



**A YEAR  
WITH THE  
BIBLE**

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**SCRIPTURAL WISDOM  
FOR DAILY LIVING**

**PATRICK MADRID**



**PRESENTED TO**

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WITH THE  
BIBLE





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# A YEAR WITH THE BIBLE

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SCRIPTURAL WISDOM  
FOR DAILY LIVING

PATRICK MADRID



CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA



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## **DEDICATION**

With gratitude to  
Father Luke Tancrell, O.P.

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# Introduction



Perhaps the greatest Scripture scholar the Catholic Church ever produced was a man named Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus, commonly known today as Saint Jerome (347–420). Born in what is now modern day Slovenia, Jerome was a both a master linguist in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, as well as a profoundly incisive and erudite scholar and translator. Ordained a bishop in 379, he studied under Saint Gregory Nazianzen (329–390) and then served for three years in Rome as a personal secretary and theologian to Pope Saint Damasus 1 (305–384), who commissioned him to translate from Hebrew and Greek the Catholic version of Scripture known ever since as the Latin Vulgate. Jerome spent the final 32 years of his life as a monk in Jerusalem, and then in Bethlehem, translating and commenting on Sacred Scripture.

Why all this detail about Saint Jerome by way of introduction to this book, you ask? The answer is simple. Jerome knew the Bible inside and out, forward and backward, in its original languages of Greek and Hebrew. If anyone could be trusted to give solid, compelling reasons for spending, not merely a “year with the Bible,” but indeed a whole lifetime, it was him. And he said the following:

I beg of you, my dear brother, to live among these books—to meditate upon them—to know nothing else, to seek nothing else. Does not such a life seem to you a foretaste of heaven here on earth?

Let not the simplicity of the Scripture or the poorness of its vocabulary offend you; for these are due either to the faults of translators or else to deliberate purpose: for in this way it is better fitted for the instruction of an unlettered congregation as the educated person can take one meaning and the uneducated another from one and the same sentence.

I am not so dull or so forward as to profess that I myself know it, or that I can pluck upon the earth the fruit which has its root in heaven, but I confess that I should like to do so. I put myself before the man who sits idle and, while I lay no claim to be a master, I readily pledge myself to be a fellow-student.

“For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.” Let us learn upon earth that knowledge which will continue with us in heaven.

There could hardly be a better introduction, indeed a better recommendation, for a book titled *A Year With the Bible*.

Follow Saint Jerome's holy advice and his admirable personal example. Make daily meditation on Scripture part of your life. Do not neglect to ask, to seek, and to knock at the door of divine revelation. The truth will be given to you. You will find it. The door will be opened to you.

Let your daily reading of Scripture be for you a foretaste of heaven, your roadmap to heaven, a trustworthy companion along the narrow, rough, and arduous ascent you are making toward heaven. And when that blessed morning dawns on which you finally enter into the eternal joys of heaven, you will see God face-to-face forever and praise him eternally in the glorious company of his angels and with his saints. What you learned and believed by meditating on the Holy Bible will have brought you there.

Just think: Right now, as you turn the page and begin reading this book, you are taking, as Saint Jerome says, another step toward heaven.

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# How to Use this Book



Saint Jerome’s well-known dictum, “Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ,” is a good and necessary reminder of why reading the Bible is so important. In its pages, you will encounter him personally, hear him preaching and teaching, witness his miracles, and learn from his own lips what he desires for you to know and do and experience in the Christian life. You will see how, for countless generations, God gradually prepared the world for the coming of his son, Jesus Christ.

What’s more, in the Bible you will meet the Prophets and Apostles, the Blessed Virgin Mary, angels and devils, and all the innumerable figures—great and small, heroic and pathetic, holy and wicked—who played a role in the sweeping human drama that is God’s plan of salvation for mankind. This drama is truly “the greatest story ever told.” But, of course, the Bible tells us more than a mere “story.” It tells us the truth about God’s love for us and how Jesus Christ came to save us from our sins and enable us, by his grace, to know, love, and serve God in this life so that we may be happy with him forever in the life to come.

The Bible gives compelling answers to all of life’s Big Questions: Why am I here? How did I get here? What is the meaning of life? What is the purpose of my life? What will become of me when this life ends?

And so, as you take up this book, which gives you a kind of “guided tour” of the major themes and teachings contained in the Bible, you will encounter Jesus Christ on every page. His presence is imbued in the Old Testament, where he is implicitly anticipated, prefigured, and pointed toward, as well as in the New Testament, where the fullness of God’s revelation is unveiled for us definitively in the person of the Incarnate Word of God.

As the title of this book indicates, you can spend each of the 365 days in a year pondering some aspect of Jesus Christ and his teaching. The themes contained in this particular selection of Bible passages deal primarily with the issues, challenges, and opportunities that you personally face in your



daily life. They will help you navigate through the often turbulent waters of this earthly life and deal more effectively with everything from your own weaknesses, anxieties, and uncertainties, to relationships with family, friends, and even enemies. Day by day, this book unfolds for you what the Bible says about such things as temptation, virtues, vices, prayer, forgiveness, death, fear, faith, hope, love, children, parents, marriage, money, entertainment, sex, friendship, prayer, modesty, angels and devils, heaven and hell, salvation and damnation, atheism, the Cross of Christ (and your cross, too), the Church, the sacraments, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and even the antichrist and the End Times.

Keep in mind that, although it is not the whole Bible, of course, neither is *A Year With the Bible* merely a book “about” the Bible. Those who are more or less unfamiliar with Scripture, will discover in it a means of launching out into the deep to begin a life-long project of deepening their knowledge of and love for Jesus Christ as he is revealed, implicitly and explicitly in the pages of the Bible. Even those who are already experienced with regularly studying and praying with Scripture will find *A Year with the Bible* to be a helpful companion for their daily life and growth in Christian maturity, for it will bring to mind many things the Lord is telling us that can easily be overlooked or forgotten in the hurly burly of one’s daily routine.

Psalm 119 proclaims “Your Word, O Lord, is a lamp for my feet.” If you truly desire to walk in the light of the truth, rather than stumble blindly downward in the darkness of the world, the Bible will guide your steps in the right direction. Along the way, as Saint Jerome teaches, you will come to know the Lord Jesus Christ ever more fully, and he will guide you and teach you many things that he wants you to know and understand. Apply these things to your life and when you have reached the conclusion of your earthly path, you will find to your ineffable joy that, by walking in the light of Christ’s truth, your steps will have brought you to your heavenly homeland, where you will live in glory, peace, and perfect happiness with the Triune God and all his angels and saints for all eternity.

That is how to use this book.

# A Prayer for Grace and Illumination



Stay with me, Lord, for it is necessary to have You present so that I do not forget You. You know how easily I abandon You.

Stay with me, Lord, because I am weak and I need Your strength, that I may not fall so often.

Stay with me, Lord, for You are my life, and without You, I am without fervor.

Stay with me, Lord, for You are my light, and without You, I am in darkness.

Stay with me, Lord, to show me Your will.

Stay with me, Lord, so that I hear Your voice and follow You.

Stay with me, Lord, for I desire to love You very much, and always be in Your company.

Stay with me, Lord, if You wish me to be faithful to You.

Stay with me, Lord, for as poor as my soul is, I wish it to be a place of consolation for You, a nest of Love.

Stay with me, Jesus, for it is getting late and the day is coming to a close, and life passes, death, judgment, eternity approaches. It is necessary to renew my strength, so that I will not stop along the way and for that, I need You. It is getting late and death approaches. I fear the darkness, the temptations, the dryness, the cross, the sorrows. O how I need You, my Jesus, in this night of exile!

Stay with me tonight, Jesus, in life with all its dangers, I need You.

Let me recognize You as Your disciples did at the breaking of bread, so that the Eucharistic Communion be the light which disperses the darkness, the force which sustains me, the unique joy of my heart.

Stay with me, Lord, because at the hour of my death, I want to remain united to You, if not by Communion, at least by grace and love.

Stay with me, Jesus, I do not ask for divine consolation, because I do not merit it, but, the gift of Your Presence, oh yes, I ask this of You!

Stay with me, Lord, for it is You alone I look for. Your Love, Your Grace, Your Will, Your Heart, Your Spirit, because I love You and ask no other reward but to love You more and more.

With a firm love, I will love You with all my heart while on earth and continue to love You perfectly during all eternity.

Amen.

—Saint Padre Pio of Pietrelcina (1887–1968)

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A YEAR WITH THE BIBLE

# *The Daily Readings*

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## To the pure, all things are pure

*This world is filled with many vulgar and dishonorable things that will claw and tear at your Christian purity if you allow them to. Don't let them! Seek instead the things of God. He will purify you and free you from your slavery to profane and inconsequential things.*



This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, instead of giving heed to Jewish myths or to commands of men who reject the truth. To the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure; their very minds and consciences are corrupted. They profess to know God, but they deny him by their deeds; they are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good deed.

(Titus 1:13–16)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I actively cooperate with God's purifying grace, or am I really just deceiving myself by wallowing lazily in disobedience to his will?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I want to be pure as you are pure! Please give me the graces I need to strive faithfully for holiness and purity out of love for you.*

## God loves you freely

*If you only realized the vastness of God's burning love for you. What a profoundly undeserved gift he gives by loving us; and yet most people rarely, if ever, ponder with gratitude this great treasure.*



For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

( John 3:16)

But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).

(Ephesians 2:4–5)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I take God's great love for me for granted? Do I presume that "all will be well," even though I get so caught up in distractions and worldly cares that I forget to thank and praise him for loving me?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Oh, Lord. The fact that I am so unworthy of your fatherly love serves only to magnify the glorious beauty and richness of your generosity to me, a sinner. Help me, Lord, to love you with all my heart, now and forever.*



## Why do you worry so? Trust in God

*Worldly fear is a negative condition arising from our fallen human nature. God wants to free you from that kind of fear, which breeds worry, and give you joy and peace, even if your circumstances are difficult. Learn, therefore, to trust his loving providence and thus banish your worldly fears.*



“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.”

“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day’s own trouble be sufficient for the day.”

(Matthew 6:25–34)

IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I trust in God my loving Father or in my own puny efforts to “control” the circumstances of my life? Do I worry so much that I have become a person “of little faith?”

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I know that you love me. Please grant me the graces I need each day to have faith and confidence in your loving providence, come what may. Jesus, I trust in you.*

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## Be a doer of the gospel, not merely a hearer

*Remember, in this life, there are ultimately only two kinds of people: winners and losers. Winners go to heaven and losers go to hell. Jesus tells us that winning the reward of eternal life requires not merely hearing the gospel but obeying it. Which kind of person are you?*



“Not every one who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.’

“Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.”

And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching.

(Matthew 7:21–28)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Have I built my house on the solid rock of Christ’s promises or on the shifting sand of my own preferences, appetites, and opinions?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, I want to live my life on the rock of your truth, that unshakeable rock upon which you are building your Church, that mighty rock of your love that cannot be shaken or overcome by any passing danger. Lift me up onto that rock, Lord, so that I may remain there with you always.*

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## Beware of false teachers

*Not everything that glitters is gold and not everyone who presumes to teach, teaches the truth. So guard against being duped by false prophets and blind guides, who lead others astray with their spurious teachings. Listen to the Church and the saving gospel of Jesus Christ which She proclaims.*



As I urged you when I was going to Macedónia, remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies which promote speculations rather than the divine training that is in faith; whereas the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith. Certain persons by swerving from these have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions.

Now we know that the law is good, if any one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, immoral persons, sodomites, kidnapers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

(1 Timothy 1:3–11)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

There are countless voices out there clamoring for my attention. What practical steps do I take (am I even taking any?) to filter out and ignore the

seductive errors that beckon me so that I can concentrate on hearing and following Jesus Christ and His message?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, You have the words of eternal life! Strengthen my faith in you and your promises and never let any false teacher ever separate me from you and your Church.*

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# God's offer of salvation is easy for you to accept

*We all make excuses of one kind or another for not responding to God's loving call—usually out of fear and laziness. Think for a moment about your own excuses. Don't they look foolish?*



“For this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.”

(Deuteronomy 30:11–14)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I make excuses for not doing what God wants of me and for doing things I know are incompatible with his will for me?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, you know how quickly I give up and give in when following you requires sacrifice or becomes the least bit difficult. Help me, my God, to rely faithfully on your strength and not hide behind my own frivolous excuses.*



## The Holy Angels are God's messengers

*The Holy Angels are vast conflagrations of love for God; mighty and indomitable spirits beholding God, face-to-face, for all eternity. At God's command they guide, guard, illuminate, and minister to human beings in countless unseen ways.*



And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, “Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!”

(Luke 2:8–14)

This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be made worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering—since indeed God deems it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant rest with us to you who are afflicted, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire.

(2 Thessalonians 1:5–7)

For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

(Hebrews 1:7)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I have a devotion to the Holy Angels? Do I invoke their protection and intercession as I ought?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, the dazzling beauty and prodigious power of your holy angels are reminders to me that your love for creation knows no bounds. The angels reflect your resplendent beauty in ways too awesome and lofty for me to fully comprehend. Help me emulate their single-minded fidelity to you.*

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## Never publicize the good you do for others to see

*It's tempting to publicize our good deeds so that others will think well of us and praise us. But doing so only debases any merit such deeds might have had in God's eyes because pride and human respect have replaced true love for God and for our neighbor.*



“Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

“Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when 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.”...

