentions of the
Holy Father this month.

Amen.

*"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all
circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."
(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)*



Prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

O most holy heart of Jesus, fountain of every blessing,
I adore You, I love You, and with lively sorrow for my sins I offer You this poor heart of mine.
Make me humble, patient, pure and wholly obedient to Your will.
Grant, good Jesus, that I may live in You and for You. Protect me in the midst of danger.
Comfort me in my afflictions. Give me health of body, assistance in my temporal needs, Your blessing on all that I do, and the grace of a holy death. Amen.

Other prayers can be sought from different sources such as:

Sacramental: Prayers linking student learning to the reception of the sacraments could include examinations of conscience linked to topics being studied (ecological, family life, social issues, morality and ethics), a renewal of baptismal promises or reflections on the Eucharist or gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The Liturgical Year: Although courses are not tied to a particular time of year and may be offered using a variety of schedules and formats, there are topics which can be shared with students as they illustrate the connection to themes and concepts being studied. Examples could include the Easter Sprinkling Rite or Blessing of Oils when studying properties of water or oil, lines from the Exsultet when studying the role of bees in the ecosystem, or the text of the blessing of an Advent wreath while studying a poem about greenery.

Devotional Practices: Practices and prayers which flow from and lead us to the practice of the liturgy. There may be devotions to particular saints or traditional practices. See the next section for more on praying through the intercession of saints.

The Rosary: The rosary can help us focus and meditate on the mysteries of Christ's life and that of his mother. Schools may wish to offer students the opportunity to participate in the powerful experience of praying the rosary together.





If you ever feel distressed during your day, call upon Our Lady. Just say this simple prayer,
“Mary, Mother of Jesus, please be a mother to me now.” I must admit, this prayer has never failed me. — *Mother Teresa of Calcutta*

PRAYING THROUGH THE INTERCESSION OF SAINTS

Throughout the ages certain women and men have relied on their faith far beyond the capacity of their peers to find direction and provide leadership in challenging times. These saints, long gone to join our God, still offer us direction and support in our time. Catholics often pray through the intercession of saints, leaning on these wise and devout individuals of the past to help direct our thoughts and intentions toward the goodness of God. St Mary, Mother of Jesus, is often turned to for help in praying about any situation. Here is a short list of other patron saints whose particular connection to an issue or cause may comfort and inspire students.

- St. Albertus Magnus, Patron saint of scientists
- St. Alexandra, Patron saint and defender of humanity
- St. Alphonsa Muttatupadathu, Patron saint against illness
- St. Anthony of Padua, Patron saint of lost items and lost people
- St. Augustine, Patron saint of addictions and anthropologists
- St. Brother Andre Bessette of Montreal, Patron saint of the rejected
- St. Carlos Acutis, Patron saint of youth computer programmers
- St. Cecilia, Patron saint of musicians
- St. Dymphna, Patron saint of mental health
- St. Francis de Sales, Patron saint of writers
- St. Francis of Assisi, Patron saint of poverty and animals
- St. George, Patron saint of reading and books
- St. Joseph, Patron saint of workers, fathers, and an easy and holy death
- St. Josephine Bakhita, Patron saint against human trafficking
- St. Jude, Patron saint of lost causes
- St. Kateri Tekakwitha, Patron saint of the environment and indigenous peoples
- St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Patron saint of World Youth Day and Missionaries of Charity
- St. Pope John Paul II, Patron saint of World Youth Day and Catholic Sports
- St. Sebastian, Patron saint of athletes
- St. Teresa of Avila, Doctor of the Church, patron saint of headache sufferers
- St. Thomas Aquinas, Patron saint of students

There are many more saints, and students can be encouraged to investigate and search for saints with whom they may feel a particular connection.



"Loving God, With sunrise a glorious light, For each new day You make, May I see on today's horizon The direction I should take. Amen" (*Prayer for Direction*)

INCORPORATING AND SELECTING PRAYER

Students also benefit from being offered prayers written in their era. It is extremely important to carefully select such prayers. Students and teachers like to see a variety of sources when reading/reciting prayers. Sources should be vetted appropriately. For example finding a nice video prayer but from a source that contains a lot of ads, or a prayer from a source that doesn't have a publishing or educational background is discouraged. A Catholic worldview should always be reflected when we select prayers. Make sure to provide credit and a reference to any prayers that you incorporate within an online course you have not written yourself.