“And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

(Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

What are my true motivations for doing whatever good I may do for others? Am I serving others in a spirit of humility, or am I really just seeking applause?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, you know how weak and vain I am. Please forgive me for all the times I have sought human respect rather than seeking first your Kingdom out of love for you.*

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## A blessing or a curse—which will you choose?

*God wants to bless you with a superabundance of gifts, especially eternal life. But you must first relinquish the burden of empty and insignificant trifles that you clutch. If you are overloaded with such things, you cannot receive God's blessings. And, eventually, those trifles will drag you down to hell.*



“Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day, and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods which you have not known. And when the Lord your God brings you into the land which you are entering to take possession of it, you shall set the blessing on Mount Geri’zim and the curse on Mount Ebal....

“You shall be careful to do all the statutes and the ordinances which I set before you this day.”

(Deuteronomy 11:26–29, 32)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I truly open to God’s will for my life? Are my arms and my heart open wide to him? Do I sincerely desire his blessings, in whatever form he may choose to give them to me?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, help me each day to say firmly “Yes.” to your will and “No!” to anything that would prevent me from knowing, loving, and serving you in this life and being happy with you forever in the life to come.*

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## What is impossible for you is not impossible for God

*Even if God permits you to have prosperity in this life, be on guard lest money and material things become false gods. As Christ warns, that is a real and present danger. Far better that you be poor and holy than wealthy and on the wide, easy road to hell.*



And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, “Then who can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.” Peter began to say to him, “Lo, we have left everything and followed you.” Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.”

(Mark 10:23–30)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I trust fully in God’s grace for my happiness and salvation, or is my confidence really in my bank account?



## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I believe your teaching that, left to myself, it would be impossible for me to be saved. But I trust in you and in your love for me. For with you, O God, all things are possible, even the salvation of a sinner like me.*

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## Be like Mary, who pondered all things in her heart

*Many people move aimlessly through this life without ever thinking carefully about who they are, why they are here, and where they are going. Don't be like them. Instead, imitate the Blessed Virgin Mary, who never ceased contemplating the things of God and what they meant for her.*



But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart.

(Luke 2:19)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I ever ponder the things of God in my heart? Do I ever really ponder anything at all? Or do I simply stumble indiscriminately from one earthly distraction to another?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*My Lord and my God, let me love you as Our Lady loved you. Let my heart become a worthy abode for your grace and truth that I might ponder their beauty for the rest of my days.*

## The Lord will multiply the little you have to give

*Just as the Lord told the Apostles to feed the multitudes assembled on a barren hillside, so too he asks you to feed those around you with the bread of truth. Though you possess in yourself very little you can offer, if you offer that little portion to him, he will work new miracles through you.*



Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a lonely place apart. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. As he went ashore he saw a great throng; and he had compassion on them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a lonely place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” Jesus said, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” They said to him, “We have only five loaves here and two fish.” And he said, “Bring them here to me.” Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass; and taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

(Matthew 14:13–21)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Like the Apostles, my first instinct is to shrink back when God asks me to feed his people with the truth. “Who am *I* to do this?” I ask. “Where

could I ever find enough food in this deserted place to feed them all?" I must give what little I have to him and trust that he will multiply it.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I marvel that you would deign to make use of such an unworthy and inadequate person as I to accomplish your will! I lovingly offer you all that I have, even though it is meager, for your use.*

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## Jesus calms storms, in nature and in your soul

*We all experience storms in this life. They rise up usually without warning, and then fade away leaving us disoriented, demoralized, and distracted from our relationship with the Lord. For some, the storms never seem to end. Ask Jesus to calm the tempests in your life.*



And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and woke him, saying, “Save, Lord; we are perishing.” And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, O men of little faith?” Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. And the men marveled, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?”

And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demoniacs met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. And behold, they cried out, “What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?” Now a herd of many swine was feeding at some distance from them. And the demons begged him, “If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of swine.” And he said to them, “Go.” So they came out and went into the swine; and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and perished in the waters. The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, and what had happened to the demoniacs. And behold, all the city came out to

(Matthew 8:23–33)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

When storms break out in my life, do I fear that God has abandoned me? Do I, like the Apostles, wonder if God really cares what is happening to me?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I know that you love me and hear my prayers when I cry out to you with a heart full of love and trust. Protect me from the storms in my life, whether in my heart or those times of danger I must pass through on my way home to heaven.*

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## Be ruthless in fighting temptations

*This adage is true: “Know your enemy.” Never underestimate the power of temptations that come from the world, the flesh, and the devil. If you rely on your own strength to resist them, you will fall. So rely on God’s grace.*



Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

(Ephesians 6:10–11)

Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world.

(1 Peter 5:8–9)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I allow temptations to loll seductively before me while I toy with the possibility of giving in to them, or do I reject and turn my back on them immediately and call out to God for strength, as did the saints?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*My God, you know that, left to myself, I am exceedingly weak and vulnerable in the face of temptations. But with the help of your grace, I will strive to fight and overcome them!*

## God will forgive you if you ask him to

*Though your sins be as numerous as the grains of sand on the shore, God's merciful forgiveness is far greater than your sins. Do not be afraid. Trust in his love. Repent of your sins without delay and return to the house of your Father. He is waiting for you.*



And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry.

"Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.' "

(Luke 15:20–32)



## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I so proud that I think my sins are too terrible for God to forgive?  
Am I far from God and remain alienated from him out of fear? Is not he my loving Father?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Loving Father, I have sinned against you! I repent of my sins and beg your forgiveness. I know that you love me and that you will welcome me home, I who once was dead but now am alive because of your wondrous mercy.*

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## Don't be afraid to defend the truth ... with charity

*By virtue of your Baptism, you are called by Christ to always be ready to explain your faith intelligently, share it effectively, and defend it charitably.*



[I]n your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence; and keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are abused, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

(1 Peter 3:15–16)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

How do I react in situations where I know I should at least *try* to explain, or even defend, my faith in Jesus Christ? Am I passive and reticent? Fearful and cowardly? Or do I willingly speak out and stand up for the truth?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Help me, Lord, to get out of my comfort zone when my faith in you is challenged! Give me the courage and presence of mind to speak the truth charitably to anyone who calls me to account for my hope in you.*

## Be faithful and you will conquer

*The challenges and temptations that come your way in this life may be daunting, but the grace of God who sustains you is far more powerful!*



‘I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death.’

(Revelation 2:9–11)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

How willing am I to stand up and even, when necessary, suffer for the cause of truth? Am I a “fair weather friend” of Jesus Christ, or am I completely committed to him and willing to endure any sacrifice necessary in order to be faithful to him?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, you know that I fear many things. You know I fear difficulties, suffering, and death. So I ask you to please strengthen my will by your grace so that I will be strong when challenges to my love for you beset me.*

## Beware the danger of earthly riches

*Scripture contains many warnings about the danger of riches. Heed them!*



There is great gain in godliness with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world; but if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs.

(1 Timothy 6:6–10)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I covet being wealthy? Am I envious toward those who are? Am I stingy when giving alms? Am I content with the resources God has given me in the measure he knows is best for me?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, protect me from the corruption that so often comes from affluence and financial plenitude. Whether I have much or little money matters not, for you alone are my true and lasting treasure. Help me to be generous, prudent, and content with whatever money I might have.*

## The Church will never be overcome

*Jesus Christ never did anything second-best, inadequately, or halfway. He accomplished perfectly all that the Father sent him to do—including establishing his Church on the rock of Peter.*



Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do men say that the Son of man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

(Matthew 16:13–20)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I trust Christ’s promise that his Church will never be overcome, not even by the gates of hell? Am I standing firmly, decisively with him on that rock upon which he is building His Church? If not, why?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Jesus, I trust in you! When you promised that nothing, not even hell, can overcome the Church you established, you made a guarantee that I am committed to holding fast to, for the rest of my life.*

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## God wants you to be happy

*Above all, God wants you to be happy. Perfect happiness, though, can never come from the finite things of this world. They are as ephemeral as the wind. As St. Augustine said, God alone can make you truly happy, and your heart will not rest until it rests in him.*



Therefore, my brethren, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved....

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.

(Philippians 4:1, 4–9)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I willingly confide to God the desires of my heart? Do I trust that he will only and always do what is best for me? Do I try to control everything in my life or do I trust in him?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, how good and generous you are to me! You created me out of love because you desire my eternal happiness. You give me all that I need to*

*respond lovingly to your plan for my life. Strengthen my desire to say “Yes” to you. Please be patient with me.*

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## God will forgive you if you forgive others

*Forgiving those who cause offence or injury is often exceedingly difficult. And yet, forgiveness is one of the most beautiful and important teachings of Jesus Christ. It is central to the gospel because, without it, you can't go to heaven.*



Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.

“Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the reckoning, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents; and as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ And out of pity for him the lord of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ So his fellow servant fell down and besought him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ He refused and went and put him in prison till he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers, till he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

(Matthew 18:21–35)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I too proud to forgive those who have hurt me? Do I hold grudges, secretly seethe with anger, or treat contemptuously someone whom I dislike? Why can't I let go of my anger?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*My Lord and my God, you have forgiven me countless times, though I did not deserve it. Please help me to cast out all my pride and anger so that I can forgive others from my heart.*

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## You were made for greatness

*It is true that God loves you “just the way you are,” but he loves you too much to let you stay that way. God wants to raise you to unimaginable heights of beauty and glory, and he will, but only if you allow him to.*



“Then shall your light break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing shall spring up speedily;  
your righteousness shall go before you,  
the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.  
Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;  
you shall cry, and he will say, Here I am.  
“If you take away from the midst of you the yoke,  
the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,  
if you pour yourself out for the hungry  
and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,  
then shall your light rise in the darkness  
and your gloom be as the noonday.  
And the Lord will guide you continually,  
and satisfy your desire with good things,  
and make your bones strong;  
and you shall be like a watered garden,  
like a spring of water,  
whose waters fail not.  
And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;  
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;  
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,  
the restorer of streets to dwell in.

(Isaiah 58:8–12)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I ever secretly feel that I am worthless, a fraud, good for nothing? Do I trust in God's promise that, if I cooperate freely with him, he will transform and fill me with his grace and goodness? What holds me back from saying "Yes" to him?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, even though my sins, faults, and limitations sometimes seem insurmountable, I trust in your goodness and mercy and know that you will fashion this lump of clay that I am into a vessel of grace that is pleasing to you and beneficial to others.*

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## Fight the good fight of faith

*There is an unseen war raging all around you—a titanic conflict between light and darkness, good and evil. As a baptized Christian, you must take your stand for good. Don't be afraid to fight, armed with the bright, strong, and sharp weapons of the Spirit.*



But as for you, man of God, shun all this; aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the presence of God who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ; and this will be made manifest at the proper time by the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

(1 Timothy 6:11–16)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I stand up for the truth when situations require me to do so, or do I shrink back in fear and silence?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, help me overcome my laziness and my fear of rejection and ridicule. Give me a spirit of calm, courageous boldness to fight the good fight with integrity and charity.*

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## Jesus Christ is true God

*Contemplate the awesome mystery of the Incarnation! In the person of Jesus Christ, God comes very near to us, becoming one of us, out of love for us.*



In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

( John 1:1–4, 14)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

How often do I reflect prayerfully on the fact that Jesus Christ is true God? Do I acknowledge with heartfelt gratitude and humility that, as God, he has a claim on my life? Do I live according to that truth?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I know that you love me and I firmly believe that you died for my sins to save me from damnation. Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior, have mercy on me a sinner!*

## Your sufferings are meritorious when offered to God

*So much suffering in this life goes to waste because people do not offer it up to God for their own purification and growth in holiness. Never allow your own suffering to be wasted. Give it all to God with love and trust.*



Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. Since we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, "I believed, and so I spoke," we too believe, and so we speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

(2 Corinthians 4:10–17)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I sometimes lose heart and become discouraged in the midst of my daily trials and suffering? What can I do today to offer up my sufferings to the Lord?

### CLOSING PRAYER



*Lord Jesus, you suffered long and intensely for my salvation. You know better than anyone suffering's immense value in the eyes of your Father. Teach me to imitate your meek and humble example when suffering comes my way.*

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## God does not cause evil and death; human sin does

*Many people make the mistake of blaming God for evil. “Why didn’t God make a world free from suffering and death?” they ask. They forget that that is precisely how he did create the world. We human beings are to blame for the problem of evil. Human sin wrecked the perfect world God created.*



Do not invite death by the error of your life, nor bring on destruction by the works of your hands; Because God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living. For he created all things so that they might exist; the generative forces of the world are wholesome, and there is no destructive poison in them, and the dominion of Hades is not on earth.

For righteousness is immortal. for God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of his own eternity, but through the devil’s envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his company experience it.

(Wisdom 1:13–15, 2:23–24)

Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned....

If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

(Romans 5:12, 17)

IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

These Bible passages can help me see reality more clearly if I should ever be tempted to blame God for evil in this world, or doubt his existence because he permits sickness, accidents, and death. Not only is he not to blame, he has provided the solution in his Son Jesus Christ!

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I believe and profess that you are all good and only want what is good for me. Help me never to lose my confidence in your love, even when trials, hardships, and suffering come my way.*

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## God won't permit temptations beyond your strength

*It is true that temptations come to all, but God will give you the graces you need to withstand them, if you ask him to and if you are willing to cooperate with his grace.*



We must not put the Lord to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents; nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

(1 Corinthians 10:9–13)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I put up a fight when temptations beset me, or do I give up quickly and surrender myself to them without a struggle? Do I rely on God's grace to conquer temptations, or am I conquered by them?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord. You know how often I give in to temptations, even minor ones, out of weakness. Help me conquer my appetites and lusts and my inordinate desire for earthly goods and pleasures. Help me remain strong when temptations flare up, trusting in you alone.*

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## Lift your eyes to the things above

*God made you for great things: glory, honor, and immortality! So why, instead of letting him purify you, do you continue to meander in your self-constructed maze of mediocrity, laziness, and complacency?*



If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you once walked, when you lived in them. But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all.

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

(Colossians 3:1–17)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

I know God wants to make me a saint, but that would require a great deal of hard work on my part. It's far easier to just stay wrapped up in my little cocoon of comfort, lethargy, and apathy. What will it take to jolt me awake to take action ... before it's too late?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, with a thankful heart, I ask you to help me shake off my cocoon of apathy and really begin striving to cooperate with your grace. Set my feet on the path of righteousness that leads to salvation, and never let me stray from it.*

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## Everything God creates is good

*When God created the cosmos and everything in it, he declared, “It is very good.” This shows that God loves all that he creates because he creates only good things. Christians must therefore avoid the heretical trap of “dualism” that regards spirit as good but despises matter as evil.*



Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, through the pretensions of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and enjoin abstinence from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving; for then it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

If you put these instructions before the brethren, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the faith and of the good doctrine which you have followed. Have nothing to do with godless and silly myths. Train yourself in godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance. For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

Command and teach these things.

(1 Timothy 4:1–11)

IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...



Do I place more importance on staying in shape physically than I do on training and strengthening my spiritual life? Do I reject or look with suspicion on the Church's Sacraments because I am inclined to think, deep down, that God does not impart grace through material things?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus Christ, your Incarnation is sufficient proof for me that you love material things. Grant me, therefore, a proper and well-ordered respect for the goodness of all that you have created, both spiritual and material.*

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## If you turn from your sins, you will live

*It is not God's will that anyone should perish in the state of mortal sin and thereby lose salvation. Those who remain faithful to his commandments will gain eternal life. Those who refuse to do so will be damned. There is no third option.*



“None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness which he has done he shall live. Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity and does the same abominable things that the wicked man does, shall he live? None of the righteous deeds which he has done shall be remembered; for the treachery of which he is guilty and the sin he has committed, he shall die.

“Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die for it; for the iniquity which he has committed he shall die. Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is lawful and right, he shall save his life. Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions which he had committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. Yet the house of Israel says, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ O house of Israel, are my ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just?

“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, says the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of any one, says the Lord God; so turn, and live.”

(Ezekiel 18:22–32)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Which type of person am I? Do I turn decisively away from sin, embracing God's mercy and forgiveness? Or do I obstinately persist in sin and rebellion?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I want to spend eternity with you in heaven! I believe in you, hope in you, adore you, and love you. Help me to remain ever faithful to you, from this very moment until you call me from this life. Never let me be separated from you by sin.*

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## The futility of idols

*Only a fool worships a creature instead of almighty God, the Creator of all.*



All worshipers of images are put to shame,  
who make their boast in worthless idols;  
all gods bow down before him.

Not to us, O Lord, not to us,  
but to thy name give glory,  
for the sake of thy steadfast love and thy faithfulness!  
Why should the nations say,  
“Where is their God?”  
Our God is in the heavens;  
he does whatever he pleases.  
Their idols are silver and gold,  
the work of men’s hands.  
They have mouths, but do not speak;  
eyes, but do not see.  
They have ears, but do not hear;  
noses, but do not smell.  
They have hands, but do not feel;  
feet, but do not walk;  
and they do not make a sound in their throat.  
Those who make them are like them;  
so are all who trust in them.  
O Israel, trust in the Lord!  
He is their help and their shield.

(Psalms 97:7, 115: 1–9)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Idolatry manifests itself in many forms: the worship of money, power, sexual pleasure, food and drink, sports, technology, and even other people. All of these are mere creatures! Why do I find myself falling down in adoration of these idols when I must worship God alone?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*O God, like the Israelites of old who succumbed to the sin of idolatry by worshipping the golden calf, I recognize in myself this weakness and confess my own tendency to idolize the things of this world. Smash all my idols, Lord. Free me from them forever!*

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## Bear one another's burdens

*The essence of the Christian life is loving God and loving our neighbor for the sake of God. And the essence of loving our neighbor is seeking to help him however we can, both spiritually and physically.*



Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if any one thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each man will have to bear his own load.

(Galatians 6:1–5)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I ignore the needs of those around me? Am I selfish, self-centered, and miserly when I see people who need my help? To what extent do I help others bear their burdens?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord God, with the help of your grace, I resolve to stop being selfish and to seek the good of my neighbor, doing what I can to help him bear his physical and spiritual burdens.*

## You belong to God

*If you wish to really know yourself, begin with the realization that you are a beloved child of God, created by him for eternal happiness. Everything else is subordinate to that.*



Little children, you are of God, and have overcome them; for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world, therefore what they say is of the world, and the world listens to them. We are of God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and he who is not of God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

(1 John 4:4–12)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Yes, I know I am a child of God, but do I really live like one? Do I relate to God as he really is, my loving Father, or do I ignore him except for when I need something?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*God my Father, you have shown me in so many ways how much you love me, beginning with giving me life. Please teach me how to love you*

*and seek you as I ought, empowered by your gracious gifts of faith, hope, and charity.*

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## Nothing can separate us from Christ

*No earthly suffering compares with the eternal love God has for you. Do not fear anything or anyone in this life that tries to dissuade you from loving God. Trust in him, for by his grace he will make you victorious over all your enemies, even death.*



What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written,

“For thy sake we are being killed all the day long;  
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Romans 8:31–39)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I really trust that no external force can separate me from the Lord?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, grant me the grace of standing firm in my commitment to you,  
come what may.*

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## God will never go back on his promise

*God can neither deceive nor be deceived. You can always trust him to be faithful to his promises, even though, if you forsake his grace, you may not be faithful to your promises.*



The saying is sure:  
If we have died with him, we shall  
also live with him;  
if we endure, we shall also reign  
with him;  
if we deny him, he also will deny us;  
if we are faithless, he remains  
faithful—  
for he cannot deny himself.

(2 Timothy 2:11–13)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

I should have a healthy fear of my own capacity to turn away from God through serious sin. If that should happen, may God forbid it, I can trust in his unwavering promise to forgive me if I turn to him with a contrite heart.

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I implore your grace and strength so that I may strive to be more like you in fidelity to the promises I make to you and to others.*

## If you have Christ, you have everything

*For those who truly love God, no price is too high, no distance is too far, no barrier is too strong to keep them away from him. But for those who do not love God, the slightest cost, the least distance, and the flimsiest barrier are sufficient to deter them.*



But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith; that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

(Philippians 3:7–11)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Why do I waste so much time and energy striving for passing trivialities in this life and so little time (if any at all) in pursuit of union with the Lord in this life to come? He alone is all that really matters.

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, help me always live up to my profession that I “count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing” you. Grant me the grace to live out this declaration by never letting anything or anyone prevent me from being united with you.*

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## Be generous in your giving

*Generosity is a sure sign of a magnanimous heart. As Saint Thomas Aquinas says, magnanimity is the “stretching forth of the mind to great things,” especially in one’s generous and honorable dealings with others.*



So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren to go on to you before me, and arrange in advance for this gift you have promised, so that it may be ready not as an exaction but as a willing gift.

The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. As it is written,

“He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor;  
his righteousness endures for ever.”

He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your resources and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for great generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God; for the rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God. Under the test of this service, you will glorify God by your obedience in acknowledging the gospel of Christ, and by the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others; while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God in you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

(2 Corinthians 9:5–15)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I generous with my time and money, or am I stingy and grudging when the Church or my neighbor ask me for help? Do I seek opportunities to do great things for others, or do I hang back, comfortable and alone, in my little bubble of selfishness?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, you do not desire from me grandiose and showy gestures. They would only puff up my pride. I ask you, rather, for the grace to be quietly and cheerfully generous with others, without fanfare, out of love for you.*

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## Keep yourself in the love of God

*Only God's grace can keep you from falling into heresy, dissension, dissent, division, and sinful activity. So stay very close to him through prayer and the sacraments and do your best to help those around you who may be wavering.*



But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; they said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.” It is these who set up divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And convince some, who doubt; save some, by snatching them out of the fire; on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and for ever. Amen.

( Jude 17–25)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I pay heed to scoffers and dissenters who flatter themselves by imagining that they know better than the Church what Christians should believe and not believe, practice and not practice? Worse yet, am I myself a dissenter?

### CLOSING PRAYER



*O Lord, preserve me in the unity of faith so that I may never be separated from the Church and from you by the folly of asserting my own preferences and desires over and against the teachings of the Church.*

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## Be strong in the face of temptations

*Temptations are common to all human beings. You are no exception to this rule. Therefore, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus Christ, who, through his own combat with temptation while fasting in the desert, shows how you can triumph over them.*



Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written,

‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’ ”

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written,

‘He will give his angels charge of you,’  
and

‘On their hands they will bear you up,  
lest you strike your foot against a stone.’ ”

Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’ ” Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Begone, Satan!

(Matthew 4:1–10)

IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I take the danger of temptations seriously, or am I foolishly overconfident, assuming I am “strong enough” to resist them without the benefit of prayer, penance, and the disciplining of my will?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus Christ, teach me to be strong and steadfast when temptations crowd around me demanding my surrender. Give me the grace to renounce Satan and all his deceitful works, pomps, and empty promises.*

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## The Beatitudes are the pattern for life in Christ Jesus

*If you desire to be like Jesus, strive to live out his teachings in the Beatitudes. Saint Augustine declares that they are the “perfect code of the Christian life ... as relates to the conduct of daily life.”*



Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.

(Matthew 5:1–12)

IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I ever spend time pondering the deeper meaning of the Beatitudes and how they apply to me personally? What might be stopping me from doing so right now?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, in your Sermon on the Mount, you preached this message to me personally as much as to anyone else. Help me, therefore, to see how I can faithfully put your teachings into practice in my daily life.*

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## Heed what you've learned about the Faith!

*Maintaining the purity of the Faith “once for all handed down” requires prayer and vigilance. Don't be seduced by passing theological fads and ideological fancies. Stand firm in your knowledge and love for Christ by adhering faithfully to Apostolic Tradition.*



Therefore we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will.

(Hebrews 2:1–4)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

How well do I really know my Faith? Do I study Sacred Scripture and the *Catechism* to widen and deepen my understanding of Church teaching? Do I dabble in reading or listening to false doctrines propagated by groups that attack the Church?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I praise and thank you for the gift of faith you have bestowed on me, and for the precious truths contained in your gospel that have been faithfully handed down to me from the Apostles. Protect and guide me with your grace to always be faithful to your doctrines.*

## Spiritual healing is better than physical healing

*In light of eternity, what good would a healthy body be if the soul were diseased with sin? As important as your bodily health is, it is not as important as your spiritual health. Don't neglect to take good care of either one.*



And when he returned to Caper'na-um after some days, it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak thus? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—"I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home." And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

(Mark 2:1–12)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

When my health and wellbeing are diminished, do I ask the Lord to heal me in body *and* spirit?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I want to be pure and strong in mind and body. I ask you, therefore, today and every day of my life, to grant me both bodily and spiritual strength and capacity to do your will.*

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## Forgiveness is not optional

*Jesus's teaching is clear: If in your anger you don't forgive others, you will not receive forgiveness from God. Hidden, unexpressed anger is bad enough. It is worse if you manifest anger by your facial expression. Worse yet is insulting someone out of anger.*



“You have heard that it was said to the men of old, ‘You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be liable to the hell of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison; truly, I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny.”

(Matthew 5:21–26)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

If I am honest with myself and with God, I must admit that I do harbor anger and resentment toward others. Sometimes, I show my anger in order to punish the one who makes me angry. I must repent of this sinful attitude and shameful treatment of others!

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, you know well the dark crevices of anger and resentment that lurk hidden in my heart. By your grace, illuminate and eliminate them all with*

*the light of your mercy and forgiveness. May I forgive everyone, just as I ask your forgiveness.*

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## Learn how to love even your enemies

*This is one of Christ's most radical and unexpected teachings. Forgiving one's enemies is a profoundly Christ-like act because it enables us (and our enemies) to break free from the prison of hostility and revenge created by enmity between persons.*



“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

(Matthew 5:43–48)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

I'm sad to say that, yes, I do have some enemies and I wish that it were not so. Am I willing to follow Christ's teaching and forgive them from my heart?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, just as you cried out from the Cross, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do,” teach me to forgive my enemies and to pray for their wellbeing in this life and their salvation in the life to come.*

## Glorify God in your body, not yourself

*Ours is a thoroughly narcissistic generation. The twin follies of vanity and “body worship” are nothing new, but they have plummeted recently to new lows of degradation and depravity. Shun these things for they are utterly antithetical to the gospel of Jesus Christ.*



I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

(Romans 12:1–2)

“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be enslaved by anything. “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two shall become one.” But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

(1 Corinthians 6:9–20)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I guilty of the sins of vanity, self-admiration, and narcissism regarding my body and personal appearance? Am I guilty of the lust of the eyes (i.e., ogling attractive people for pleasure), using pornography, or objectifying my own body or the bodies of others as objects of sensual idolatry?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*My God, I want to be free from vanity, narcissism, and lust! Grant me the grace to chastely and modestly respect my body as the temple of the Holy Spirit that it is.*

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## Christ is supreme above all things

*It is a profound mystery that, at the Incarnation, God became man. Jesus Christ is true God and true man. According to his divine nature, Christ created the cosmos, and according to his human nature, he is supreme above all creatures.*



He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent. For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him.