Please consider using a diversity of sources as well. Other people in your Catholic community can help select a diversity of sources that prioritize the dignity of the human person. Focus on God's love and our call to compassion, kindness and justice. Cultural diversity is always encouraged as well.

COMPOSING PRAYERS

Composing a prayer may seem unfamiliar at first, but it is important to remember that it is much like writing a letter or message to someone that cares for you. The language that you use should be student friendly and come from the heart. Your broader Catholic community can support you, including clergy and chaplains.

Steps to follow:

1. Find inspiration in a theme. This may be related to the topic of a lesson, an emotion, experience or other
2. Write statements that explain or give witness to the theme.
3. Write them as sentences and rearrange so they flow and have an authentic voice suitable to the theme.
4. Make sure the prayer includes an opening (salutation) and a closing theme.

The table below provides you with some foundations to get started. The inspirations, salutations and closing words have been inspired by secondary students taking Catholic courses.

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

Inspiration for Prayer	Salutations	Closing Words
Acceptance	Almighty God	As we do the work set for us, Amen.
Adoration	Blessed Father	Bless us through the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.
Against negativity	Come, Holy Spirit	Christ our Lord, Amen.
Anxiety	Creator God	For this is the will of God in Jesus Christ, Amen.
Before a test/exam	Dear God	For this, I thank you, Amen.
Blessings	Dear Jesus	Holy Spirit, Come reign in our hearts!
Challenge and Transformation	Dear loving Father	I love You with all the strength of my heart, my mind, my soul and my Spirit.
Comfort	Eternal God	In His holy name, Amen.
Confession	God grant me	In Jesus' Name, Amen.
Congratulations	God of All	In Jesus' Name, we pray all these things, Amen.
Courage	God our Father	In Your name, Amen.
Environment and Sustainability	Gracious Father	May You Bless Us as We Go Throughout Our Week, and Be Grounded and Rooted in Your Word. In Jesus' Name, We Pray, Amen.
Family	Gracious Redeemer	May your grace, mercy and peace, Bless us, protect us and transform us all, This day, now and forever, Amen.
For others	Heavenly Father	Restore our courage and faith, oh King of Heaven. Amen.
Forgiveness	Heavenly God	Through Jesus Christ, I pray.
Freedom	Holy Spirit of Love	We ask all these things through Christ our Lord, Amen.
Graduation	Jesus	
Giving	Lord	
Grief and Loss	Lord God	
Guidance	Loving God	
Healing	Merciful Father	
Health and Safety	Mighty God	
Hope	○ Blessed Trinity	
Illness	○ God	
Intercession	○ God of Truth	
Longing for belonging	○ God in Heaven	
Love	Oh God in Heaven	
Marriage	Our God of Hosts	
Nations		
Peace		
Peace of mind		
People struggling with Faith		
Petition (intercession)		
Praise		
Prayer in seek of a greater understanding		
School		
Stress		
Summer Holidays		
Support		
Thanksgiving		
Unification of all peoples		

Transitional Phrases Following Salutations

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| • Open our eyes to | • We come to You |
| • We ask You | • We pray for |
| • May we be | • Thank You for |
| • Give us the _____ to _____ | • Guide us |
| • You have given/helped/taught us | • Help us to |

INCORPORATING AND SELECTING PRAYER INTO ONLINE COURSES

When developing prayers for online courses, consider how student learning will build and connect to embedded reflections as well as the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations. Capitalize on authentic ways to infuse specific course content into prayer, as demonstrated in the course-specific examples provided.