(Colossians 1:15–22)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

How does my belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ affect how I live my life? Do I properly reverence and give thanks for the fact that he died for *my* salvation?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, as I ponder the mystery of your Incarnation and the fact that you were willing to suffer and die to save an unworthy sinner like me, I praise*

*and thank you with all my heart. Help me, Lord, to live my life worthy of this precious gift you have given me.*

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## Remain in God's grace and kindness

*God will be faithful to his promise of salvation for those who love and obey him, but it is certainly possible that they can be unfaithful to him and fall away from his grace.*



Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in order to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? If the dough offered as first fruits is holy, so is the whole lump; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the richness of the olive tree, do not boast over the branches. If you do boast, remember it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you. You will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast only through faith. So do not become proud, but stand in awe. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off. And even the others, if they do not persist in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. For if you have been cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree.

(Romans 11:13–24)



## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I serious about striving to remain in God's grace? Do I "cut corners" and make excuses for my sinful activity thinking that God won't really care about those things?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I know I am unworthy of your great gift of salvation. So please give me the graces I need each day to remain in your grace. Never let me fall away from you through sin.*

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## The cost of following Jesus

*Don't be surprised when you encounter opposition, even anger, from others because of your belief in Jesus Christ. Stand firm and do not waver.*



“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to councils, and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you up, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will deliver up brother to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; and you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel, before the Son of man comes.

“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.”

(Matthew 10:16–24)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I willing to suffer, if necessary, for my Christian convictions? Do I take seriously Christ’s teaching that I must be ready and willing to speak the truth in the face of opposition?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I am often weak and afraid when challenges arise and when I encounter hostility toward you and the Church. I believe and trust in your promise that you will come to my assistance with the words I should say if and when the time comes.*

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## God cares about the little things in life

*Yes, even the seemingly insignificant things you say and do are important in God's eyes, which is why they should be important to you, too.*



“Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! how can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

(Matthew 12:33–37)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

How often “careless words” come out of my mouth each day! And what about my careless thoughts and deeds? Do I take to heart Christ's teaching that even small things are meaningful to Him? Will I work on keeping my words and deeds pure and godly?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O my God, in the words of St. Thérèse, I offer you all my actions of this day. I desire to sanctify every beat of my heart, my every thought, my simplest words and works, by uniting them to you.*

## You are the sower of seed

*You will never know in this life what good you will do for others by your good example, a word of friendly encouragement, and speaking the truth, even if only in passing. In heaven, all will be revealed. So, in the meantime, be diligent in doing these things each day.*



That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat there; and the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they had not much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched; and since they had no root they withered away. Other seeds fell upon thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear.” ...

“Hear then the parable of the sower. When any one hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in his heart; this is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is he who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the delight in riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. As for what was sown on good soil, this is he who hears the word and understands it; he indeed bears fruit, and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

(Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I go about my day self-absorbed, distracted, and without a thought for how I can help those around me get to heaven? I must resolve to daily seek opportunities to do good for others and then act on them.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, use me to spread the truth of your gospel to those around me. Give me the right words to say and help me to know when it is the right time to say them. Thank you for allowing me to assist you in your efforts to bring souls to heaven.*

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## Earthly wealth can be hazardous to your spiritual health

*The wealth of this world is nothing compared to the riches that the blessed in heaven will enjoy.*



And Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly, I say to you, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” When the disciples heard this they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” But Jesus looked at them and said to them, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” Then Peter said in reply, “Lo, we have left everything and followed you. What then shall we have?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.”

(Matthew 19:23–29)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I more concerned about accumulating money and possessions than I am about laying up treasure in heaven. Am I greedy? How can I be more generous with God and my neighbor?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, never let me make false gods out of my money and possessions.  
Keep me close to you with a poverty of spirit that sees earthly wealth as of  
little real importance, fleeting, and only truly good for me if I make use of it  
wisely and for your greater glory and honor.*

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## The Church always has both good and bad members

*Your heart is a microcosm of the wheat and tares in the Church. Your love for God, tepid as it often is, co-exists alongside your sins. One subtlety in this parable is that the tares (darnel) look nearly identical to wheat, making them practically indistinguishable from each other. Ponder that.*



Another parable he put before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the householder came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then has it weeds?’ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ But he said, ‘No; lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’ ” ...

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” He answered, “He who sows the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world, and the good seed means the sons of the kingdom; the weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. The Son of man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there

men will weep and gnash their teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.”

(Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I carp and complain about all the “bad Catholics” I see in the Church and yet make excuses for myself? Do I assume bad motives of others? Do I judge their hearts?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, you know my heart, and you know that I love you. You also know how weak and sinful I am. As I reflect on your parable of the wheat and the tares, I pray that you would give me ears to hear.*

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## Keep God’s commands before your own “traditions”

*God wants you to be faithful to his teachings, not your own personal whims and preferences as to how you think things “ought to be.” Come to the Lord on his terms and never foolishly imagine you can demand that he come to you on yours.*



Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, “Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat.” He answered them, “And why do you transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him surely die.’ But you say, ‘If any one tells his father or his mother, What you would have gained from me is given to God, he need not honor his father.’ So, for the sake of your tradition, you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said:

‘This people honors me with their lips,  
but their heart is far from me;  
in vain do they worship me,  
teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’ ”

(Matthew 15:1–9)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I seek to impose my own private opinions on the Church, on my fellow Christians? Do I insist on doing things my way in the Church or am I

humble and teachable and attentive to Christ who teaches through the Church?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, never let me be so foolish as to imagine that I can sit in judgment over the Church and decree what I will and will not accept. Help me be faithful and attentive to your teachings rather than my own fancies and preferences.*

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## God is love

*These three words contain an infinite truth about who God is and why he created the cosmos. Our weak, finite minds struggle to comprehend this, even though we see evidence of his love all around us. God asks simply that we respond to his love with love.*



Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because he first loved us. If any one says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also.

(1 John 4:7–21)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

God certainly did not “need” to create me, but he *did* create me because he loves me and wants me to be happy with him. How have I responded to his love?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Thank you for loving me, O Lord. Thank you for giving me the precious gift of freedom to love you in return. I beg you to stay close to me with your grace so that my love for you will never grow cold through sin or apathy.*

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# Heaven is more valuable than any earthly gain

*The popular saying, “You can have it all!” is only true for those who love God and go to heaven.*



Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life? For the Son of man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay every man for what he has done. Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.”

(Matthew 16:24–28)

## IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I willing to follow Christ, even if it means suffering? Am I willing to embrace my cross so that I can share in his Resurrection?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I want to save my life! Let me follow you always, all the way into eternal life.*

## Set your sights on God, not the world

*If you want to live in the light of God's saving truth, you must stay out of the darkness of sin. If you want to be saved, do his will in faith and obedience.*



Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new commandment, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in the darkness still. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and in it there is no cause for stumbling. But he who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides for ever.

(1 John 2:7–17)



## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Does my life show that I live in the light, or am I still cowering in the shadows of sin even though I outwardly identify myself as belonging to Christ?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, illuminate me with the light of your truth. Open my eyes that I may see you. Give me a heart overflowing with love that I may love my brother as you want me to.*

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## Jesus prefigures Confession by healing the Leper

*Sin, especially mortal sin, can be compared to a disfiguring, contagious, bodily disease. If you desire to be healed, you must go directly to God in humble repentance. And then, as Christ commands, in the sacrament of Confession, you “show yourself to the priest” and receive sacramental absolution.*



And a leper came to him beseeching him, and kneeling said to him, “If you will, you can make me clean.” Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, “I will; be clean.” And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. And he sternly charged him, and sent him away at once, and said to him, “See that you say nothing to any one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to the people.” But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

(Mark 1:40–45)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

I know I am a sinner, but am I *truly* sorry for my sins? Do I honestly acknowledge my need for God’s healing forgiveness? How long has it been since my last Confession?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended thee, and I detest all my sins because of thy just punishment, but most of all because I have offended thee, my God, who art all good and deserving of all my love, I firmly resolve with the help of thy grace to sin no more and avoid the near occasions of sin. Amen.*

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## Defend the Faith with charity and prudence

*Defending the Faith is an important part of the Christian life. Remember, though, some who challenge your beliefs aren't really interested in an answer. They just want to argue.*



If any one purifies himself from what is ignoble, then he will be a vessel for noble use, consecrated and useful to the master of the house, ready for any good work. So shun youthful passions and aim at righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call upon the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with stupid, senseless controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to every one, an apt teacher, forbearing, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth, and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

(2 Timothy 2:21–26)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I respond to questions and challenges about my Faith in Christ with anger or impatience? Am I aware that if the only tool I have is a hammer, I will tend to approach every problem as if it were a nail?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I know there are times when I should speak up in defense of the truth of your teachings. Please grant me the courage to respond gracefully when I should and the wisdom to know when not to get involved in what would become a senseless quarrel.*

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## On those unwilling to receive the truth

*Not everyone is willing to listen to the truth of Jesus Christ. So, do the best you can in sharing and explaining your Faith, but do not become disturbed or discouraged if someone rejects your message. Pray for him or her and keep moving forward.*



He went away from there and came to his own country; and his disciples followed him. And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue; and many who heard him were astonished, saying, “Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to him? What mighty works are wrought by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. And Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.” And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief.

And he went about among the villages teaching.

(Mark 6:1–6)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Some people, including some of his own relatives, would not believe or even listen to Jesus when he preached to them. Why should I expect that everyone will always listen to me?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, my own heart is a mystery to me. How could I ever even begin to understand someone else’s heart? Teach me, therefore, to be at peace even*

*when someone will not listen to my words about you.*

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# The devil will tempt you, but he can't *make* you

*It is true; the devil will try every trick in the book to cause you to sin. But he cannot force you to sin. Only you have that power.*



Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.

(Genesis 3:1–7)

## IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I spiritually alert enough to recognize when the evil one is trying to tempt me to sin against God? When I see the warning signs of temptation, what do I do? Do I negotiate with the enemy or turn immediately and decisively away from the temptation?

## CLOSING PRAYER



*Lord, I know that, left to myself, I am exceedingly weak in the face of temptations. But with your grace, I can stand fast. O God, come to my aid! O Lord, make haste to help me!*

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## Crucify your carnal passions

*Your road to resurrection and eternal life leads through Calvary. It is there, on Golgotha, that you must renounce your sins and put to death your carnal passions and appetites. Only then will you be worthy of the crown of glory that awaits all who love Christ.*



Now the works of the flesh are plain: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us have no self-conceit, no provoking of one another, no envy of one another.

(Galatians 5:19–26)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Have I firmly and irrevocably turned my back on sins of the flesh, asking the Lord to crucify my passions so as to share in his Resurrection?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Look down upon me from the Cross, good and gentle Jesus, while before you I humbly kneel and, with burning soul, pray and beseech you to fix deep in my heart lively sentiments of faith, hope, and charity; true contrition for my sins, and a firm purpose of amendment.*

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## All nature proclaims the greatness of God

*To know that God exists and that he is good, all one need do is contemplate the majestic beauty and order of the cosmos. He made all this for us, out of love.*



When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,  
the moon and the stars which thou hast established;  
what is man that thou art mindful of him,  
and the son of man that thou dost care for him?  
Yet thou hast made him little less than God,  
and dost crown him with glory and honor.  
Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands;  
thou hast put all things under his feet,  
all sheep and oxen,  
and also the beasts of the field,  
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,  
whatever passes along the paths of the sea.  
O Lord, our Lord,  
how majestic is thy name in all the earth!

(Psalm 8:3–9)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I ever spend time gratefully reflecting upon the mighty works of God that surround me in the natural order? Do I truly value his creation? Am I a prudent steward of the resources he has entrusted to me?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I praise and thank you for the awesome beauty with which you have imbued your creation. As the moon reflects the light of the sun, the cosmos reflects your glory and goodness. Give me wisdom to properly care for my little portion of your creation.*

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## Make the most of your time by avoiding idleness

*For the Christian, there is no time to waste. The timespan of your earthly life, whether long or brief, is a precious gift from God, and you must make the best possible use of it. You will eventually have to render an account of your life to him.*



Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

But immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is fitting among saints. Let there be no filthiness, nor silly talk, nor levity, which are not fitting; but instead let there be thanksgiving. Be sure of this, that no immoral or impure man, or one who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for it is because of these things that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not associate with them, for once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.

(Ephesians 5:1–11, 15–20)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

How well am I spending the time God has given me in this life? Do I squander my time with frivolous or, worse yet, sinful activities? Am I sincerely trying to know and do what is pleasing to the Lord?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*My God, here and now, I commit to making worthy use of the time you give me. I repent of having squandered so much time and for neglecting the countless opportunities for grace that you offered to me. Forgive me, Lord, and help me remain faithful to this commitment.*

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# God knows the secrets of your heart better than you

*Nothing is hidden from God's sight. Not even those things you did when no one was looking.*



Thou hast set our iniquities before thee,  
 our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.  
 O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me!  
 Thou knowest when I sit down and when I rise up;  
 thou discernest my thoughts from afar.  
 Thou searchest out my path and my lying down,  
 and art acquainted with all my ways.  
 Even before a word is on my tongue,  
 lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.  
 Thou dost beset me behind and before,  
 and layest thy hand upon me.  
 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
 it is high, I cannot attain it.  
 Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?  
 Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?  
 If I ascend to heaven, thou art there!  
 If I make my bed in Sheol, thou art there!  
 If I take the wings of the morning  
 and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,  
 even there thy hand shall lead me,  
 and thy right hand shall hold me.  
 If I say, "Let only darkness cover me,  
 and the light about me be night,"  
 even the darkness is not dark to thee,  
 the night is bright as the day;



for darkness is as light with thee.

(Psalm 90:8, 139:1–12)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Why do I imagine that I can keep secrets from God? When I am tempted to think and do things that I know are displeasing to him, I should remind myself that he sees everything. He wants me to live my life entirely in the light of his grace.

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Glory, honor, and praise be to you, O Lord, for you know everything! There is nothing that escapes your gaze. I pray that every recess of my heart, however hidden it might seem, will be fully and eternally illuminated by the light of your truth.*

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## There is only one God

*Monotheism is the very heart of Christianity. The doctrine of the Blessed Trinity does not mean “three Gods.” It means “One God in three Persons.” The difference is not mere semantics. There is only one God.*



I am the Lord, and there is no other,  
besides me there is no God;  
I gird you, though you do not know me,  
that men may know, from the rising of the sun  
and from the west, that there is none besides me;  
I am the Lord, and there is no other.

For thus says the Lord,  
who created the heavens  
(he is God!),  
who formed the earth and made it  
(he established it;  
he did not create it a chaos,  
he formed it to be inhabited!):  
“I am the Lord, and there is no other.  
I did not speak in secret,  
in a land of darkness;  
I did not say to the offspring of Jacob,  
‘Seek me in chaos.’  
I the Lord speak the truth,  
I declare what is right.  
“Assemble yourselves and come,  
draw near together,  
you survivors of the nations!  
They have no knowledge  
who carry about their wooden idols,

and keep on praying to a god  
that cannot save.  
Declare and present your case;  
let them take counsel together!  
Who told this long ago?  
Who declared it of old?  
Was it not I, the Lord?  
And there is no other god besides me,  
a righteous God and a Savior;  
there is none besides me.

(Isaiah 45:5–6, 18–21)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I seek, as best I can, to penetrate deeper into the glorious mystery that there is only one God who has revealed himself in the divine Persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I believe that you are one God, not three. Enlighten the darkness of my mind to more clearly understand this august truth about you as I praise you saying, “O most Holy Trinity, undivided unity; holy God, mighty God, God immortal, be adored.”*

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## Those who suffer with Christ will be glorified with him

*Christ died for you so that you might live with him forever in heaven.*



What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

(Romans 6:1–11)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Through the sacrament of Baptism, I share in Christ's death and Resurrection. Do I live as if I am truly dead to sin or do I still cling to my "old self" and its sinful habits and tendencies?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.*

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## The Lord will give rest to the weary

*Take the Lord at his word. Ask him to give you rest from your burdens.*



“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

(Matthew 11:28–30)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

I am busy and weighed down with many cares and struggles in this life. Why do I insist on trying to shoulder these heavy burdens on my own? Why don’t I turn to Jesus and ask him to help me carry them?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I truly want the peace and rest which you promise to those who love you. Please give them to me. I offer to you all those things in my life that weigh me down. Replace them, Lord, with your easy yoke.*

## Christ wants you to have abundant life

*Why do you insist on settling for scraps when God desires to feed you with a magnificent banquet? Follow the Good Shepherd and you will never go astray or go hungry or go without the many gifts he wants to lavish upon you, if only you would let him.*



“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber; but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens; the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” This figure Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not heed them. I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd.

( John 10:1–16)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

I belong to the Lord. When I hear his voice calling me, do I respond and follow him? Or do I listen instead to the clamoring voices of thieves, robbers, strangers, and hirelings who beckon me away from him?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Christ the Good Shepherd, I want always to be close to you. Never let me stray away from the flock for whom you laid down your life.*

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## The righteous will be vindicated

*You cannot have one foot in the world and the other in the kingdom of Christ. It's all or nothing.*



Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

(1 Corinthians 6:9–11)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Even though I outwardly profess my love of God, is it an inward reality in me? Do my thoughts, words, and deeds truly reflect my new life in Christ, or am I still secretly mired in the mud of immorality?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I recommit myself entirely to you now, with nothing held back. I know it is all or nothing. I want all of you and nothing to do with sin.*

## Walk in the light of God's grace

*It is not enough simply to profess your faith in Christ. By his grace, you must live out that faith, obeying his teachings and keeping his commandments.*



This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He who says “I know him” but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps his word, in him truly love for God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him: he who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

(1 John 1:5–10, 2:1–6)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Which am I? One who claims to follow Christ but does not keep his commandments? Or do I cooperate with God's grace through works of

obedience, as he exhorts me to?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Help me, Lord, to be a true follower of yours, not just in name only, but in my deeds. Let my life show that I am walking in the way that you walked.*

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## Beware of presumption

*Never assume that just because you are outwardly “religious” you are therefore right with God. You must bear good fruit.*



But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit that befits repentance, and do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

(Matthew 3:7–12)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

What good fruit is present in my own life to indicate that I am truly following Christ?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, help me to be authentic and unwavering in my commitment to you. By your grace, I will strive to be wheat, not chaff.*

## This is God's plan for you

*God only wills what is the absolute best for each of us. His will for you, therefore, is nothing less than unimaginable glory, holiness, and happiness. This reward of salvation through Christ Jesus is his free gift to those who love and obey him.*



To the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us. For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory. In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

(Ephesians 1:1b–14)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I cooperating with God's grace so that he can accomplish his will for me? Do I take seriously and with deep gratitude the fact that God loves me so much that he wants to give me ineffable blessings and exaltation in heaven?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, your lofty plan for me is wondrous in its splendor! I thank you and praise you and ask you to help me be worthy of your love.*

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## Faith alone, apart from works, cannot save you

*The only place in the Bible where the words “faith alone” appear is in this passage, wherein we are reminded that our justification before God is not by faith alone. Rather, as Jesus himself taught, our good works, done in grace, have a role in our ongoing justification.*



What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead....

Do you want to be shown, you foolish fellow, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works, and the scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness”; and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead.

( James 2:14–17, 20–26)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

The Bible is clear that faith alone cannot save me, nor can my works save me. Am I living out the biblical teaching that, once God’s grace has

been poured out into my soul, my obedience of faith (i.e., “faith working in love”) is what is necessary for salvation?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, teach me to live out my faith in you through obedience to your commandments. Let me never trust vainly in my own efforts, which cannot save me, nor presume that you will save me apart from my cooperation with your grace.*

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## Do not be overly perplexed by earthly suffering

*Look beyond the outward appearances of the trials that beset you in this life, especially when you are persecuted, whether subtly or overtly, for your faith in Christ. There is a profoundly important and beneficial meaning to such sufferings.*



Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a wrongdoer, or a mischiefmaker; yet if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God. For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? And

“If the righteous man is scarcely saved, where will the impious and sinner appear?”

Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will do right and entrust their souls to a faithful Creator.

(1 Peter 4:12–19)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I quickly become discouraged when I encounter opposition to my Faith? Do I shrink back from living and proclaiming the truth out of fear of

rejection, ridicule, or persecution?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Almighty God, I love you, and my only desire is to love you until the end of my life.... I love you my divine Redeemer because you were crucified for me. I love you my God because you keep me here on earth crucified for you. Please God, let me die loving you.*

(St. John Vianney (1786–1859)).

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# Behold the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin

*The human race contracted the deadly malaria of sin, not through the bite of a mosquito, but through the bite of an apple.*



“Because you have done this,  
 cursed are you above all cattle,  
 and above all wild animals;  
 upon your belly you shall go,  
 and dust you shall eat  
 all the days of your life.  
 I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
 and between your seed and her seed;  
 he shall bruise your head,  
 and you shall bruise his heel.”

To the woman he said,  
 “I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing;  
 in pain you shall bring forth children,  
 yet your desire shall be for your husband,  
 and he shall rule over you.”

And to Adam he said,  
 “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,  
 and have eaten of the tree  
 of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’  
 cursed is the ground because of you;  
 in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;  
 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you;  
 and you shall eat the plants of the field.  
 In the sweat of your face  
 you shall eat bread

till you return to the ground,  
for out of it you were taken;  
you are dust,  
and to dust you shall return.”

(Genesis 14–19)

## IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Sin and death entered the world because of Adam’s sin. But out of love for me, in the fullness of time, the Father sent his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to liberate me from sin and death by *his* death on the Cross.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, through the intercession of your mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the “woman” who brought you forth to crush the head of the serpent, I ask for pardon for my sins, peace of soul, and a holy willingness to patiently endure the effects of my sins until all is made new in heaven.*

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*The Old Covenant priests who offered ritual animal sacrifices in the Temple merely foreshadowed and pointed toward the perfect and unique priesthood of Jesus Christ.*

## Jesus Christ is our eternal High Priest



Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was.

So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,

“Thou art my Son,  
today I have begotten thee”;  
as he says also in another place,  
“Thou art a priest for ever,  
after the order of Melchiz´edek.”

(Hebrews 4:14–16, 5:1–6)

IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Because of Christ's perfect sacrifice on the Cross, I can now approach the Father in perfect confidence. But how often do I really act on this truth?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus Christ, my redeemer, savior, and high priest, deal gently with me, I pray, for I am ignorant and wayward. Have mercy on me, a sinner.*

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## Remember the Ten Commandments of God

*God gave us the Ten Commandments to help, not hinder us. As human history proves, obedience to these fundamental teachings brings happiness, peace, and fulfillment. Disobedience to them leads to anguish, strife, and chaos.*



And behold, one came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?” And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? One there is who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” He said to him, “Which?” And Jesus said, “You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The young man said to him, “All these I have observed; what do I still lack?” Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.

(Matthew 19:16–22)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

The code of moral behavior enjoined on me by the Ten Commandments is simple but not easy. In fact, without God’s grace, no one can perfectly fulfill these important duties. Do I call upon the Lord for his help as I seek to follow the Ten Commandments?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I repent of all the ways in which I have transgressed your commandments. Give me the strength of your grace to ever more faithfully*

*live my life according to them.*

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## Put on the whole armor of God

*No good general would send his troops into battle without weapons and protective gear. Neither does God send you forth to “fight the good fight” against the world, the flesh, and the devil, without equipping you with the bright, hard weapons and armor you need.*



Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that utterance may be given me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

(Ephesians 6:10–20)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

The Lord has provided me with a powerful array of weaponry and protection for the spiritual battles in which I must engage in this life. Have I

made good use of them? Have I made any use of them?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I thank you for equipping me to open my mouth and proclaim your truth. Protect me, I beg you, from all spiritual adversaries, and enable me to speak out as I ought.*

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## Let the peace of Christ reign in your heart

*Just as you will draw more flies with honey than with vinegar, you will draw innumerable more souls to God by kindness and compassion than by sternness and severity.*



Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

(Colossians 3:12–17)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I kind, compassionate, and considerate of others, or am I harsh and judgmental? Am I quick to forgive, or do I hold grudges? Does Christ's teaching to "love one another" truly dwell in my heart, or is it just a slogan for me?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, how unworthy I am of the countless kindnesses and blessings you have bestowed on me. Though I often neglect you and forget you, you never*

*cease to foster my physical and spiritual wellbeing. Teach me to show love to others as you have shown it to me.*

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# The mystery of God's love is revealed in Jesus

*Jesus Christ reveals the love of the Father to us. And he perfectly models how we are to reveal God's love to those around us.*



For I want you to know how greatly I strive for you, and for those at La-odice´a, and for all who have not seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged as they are knit together in love, to have all the riches of assured understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this in order that no one may delude you with beguiling speech. For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so live in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

(Colossians 2:1–7)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Is my life in good order? Am I standing firm in my faith in Jesus Christ? If not, why not?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Father, I thank you and praise you for the treasure of wisdom and grace you have bestowed on your Church through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let me never be swayed or deluded by the beguiling speech of those who do not know you and who seek to draw me away from you.*

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## God's promise is your steadfast anchor

*The one constant in this world is change. Empires rise and fall. Fads and fashions are de rigueur one day and discarded the next. Good health and possessions come and go. Seemingly permanent friendships suddenly dissolve. God alone never changes. Trust in him and you will not be disappointed.*



For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchiz’edek.

(Hebrews 6:13–20)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Have I set myself up for inevitable disillusionment by assuming that my possessions, friends, and health will always be there? Or do I instead put my faith in God and his unshakeable promises?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, you are my rock and my salvation, my refuge and my steadfast anchor. I renew my faith in you, now and for the rest of my life.*

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## A warning of God's judgment on evildoers

*Have nothing to do with the works of iniquity and those who work them.*



These men in their dreamings defile the flesh, reject authority, and revile the glorious ones. But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.” But these men revile whatever they do not understand, and by those things that they know by instinct as irrational animals do, they are destroyed. Woe to them! For they walk in the way of Cain, and abandon themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam’s error, and perish in Korah’s rebellion. These are blemishes on your love feasts, as they boldly carouse together, looking after themselves; waterless clouds, carried along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars for whom the nether gloom of darkness has been reserved for ever.