Unit and Activity	Messages to convey	Prayer
Unit 1: Activity 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone is welcome • Everyone's gift is amazing • Pray for inclusivity and respect for diversity • Mindful of unique gifts • Celebrate our humanity 	Creator God, We ask You to help us to respect the unique gifts and talents You have given to each and every person in our course. Please guide us to use our strengths throughout the course to help all members of our class community. May we be mindful of each other's differences and celebrate our shared humanity. Amen
Unit 1: Activity 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking knowledge/ understanding • Be discerning with information • Skills/wisdom/insight to critically analyze information 	Heavenly Father, Guide us as we seek knowledge and understanding. Help us to be discerning when we are researching, by checking the credibility of our sources and asking good questions. Give us the insight and skills needed to understand what is reliable, even when faced with conflicting information. Help us to always trust in Your wisdom, Lord. Amen.
Unit 1: Activity 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnocentrism — seeing beyond our own culture • Different perspective/experiences/ background • Celebrate diversity and culture • Open-minded approach to discussion • Learning from each other 	Lord, We come before You with differing perspectives, drawn from our different backgrounds, experiences, and journeys. Guide us to see beyond our own culture, and to treat all people with kindness and respect. Help us to remain humble and open-minded as we learn from one another, in the hope that we may become closer to You. Remember, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy." (Matthew 5:7) Amen
Unit 1: Activity 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about social issues • Effective research, respect dignity • Ethics • Be teachable/open minded • Find quotes about God's wisdom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - James (1:15) - Proverbs (2:6) 	Dear Lord, Guide us as we learn the issues that social scientists explore, and show us the most effective ways of researching and understanding them. Remind us to always approach these issues with a respectful and teachable spirit. As James writes in 1:5, "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." May we always remember to thank You for the gifts You have given us. Amen



Dear God of All, You gave the apostles the gift of tongues to spread Your word. Help us to communicate openly and honestly as we progress through this course. Lead us to approach each new concept and problem with full attention knowing that the wisdom we derive from this may help us in the future to create a better world for all.

We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.

EXAMPLES FROM ONLINE COURSES:

CALCULUS AND VECTORS - MCV 4U

¹ The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork.

² Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge. (Psalm 19:1-2)

God of All, inspire us with your wisdom as we explore these new areas of mathematics and their ability to guide us towards a better understanding of your universe. Help us to put the knowledge we gain at the service of our communities, and direct our hearts towards lives of compassion. Amen.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND GERONTOLOGY - TOJ4C

Loving God, Help me to be present to the members of my community at all stages of life.
Let me recognize the wisdom of my elders and help me to honour them through my care.
Guide my actions and my words so that I always protect their dignity.
Let there be respect and gladness in each of our encounters and let me always be a beacon of your love.
Amen

AND

Gracious God, Help us to meet with courage the changes we encounter at each stage of life.
Keep our focus on the needs of our community as we comply with new regulations.
In driving and in other ways, let us always be attentive to the need to care for and protect the lives and dignity of others.
Amen

FAMILIES IN CANADA - HHS 4U

Dear God, Open our hearts to your presence as we investigate what it means to live in families in our society. Remembering the challenges your mother and father faced at the time of your birth, guide our minds towards ways in which we can help all families feel welcome and secure in their communities. Help us to live in solidarity with each other, making kindness, hospitality and friendship our goals. We ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen.



"For Christians, who believe that 'the glory of God is the living man,' the task of cultivating humanity is inseparable from the call to love God and love our neighbor as ourselves. Education, properly understood, lies right at the center of the Christian mission."
— Saint Pope John Paul II

FUNCTIONS - MHF 4U

Loving God, we live in a complex world filled with shape and pattern. Guide our minds towards greater understanding as we begin this mathematical journey together. Help us to rely on each other to strengthen our learning, and gift us with perseverance should challenges arise. May all the knowledge we gain be directed towards creating a better world filled with compassion, hope and peace. Amen.

TRAVEL AND TOURISM - CGG 30

Creator God, Guide our travel decisions to include considerations for honouring Catholic social teachings like the common good and solidarity. We live in a world that is deeply connected and impacted by movement, technology and economies. Give us the discernment to think and act thoughtfully as we encounter new people and places throughout your creation. In Your name, Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Blessed Carlo Acutis, the teen who created an online archive of Eucharistic Miracles, used the internet for God's glory. This prayer is approved by the Bishop of Blessed Carlo Acutis' home diocese of Assisi, asking for his intercession.

O God, our Father,
we thank you for giving us Carlo,
a model of life for young people,
and a message of love for all.

You made him enamoured with
Your son Jesus, making the Eucharist his "highway to heaven."
You gave him Mary as a beloved Mother,
and you made him, through the Rosary,
a cantor of her tenderness.

Receive his prayer for us.
Look above all upon the poor, whom he loved and assisted.

Grant me too, through his intercession, the grace that I need...
And make our joy full, raising Carlo among
the saints of your Church,
so that his smile shines again for us
to the glory of your name. Amen.



Our Mission

Catholic Virtual Ontario provides equity of access for Catholic secondary students to take secondary credits developed and taught by Catholic teachers.

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