It was of these also that Enoch in the seventh generation from Adam prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord came with his holy myriads, to execute judgment on all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness which they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own passions, loud-mouthed boasters, flattering people to gain advantage.

(Jude 8–16)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I careful to avoid people, places, and things that I know are occasions of sin for me? Do I maintain worthless or immoral friendships

with those who are dragging me down into the darkness? Do I take God's warning seriously regarding what will become of those who stubbornly rebel against the truth?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, you know that I am a sinner in grievous need of your mercy and grace. I must not judge anyone's heart, though I must judge whether people's outward actions are safe or spiritually injurious to me. Guard me from the danger of bad friendships.*

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## Apart from the Lord, you can do nothing

*The only way you can be spiritually alive and fruitful is to be united with Jesus Christ.*



“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.”

( John 15:1–8)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

If I do not see much good fruit in my life, very likely it is because I have at best a tenuous connection to the Lord. If my love for him is weak, my capacity for accomplishing good will likewise be weak. What am I doing each day to strengthen my union with him?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, you know how often I am sluggish and inattentive to your will for my life. You know I am weak and fickle. Do not prune my branch off your*

*vine! Grant me mercy and grace that I might become a healthy, flourishing branch bearing an abundance of good fruit.*

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## Don't be a "Doubting Thomas"—have faith

*Christianity is based on faith in the person, work, and teachings of Jesus Christ, but by no means is it a blind faith. There are reasons to believe.*



Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe."

Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.

( John 20:24–29)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I a "Doubting Thomas" who first demands empirical proof of divine revelation before I will deign to believe it? Or does Saint Anselm's motto, "*fides querens intellectum*" (faith seeking understanding), better describe me?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I believe, I believe! Help thou my unbelief!*

## If your hope is in God, you will not be disappointed

*There is no greater proof of God's enduring love for you than that he died for you, while you were yet a sinner.*



Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

While we were yet helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man—though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

(Romans 5:1–9)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I willing to endure and offer up my mundane daily trials and sufferings in a loving and grateful response to the supreme sacrifice which Christ made for me (especially in light of the fact that I utterly do not deserve what he did for me)?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I pray in the words of your servant, Saint Ignatius of Antioch (d. AD 107): “Let fire and the cross; let the crowds of wild beasts; let tearings, breakings, and dislocations of bones; let cutting off of members; let shatterings of the whole body; and let all the dreadful torments of the devil come upon me: only let me attain to Jesus Christ!”*

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## Keep your eyes on the Cross!

*“Keep your eyes on the crucifix; for Jesus without the Cross is a man without a mission and the Cross without Jesus is a burden without a reliever.” (Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, 1895–1979)*



For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
and the cleverness of the clever I will thwart.”

Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles.

When I came to you, brethren, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

(1 Corinthians 1:18–23, 2:1–2)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I take the importance of Christ’s death on the Cross seriously? How do I show my gratitude for his great gift of redemption which came at such a high price?

### CLOSING PRAYER



*Lord Jesus, though your crucifixion may be “folly” to some and a stumbling block to others, grant, I pray, that by your grace I may always be firm and courageous in proclaiming to others the saving power of your sacrifice on the Cross.*

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## Your opportunities for repentance are not unlimited

*Don't fall into the trap of imagining that you have all the time in the world to get your relationship with God in order. You don't. This life passes quickly, and you have no way of knowing when yours will end. So, don't delay—act now!*



“Seek the Lord while he may be found,  
 call upon him while he is near;  
 let the wicked forsake his way,  
 and the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
 let him return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on him,  
 and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.  
 For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
 neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord.  
 For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
 so are my ways higher than your ways  
 and my thoughts than your thoughts.

(Isaiah 55:6–9)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

How often (if at all) do I prayerfully prepare for death? Since God's ways are far above my ways, and he is urging me to seek him while he may be found, am I answering his call to decisive action or am I stuck in laziness and procrastination?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, even if you grant me a long life, I know my time is short. Help me begin preparing now for that day when you call me forth into eternity. Let me seek you, Lord, with all my heart! Keep me from backsliding into my tendency to dawdle and delay.*

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## Sin brings death, but Jesus Christ brings life

*By his sin, the first Adam opened into the world the floodgates of death. But the second Adam, Jesus Christ, has conquered death through his perfect obedience to the will of the Father. He pours out an inexhaustible ocean of mercy and grace to all who will accept it.*



Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned—sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come....

Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous. Law came in, to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Romans 5:12–14, 18–19)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Which path am I on? The wide and well-travelled boulevard of sin and rebellion which leads to condemnation? Or the narrow and difficult path that leads to life, light, and salvation?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I want to live! I reject sin and the devil and all his false, death-dealing promises. I believe in you, Lord Jesus, and profess my faith in your saving promises.*

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## Be a faithful soldier of Christ

*You belong to the Lord. Don't allow yourself to become distracted and sidetracked from those things that really matter—your love of God and pursuit of holiness. Become holy or die trying.*



You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Take your share of suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will grant you understanding in everything.

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David, as preached in my gospel, the gospel for which I am suffering and wearing fetters like a criminal. But the word of God is not fettered. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which in Christ Jesus goes with eternal glory.

(2 Timothy 2:1–10)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

The Bible refers to Christians as “soldiers” of Christ Jesus. How well or poorly am I measuring up to that honor he has given me?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, give me the courageous and stout heart of a dedicated soldier. By your grace, enable me to suffer willingly whatever difficulties might come*

*my way in your service and, above all, grant that I may obtain the glorious salvation you have promised to those who love you.*

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## Those united to Christ have new life

*You cannot live in two worlds, one of sin and disobedience and the other of grace and virtue. Put away your former self and live completely in the light of God's grace.*



What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

(Romans 6:1–4)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I fully and wholeheartedly committed to living for God and for the things of God? Or do I, out of apathy or unwillingness to give up my vices, allow my heart to be divided between God and the world?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, help me to put away my old self and live only for you. Even though I am weak and prone to falling back into sin, I know your grace is more powerful than my sins. I ask you, Lord, to save me from myself. Draw me upward into the light and peace of your grace.*



# Salvation comes from God's grace, not human effort

*Simply put: you cannot save yourself. Never forget that.*



For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

(Ephesians 2:8–10)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I imagine I can somehow “bargain” with God for my salvation? Do I foolishly think my own efforts “obligate” God to save me? Or do I recognize that he saves me by grace alone and that both my faith and my good works are themselves gifts of his grace?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I place my trust completely in your grace, for you alone can save me. I acknowledge with humble gratitude that it is your gift of grace alone that makes my faith and my obedience fruitful and meritorious in your eyes.*

## You must choose whether to worship God or idols

*Scrutinize your heart honestly and you will discover the idols you have enshrined there. Overthrow them! You are the temple of the Holy Spirit. There can be no room for false gods within you.*



Then the people answered, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods; for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, and who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; and the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land; therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God.”

But Joshua said to the people, “You cannot serve the Lord; for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm, and consume you, after having done you good.” And the people said to Joshua, “Nay; but we will serve the Lord.” Then Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.” He said, “Then put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord, the God of Israel.” And the people said to Joshua, “The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey.” So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a great stone, and set it up there under the oak in the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said to all the people, “Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us; for it has heard all the words of the Lord which he spoke

to us; therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God.” So Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance.

( Joshua 24:16–28)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

What people, pleasures, and things have I allowed, even if only subtly, to become idols in my life? Have I really and truly chosen to serve the Lord and him alone? If not, what is holding me back from making that commitment this very moment?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, far be it from me that I should forsake you, to serve other gods; for you are my Lord and my God. By your grace, I will forsake all idols and love you alone.*

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## God will judge everyone according to their works

*What you do in this life, both good and evil, will be repaid by God in the life to come.*



Or do you presume upon the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. For he will render to every man according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are factious and do not obey the truth, but obey wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for every one who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality.

All who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.

(Romans 2:4–13)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I striving to lay up treasure in heaven by following Christ's command to do good works out of love for God? Or am I one of those Christians-in-name-only whose life is bereft of good works? If I were to die today, how would God judge me?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, I know my good works cannot “earn” my salvation. You give me that precious free gift by your grace alone. But I also know that I need to cooperate with your grace by living out my obedience of faith. Grant me the grace to do so, now and always.*

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## Those who fall away from the truth face judgment

*Do not imagine that those who spurn God's grace can live as they wish without paying a terrible price in the end.*



For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries. A man who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy at the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace?

(Hebrews 10:26–29)

For if, after they have escaped the defilements of this world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overpowered, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. It has happened to them according to the proverb, The dog turns back to his own vomit, and the sow is washed only to wallow in the mire.

(2 Peter 2:20–22)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

I know that someday, sooner or later, I will die and God will judge my life. Am I ready for that? Do I sin deliberately even though I know I am called to a life of holiness?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, never let me turn away from your holy will for my life by lapsing back into my former pattern of sin and rebellion. Keep me close to you, Lord, for I am very weak. I need your grace.*

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## How you will know if you are abiding in God's love

*If you seek an infallible assurance that you are in a right relationship with God, ponder what the Bible teaches in this passage and act upon it.*



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

(1 John 3:19–24)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Is my life ordered freely toward God and the things of God? Or is it controlled and fragmented by servitude to my own appetites and desires?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord my God, in the words of your servant St. Thomas Aquinas, grant me a mind to know you, a heart to seek you, wisdom to find you, conduct pleasing to you, faithful perseverance in waiting for you, and a hope of finally embracing you.*



## Place your confidence in Christ!

*Left to yourself, you can do nothing. So trust in the Lord and in his power to accomplish in you what would otherwise be impossible for you.*



I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. And this is the confidence which we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained the requests made of him. If any one sees his brother committing what is not a mortal sin, he will ask, and God will give him life for those whose sin is not mortal. There is sin which is mortal; I do not say that one is to pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin which is not mortal.

(1 John 5:13–17)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

How much do I really trust Jesus? Do I attempt to control everything in my life? In what ways, large and small, does my foolish pride block me from abandoning myself entirely to God's loving providence?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Jesus, I trust in you!*

## The importance of prayer and fasting

*This biblical lesson reminds us that prayer and fasting are powerful spiritual weapons that are often overlooked and neglected.*



And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd about them, and scribes arguing with them. And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed, and ran up to him and greeted him. And he asked them, “What are you discussing with them?” And one of the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a dumb spirit; and wherever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.” And he answered them, “O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me.” And they brought the boy to him; and when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, “How long has he had this?” And he said, “From childhood. And it has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us.” And Jesus said to him, “If you can! All things are possible to him who believes.” Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!” And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again.” And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse; so that most of them said, “He is dead.” But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting.”

(Mark 9:14–29)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Is fasting part of my prayer life? What challenges do I face that may require prayer *and* fasting to overcome?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, you designed my human nature to experience hunger for food. Teach me to see in that natural hunger my deeper, supernatural longing for you. Help me conquer with prayer and fasting anything in this life that would prevent me from drawing closer to you.*

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## A warning about the anti-Christ

*Perhaps you will live to see the rise of the foretold antichrist, perhaps you will not. Regardless, precursors of the antichrist have and will continue to manifest themselves in this world. Be on guard against them.*



Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to meet him, we beg you, brethren, not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited, either by spirit or by word, or by letter purporting to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you this? And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming. The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false, so that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(2 Thessalonians 2:1–14)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Is my commitment to stand with Christ against the wiles of his enemies firm and irrevocable?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, protect me, my family, and friends against the menace of those who would lead us into sin and rebellion against you. Fortify our desire to remain faithful to you always, come what may.*

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## In his humanity, Christ is far superior to the angels

*In the order of creation, angels are higher than human beings, but in the Incarnation, Jesus Christ is superior to all the angels.*



In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs.

For to what angel did God ever say,  
 “Thou art my Son,  
 today I have begotten thee”?

Or again,

“I will be to him a father,  
 and he shall be to me a son”?

And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,

“Let all God’s angels worship him.”

Of the angels he says,

“Who makes his angels winds,  
 and his servants flames of fire.”

But of the Son he says,

“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever,  
 the righteous scepter is the scepter of thy kingdom.

(Hebrews 1:1–8)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I join the holy angels in praising and glorifying God for the wondrous beauty of the Incarnation? Do I bow down with the angels in profound adoration of Christ?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.*

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## The Sinner's prayer

*It is a very good thing to feel guilt for your sins, because that means your conscience is working properly. Cry out to God for mercy and forgiveness. He will hear you and heal you.*



Have mercy on me, O God,  
 according to thy  
 steadfast love;  
 according to thy abundant mercy  
 blot out my transgressions.  
 Wash me thoroughly from my  
 iniquity,  
 and cleanse me from my sin!  
 For I know my transgressions,  
 and my sin is ever before me.  
 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,  
 and done that which is evil in thy  
 sight,  
 so that thou art justified in thy  
 sentence  
 and blameless in thy judgment.  
 Behold, I was brought forth in  
 iniquity,  
 and in sin did my mother  
 conceive me.  
 Behold, thou desirest truth in the  
 inward being;  
 therefore teach me wisdom in my  
 secret heart.  
 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be



clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter  
than snow.  
Fill me with joy and gladness;  
let the bones which thou hast  
broken rejoice.  
Hide thy face from my sins,  
and blot out all my iniquities.  
Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit  
within me.  
Cast me not away from thy presence,  
and take not thy holy Spirit  
from me.  
Restore to me the joy of thy salvation,  
and uphold me with a willing  
spirit.  
Then I will teach transgressors thy  
ways,  
and sinners will return to thee.  
Deliver me from bloodguiltiness,  
O God,  
thou God of my salvation,  
and my tongue will sing aloud of  
thy deliverance.

(Psalm 51:1–14)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I sorry for my sins? Do I offer up to God the anguish my past sins cause me? Do I trust that he will heal me if I turn to him with a contrite heart? Have I turned to him for forgiveness? If not, why not?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, the wretchedness of my many transgressions have taught me the bitter truth that the wages of sin is death—including death to my peace of*

*mind. Help me, Lord! Forgive my sins and grant me that unsurpassable peace that you alone can restore to my troubled soul.*

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## Do not be lured away by false gospels

*There are many false “Christs” with false messages out there. Ignore them.*



I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel—not that there is another gospel, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, If any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.

(Galatians 1:6–9)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

What am I doing to deepen and safeguard my knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Church he established? Do I waste time studying information that will lead me away from him?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I am grateful for the Catholic Faith which comes to us from the Apostles. Give me the presence of mind and the courage of my convictions to stand firm and hold fast to the person and teachings of Christ.*

## Prophecy of the coming of Christ the King

*From Adam and Eve on, all of human history looked forward with anticipation to the advent of Christ the Messiah.*



Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Let your hands be strong, you who in these days have been hearing these words from the mouth of the prophets, since the day that the foundation of the house of the Lord of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built. For before those days there was no wage for man or any wage for beast, neither was there any safety from the foe for him who went out or came in; for I set every man against his fellow. But now I will not deal with the remnant of this people as in the former days, says the Lord of hosts. For there shall be a sowing of peace; the vine shall yield its fruit, and the ground shall give its increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. And as you have been a byword of cursing among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you and you shall be a blessing. Fear not, but let your hands be strong.”

For thus says the Lord of hosts: “As I purposed to do evil to you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, and I did not relent, says the Lord of hosts, so again have I purposed in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah; fear not. These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another, render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace, do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath, for all these things I hate, says the Lord.”

(Zechariah 8:9–17)

IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

I should give thanks to the Lord for bringing out of Israel the hope of salvation for all the world. Blessed be God!

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, your royal birth and reign were foretold by the prophets of old and anxiously awaited by all those who loved you even before they knew you. I rejoice with them in gratitude for your Incarnation.*

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## God sends his Angels to help and protect us

*You would be astounded if you only knew how often God's holy angels have protected you from harm in this life.*



The very night when Herod was about to bring him out, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison; and behold, an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands. And the angel said to him, "Dress yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your mantle around you and follow me." And he went out and followed him; he did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened to them of its own accord, and they went out and passed on through one street; and immediately the angel left him. And Peter came to himself, and said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."

(Acts 12:6–11)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I ignore the role of God's holy angels in my life and in the life of the Church? Do I invoke their guidance and protection?

### CLOSING PRAYER

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

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## God will never abandon you

*Even when you feel utterly forlorn and alone, God is with you.*



So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. Then she went, and sat down over against him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, “Let me not look upon the death of the child.” And as she sat over against him, the child lifted up his voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, “What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not; for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him fast with your hand; for I will make him a great nation.” Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink.

(Genesis 21:14–19)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Usually, I am happy and content with my life. But in truth, there are times when I feel friendless, isolated, and woebegone. In those bleak times I must remind myself that God loves me and is not far from me, no matter how hopeless things might seem.

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I know you love me. I know you want me to be happy. And you know that sometimes my confidence in your promises grows weak.*



*Strengthen my faith and hope in you and never let my passing moods cause me to give in to despair or dejection.*

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## Cry out to God for pardon and peace

*This saying is true: Know God, know peace. No God, no peace. If you want true peace of soul, ask the Lord to heal your self-inflicted wounds of sin.*



Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity,  
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

When I declared not my sin, my body wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.

For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me;  
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

I acknowledged my sin to thee,  
and I did not hide my iniquity;

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord";  
then thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin.

Therefore let every one who is godly  
offer prayer to thee;

at a time of distress, in the rush of great waters,  
they shall not reach him.

Thou art a hiding place for me,  
thou preservest me from trouble;  
thou dost encompass me with deliverance.

I will instruct you and teach you  
the way you should go;

I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,  
which must be curbed with bit and bridle,  
else it will not keep with you.

Many are the pangs of the wicked;  
but steadfast love surrounds him who trusts in the Lord.  
Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous,  
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

(Psalm 32:1–11)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

God wants to save me from my sins. Do I resist his offers to repair and restore me? When was the last time I made a thorough examination of conscience and confessed my sins in the sacrament of penance?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned through my own fault, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do; and I ask blessed Mary, ever virgin, all the angels and saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.*

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## A father's instructions to his son on holiness

*No matter how young or old you may be, or whether you are a man or a woman, this wise advice applies to you.*



On that day Tobit remembered the money which he had left in trust with Gab'ael at Rages in Media, and he said to himself: "I have asked for death. Why do I not call my son Tobi'as so that I may explain to him about the money before I die?" So he called him and said, "My son, when I die, bury me, and do not neglect your mother. Honor her all the days of your life; do what is pleasing to her, and do not grieve her. Remember, my son, that she faced many dangers for you while you were yet unborn. When she dies, bury her beside me in the same grave.

"Remember the Lord our God all your days, my son, and refuse to sin or to transgress his commandments. Live uprightly all the days of your life, and do not walk in the ways of wrongdoing. For if you do what is true, your ways will prosper through your deeds. Give alms from your possessions to all who live uprightly, and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Do not turn your face away from any poor man, and the face of God will not be turned away from you. If you have many possessions, make your gift from them in proportion; if few, do not be afraid to give according to the little you have. So you will be laying up a good treasure for yourself against the day of necessity. For charity delivers from death and keeps you from entering the darkness; and for all who practice it charity is an excellent offering in the presence of the Most High.

(Tobit 4:1–11)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I give due honor and filial reverence to my mother, considering all that she suffered for my sake? Am I earnestly seeking to live an upright life? Am I generous with others?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, you know all the ways in which I fail to live up to your holy standard of righteousness. So, since you have commanded me to “be perfect” as you are perfect, I beg you for the graces I need to obey your commandments as perfectly as I am able.*

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## The folly of atheism and idolatry

*The only thing more absurd than denying God's existence is worshipping some created thing instead of the Creator.*



For all men who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature;  
and they were unable from the good things that are seen to know him who exists,  
nor did they recognize the craftsman while paying heed to his works;  
but they supposed that either fire or wind or swift air,  
or the circle of the stars, or turbulent water,  
or the luminaries of heaven were the gods that rule the world.  
If through delight in the beauty of these things men assumed them to be gods,  
let them know how much better than these is their Lord,  
for the author of beauty created them.  
And if men were amazed at their power and working,  
let them perceive from them  
how much more powerful is he who formed them.  
For from the greatness and beauty of created things  
comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.  
Yet these men are little to be blamed,  
for perhaps they go astray  
while seeking God and desiring to find him.  
For as they live among his works they keep searching,  
and they trust in what they see, because the things that are seen are beautiful.  
Yet again, not even they are to be excused;  
for if they had the power to know so much  
that they could investigate the world,  
how did they fail to find sooner the Lord of these things?

(Wisdom 13:1–9)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I trust solely in what I can see and touch, or do I place my trust first in the God of the universe who *created* all that I can see and touch?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I acknowledge you as my loving father. I thank you for the countless ways in which you manifest yourself through the beauty and order of your vast creation and for the grace of faith that you have given me to believe in you.*

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## Always use moderation when enjoying good things

*Drunkenness is a serious sin, but Scripture teaches that wine itself is not forbidden.*



“You shall tithe all the yield of your seed, which comes forth from the field year by year. And before the Lord your God, in the place which he will choose, to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstlings of your herd and flock; that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always. And if the way is too long for you, so that you are not able to bring the tithe, when the Lord your God blesses you, because the place is too far from you, which the Lord your God chooses, to set his name there, then you shall turn it into money, and bind up the money in your hand, and go to the place which the Lord your God chooses, and spend the money for whatever you desire, oxen, or sheep, or wine or strong drink, whatever your appetite craves; and you shall eat there before the Lord your God and rejoice, you and your household.

(Deuteronomy 14:22–26)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I commit the sin of drunkenness or intemperance with drink? If so, have I confessed this in the sacrament of Reconciliation?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I want to make use of the good things that are permissible to me but only in moderation and in a way that will be beneficial to me and give*



*glory and honor to you. Let me never abuse wine or strong drink nor let me ever lead another person astray in that way.*

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## Give obedience and honor to whom it is due

*It may not always be easy, but it is right and good, to give proper honor and lawful obedience to those whom God has permitted to be in authority over you.*



Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of him who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be subject, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.

(Romans 13:1–7)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I cheat on my taxes? Do I fail to give respect to those who have legitimate authority over me, even if they may not be personally worthy of that authority? Do I presume to sit in judgment over the Church? Do I speak disrespectfully about the pope or the bishops of the Church?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, it is sometimes real challenge for me to swallow my pride and be humble. Even though some in authority over me may be unworthy of their position, I ask you to help me show them proper honor and respect.*

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## No one can force you to commit a sin

*Even if the president himself were to order you to do something sinful, you would be duty bound to ignore such a directive.*



King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.... And the herald proclaimed aloud, “You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace.”...

Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews.... “There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no heed to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up.”...

Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image which I have set up? ... [I]f you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace; and who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?”

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up.”

(Daniel 3:1, 4–6, 8, 12, 14–18)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

God made me to know the truth and do the good. Anyone who attempts to induce me to act in a way contrary to that is trying to make me sin. I will refuse to do so!

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, give me strength and courage to stand firm in the truth, even when the powerful threaten to cajole or coerce me into doing something I know is wrong.*

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## Beware of boasting and spiritual pride

*If you are puffed up with pride, you are very, very far from God. As St. Thomas Aquinas declared, “Inordinate self-love is the cause of every sin.”*



He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others: “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

(Luke 18:9–14)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I secretly judge other people’s hearts? Do I think highly of myself but look down on others? Do I realize just how ridiculous and pathetic my self-satisfied pride appears in God’s eyes?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, as your servant St. Frances Cabrini prayed, “Do not permit me to attribute to myself the good that you perform in me and through me, but rather, referring all honor to you, may I admit only to my infirmities, so that renouncing sincerely all vainglory which comes from the world, I may aspire to that true and lasting glory that comes from you.”*

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## The Church is the body of Christ

*You have a particular, God-given role to play in the life of the Church. It may be something prominent or perhaps it will be obscure and hidden from view. All that matters is that you seek to discover and fulfill this role as best you can.*



For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

(Romans 12:4–8)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

What contribution of my time and talent do I willingly offer to the Church? Do I ever pray for the Church as a whole?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I thank you for incorporating me into your mystical body through the sacrament of Baptism. Grant me the graces I need to effectively and joyfully live out my role as a healthy and productive member of your body, the Church.*



## Nothing is hidden from God—he sees everything

*Trying to keep your secret sins “secret” from God is a miserable exercise in futility.*



A man accustomed to use insulting words  
will never become disciplined all his days.  
Two sorts of men multiply sins,  
and a third incurs wrath.  
The soul heated like a burning fire  
will not be quenched until it is consumed;  
a man who commits fornication with his near of kin  
will never cease until the fire burns him up.  
To a fornicator all bread tastes sweet;  
he will never cease until he dies.  
A man who breaks his marriage vows  
says to himself, “Who sees me?  
Darkness surrounds me, and the walls hide me,  
and no one sees me. Why should I fear?  
The Most High will not take notice of my sins.”  
His fear is confined to the eyes of men,  
and he does not realize that the eyes of the Lord  
are ten thousand times brighter than the sun;  
they look upon all the ways of men,  
and perceive even the hidden places.  
Before the universe was created, it was known to him;  
so it was also after it was finished.

(Sirach 23:15–20)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

The next time I am tempted to commit a “secret” sin, I must remember that God sees all and that nothing, not even things I think and do when no one else is around, escapes his notice.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I never want to offend you by sin, and with your help I will strive to act when I am alone as I would in the company of others. I want to be authentic and consistent in my thoughts, deeds, and words, living always with the peaceful awareness of your constant presence.*

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## The Lord chooses the “foolish” to confound the “wise”

*If there is one thing God really does not like, it is when human beings boast about their “wisdom” and “knowledge.”*



For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

(1 Corinthians 1:26–29)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I wise in my own eyes? Am I conceited? Do I secretly disdain and disfavor those around me who seem less knowledgeable or less sophisticated than I?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*My God! How often I fall into the trap of egoism and pride. Help me to become, as Blessed John Henry Newman said, as ordinary an individual as others; my weapons should be but unaffected humility and unpretending love.*

## Speak boldly and fearlessly about Jesus Christ

*You will be amazed, as the Apostles were, when you let go of your fears and let the Lord speak the truth through you.*



When they were released they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who by the mouth of our father David, thy servant, didst say by the Holy Spirit,

‘Why did the Gentiles rage,  
and the peoples imagine vain things?  
The kings of the earth set  
themselves in array,  
and the rulers were gathered  
together,  
against the Lord and against his  
Anointed’—

for truly in this city there were gathered together against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever thy hand and thy plan had predestined to take place. And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness, while thou stretchest out thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of thy holy servant Jesus.” And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness

(Acts 4:23–31)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I willing to speak up in defense of the truth even when there is a real risk of rejection, ridicule, harassment, or worse? Do I fear the disapproval of others more than I love the truth?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I beg you to grant me the holy boldness of your first Apostles on the Day of Pentecost. Even though I do not know what exactly I should say and do, when the moment comes, I trust that you will give me the words and the courage to speak them fearlessly.*

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## The Lord beckons you to draw near to him

*God wants to lavish an abundance of spiritual gifts upon you, if only you would let him!*



“Ho, every one who thirsts,  
come to the waters;  
and he who has no money,  
come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk  
without money and without price.  
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,  
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?  
Hearken diligently to me, and eat what is good,  
and delight yourselves in fatness.  
Incline your ear, and come to me;  
hear, that your soul may live;  
and I will make with you an  
everlasting covenant,  
my steadfast, sure love for David.  
Behold, I made him a witness to the  
peoples,  
a leader and commander for the  
peoples.  
Behold, you shall call nations that  
you know not,  
and nations that knew you not  
shall run to you,  
because of the Lord your God, and  
of the Holy One of Israel,  
for he has glorified you.

(Isaiah 55:1–5)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

When I perceive God beckoning me, do I respond in trust?

CLOSING PRAYER

*Yes, Lord. Here and now, I incline my ear to you, that I may hear your word and live.*

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## To abide in God's love, keep his commandments

*Do not deceive yourself: He who neglects to obey the Lord's commandments does not really know him, regardless of what rhetoric about "faith" he might spout.*



My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He who says "I know him" but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps his word, in him truly love for God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him: he who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

(1 John 2:1–6)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I a hypocrite who proclaims love for God yet disobeys his commandments? Am I hard-hearted or apathetic toward others?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, when I consider all the ways I try to cut corners and take short cuts in the Christian life, I see that I have indeed been guilty of not loving my neighbor even as I profess my love for you. Root out this hypocrisy in me, I pray.*



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## How can you be silent in such a time as this?

*These are perilous times. Heroic Christian virtue is needed in a particular and urgent way. Do not forget that God brought you into the world at exactly this time. You have a mission to fulfill for this generation.*



Then Esther spoke to Hathach and gave him a message for Mor'decai, saying,

“All the king’s servants and the people of the king’s provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law; all alike are to be put to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter that he may live. And I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days.”

And they told Mor'decai what Esther had said.

Then Mor'decai told them to return answer to Esther, “Think not that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews.

For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

Then Esther told them to reply to Mor'decai,

“Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish.”

Mor'decai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

(Esther 4:10–17)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I so afraid of difficulty, persecution, and even death that I fail to stand up and do what is right in God's sight? Am I willing, if necessary, to give up my freedom or even my life for the sake of the gospel, if that is the mission God has marked out for me?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, give me the courage and peace of heart to go forward in the service of your truth, even if it should result in suffering at the hands of those who oppose you. Let me say confidently as did your servant Esther, "If I perish, I perish." I trust in you.*

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## False prophets are known by their bad fruit

*What kind of fruit is your life bearing?*



Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? So, every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit. A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits.

(Matthew 7:15–20)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I putting this Scripture passage into practice in my own life, discerning good fruit from bad? Am I vigilant to the dangers inherent in following the cult of personality? Do I put my trust in human beings or in God?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, protect me from the wiles of false prophets, and keep me from becoming one myself. Let me always bear only good fruit that is rich in truth and beauty and is pleasing to you.*

## The law of God is written on your heart

*No one needs to tell you that certain things are right and other things are wrong. You know this, deep down inside, because God inscribed this truth into your very being.*



All who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

(Romans 2:12–16)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

It's not enough for me to merely hear the voice of my conscience; do I act on what it tells me? When I know, deep down, that something is wrong, do I do it anyway? Have I confessed this in the sacrament of Confession?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I desire with all my heart to know, love, and live according to your truth. Help me properly form my conscience so that I may always know what is true and do what is good.*

## On the dangers of private interpretation

*It is natural and necessary to interpret what we read. But do not presume that your own understanding of the Bible will always be consistent with its authentic, God-given meaning.*



First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God....

And count the forbearance of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.

(2 Peter 1:20–21, 3:15–16)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I read the Bible? Do I seek as best I can to understand its meaning? Am I respectful of the fact that Christ promised the guidance of the Holy Spirit to the Magisterium of the Church to assist it in authentically interpreting the Bible? Do I listen to the Church?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Protect me, Lord, from the danger of “twisting” the meaning of Scripture by imposing my own assumptions and expectations upon it. Give me a humble heart to willingly be attentive to the authentic interpretation of the Bible that is delivered to me in the Church.*

## The universal Church teaches with Christ's authority

*When Christ established the Catholic Church, he authorized it to teach in his name.*



And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

(Matthew 28:17–20)

“He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

(Luke 10:16)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I listen attentively to the voice of Jesus Christ teaching me through the voice of the Church he founded? Do I dissent from one or more Church teachings?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Thank you, O Lord, for the great gift of your Church. I am grateful for this “ark” of salvation into which you beckon all who love you so that they may avoid being swept away by the flood of false doctrine and human opinion.*

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## God speaks to you through the gospel

*Jesus communicates his truth to us through those in the Church who have been commissioned to preach and teach.*



Because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved. The scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him. For, “everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.”

But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news!”

(Romans 10:9–15)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Even if I confess with my mouth that Jesus is Lord, have I really accepted him fully as the Lord of my life? Do I call upon him for salvation? Do I teach and encourage my friends and family to do so as well?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, I confess with my lips that you are my Lord and Savior! I believe that you will bestow your riches of grace on me. Help me to do your will, empowered by your grace, as listen attentively to those whom you have sent to preach the gospel.*

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## Purity of speech is an indication of purity of heart

*Lips that honor and praise the holy name of Jesus should not be defiled by profanity.*



And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”

Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having in his hand a burning coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth, and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven.” And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.”

(Isaiah 6:5–8)

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

(Philippians 4:8)

And he said, “What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a man.”

(Mark 7:20–23)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I curse and swear and use profanity in my speech? Do I blaspheme God by taking his name in vain, knowing that blasphemy is a mortal sin? I resolve that, today, right now, I will purify my speech so that I may honor God with undefiled lips.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, help me to overcome my tendency toward impure, profane, or unbecoming speech. Let every word that comes forth from my mouth be like clear, pure water that refreshes and gives life to those around me.*

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## Only Jesus Christ can save you from your sins

*There are not, in fact, “many roads up the mountain.” There is only one road that leads upward to eternal life: Jesus Christ. Every other road is man-made and leads downhill.*



Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a cripple, by what means this man has been healed, be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well. This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, but which has become the head of the corner. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

(Acts 4:8–12)

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world.

(1 John 4:14)

You know the word which he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)... And he commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

(Acts 10:36, 42–43)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

If I am trusting in something or someone other than Jesus to save me from my sins, I am going to be in for a very unpleasant shock at the end of my life.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*In the words of St. Paul, I pray: “Even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.”*

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## The Resurrection proves the validity of the Church

*If Christ had not risen from the dead, Christianity would be proved false. But because Christ did rise from the dead, Christianity is proved to be true.*



Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied.

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

(1 Corinthians 15:12–22)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

There exists plenty of good, solid, historical evidence to corroborate my belief in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Contemporary Pagan and Jewish authors (who were hostile to Christianity) wrote about how Christ's

followers all believed in the Resurrection and were willing to endure torture and die cruel deaths rather than recant that belief.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, I believe in your glorious Resurrection and victory over death. Thank you for dying for my sins and for rising from the dead as proof that you are indeed the Son of God.*

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## Proclaim the gospel fearlessly and without shame

*Simply put, you must take a stand for Christ. If you don't, you cannot expect him to do so for you.*



For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, “He who through faith is righteous shall live.”

(Romans 1:16–17)

So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

(Matthew 10:32–33)

For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

(Mark 8:38)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I timid about—or, worse yet, ashamed of—my faith in Christ? Of his teachings? Do I acknowledge him boldly to others, regardless of whatever they may say or do?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, I love you. Strengthen my faith in you! Give me courage to stand my ground and not back down when challenges and persecution come my way.*

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## Division between Christians is a grievous scandal

*Division between Christians is an unacceptable disgrace. We must seek unity based on truth, not on compromise.*



I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

(1 Corinthians 1:10,

I appeal to you, brethren, to take note of those who create dissensions and difficulties, in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by fair and flattering words they deceive the hearts of the simpleminded.

(Romans 16:17–18)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

What am I doing to help foster Christian unity in my own family and social circles? Do I pray for Christ's intention "that all may be one?"

### CLOSING 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 (St. Francis of Assisi).*

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## Imitate the lives and virtues of the saints

*If you want to be a saint, imitate the saints, and you will become a saint.*



Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever. Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings; for it is well that the heart be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited their adherents.

(Hebrews 13:7–9)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I invoke the intercession of my patron saint? Do I ever read the lives of the saints? God wants *me* to be a saint! What is holding me back?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*All you Holy Angels and Archangels, pray for us. All you Holy Patriarchs and Prophets, pray for us. All you holy Apostles and Evangelists, pray for us. All you holy Disciples of the Lord, pray for us. All you holy Innocents, pray for us. All you holy Martyrs, pray for us. All you holy Virgins and Widows, pray for us. All you holy Saints of God, pray for us.*

## The miraculous power of holy relics!

*God loves matter and deigns to make use of it to impart spiritual and physical blessings to his people.*



So Eli´sha died, and they buried him. Now bands of Moabites used to invade the land in the spring of the year. And as a man was being buried, lo, a marauding band was seen and the man was cast into the grave of Eli´sha; and as soon as the man touched the bones of Eli´sha, he revived, and stood on his feet.

(2 Kings 13:20–21)

So that handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick, and diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.

(Acts 19:12)

Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone forth from him, immediately turned about in the crowd, and said, “Who touched my garments?” And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, ‘Who touched me?’ ” And he looked around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had been done to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

(Mark 5:30–34)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I show reverence for sacred things? Am I respectful toward our Lady and the saints?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Thank you, Lord, for the gift of saintly relics and the holy men and women from whom they come. Increase in me a true devotion to the saints.*

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## Christ sends his disciples forth as sheep among wolves

*When the time comes, be brave and rely on the Lord to give you the words you are to say.*



“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to councils, and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you up, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

(Matthew 10:16–20)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

What am I worried about? Jesus promised that the spirit of my Father in heaven will be within me and will show me what I am to say.

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Jesus, I trust in you! Left to myself, I would be adrift in a sea of uncertainty and distress when the storms of life whip up around me. But I know that you are in the boat with me, and I know that you will see me safely through whatever tempest may come.*



## Baptism cleanses us of our sins

*We wash our clothes when they become dirty, bedraggled, and unsightly. In the sacrament of Baptism, Jesus Christ washes the soul, making it dazzlingly bright, pure, and full of grace.*



Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him.”

‘And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name.’

(Acts 2:37–39; 22:16)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I carefully guard the spotless purity I was given the sacrament of Baptism?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, even though I have sinned countless times since my Baptism, I know you are faithful to your promise to restore to the state of unsullied grace those who turn to you in repentance, “though their sins be as scarlet.”*

## Pray that God sends a “Philip” to the hard-headed

*Often, the people closest to you are the least likely to heed your good counsel.*



And he rose and went. And behold, an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a minister of the Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of all her treasure, had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go up and join this chariot.” So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” And he said, “How can I, unless some one guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

(Acts 8:27–31)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Even if my own family members who have strayed from the true Faith are unwilling to listen to me when I encourage them to return to the Church, I can still pray that God will send a “Philip” to them—someone they *will* listen to.

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I ask you to send the right person to my friends and family who are far away from you, someone they can trust and whose message of your love they will receive with an open heart.*

## Don't be afraid to speak the truth

*It's not always comfortable or easy to speak the truth. Don't let that daunt you.*



And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man shall attack you to harm you; for I have many people in this city.”

(Acts 18:9–10)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I shy away from telling people the truth about God because they might laugh at me or reject me?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, give me courage and wisdom to know when and how to share your truth with those around me.*

## Get rid of whatever causes you to fall into mortal sin

*You must be ruthless and uncompromising in your commitment to root sin out of your life. If you don't, you will remain a slave to sin.*



“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

(Matthew 5:27–30)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I serious about being holy? Am I resolute in my efforts to cultivate virtue and eradicate vice in my life, or am I half-hearted and tepid?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I need your help to overcome my sins! Your grace alone can enable me to do this. Strengthen my will and intensify my dedication to avoid sin, out of love for you.*

## Public testimony of Jesus is a sure sign of salvation

*This life is passing. The life to come is eternal. So fix your gaze on Jesus Christ and let nothing deter you from him.*



Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear omen to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict which you saw and now hear to be mine.

(Philippians 1:27–30)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Is my life worthy of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I want to be with you in heaven! Please help me think, say, and do only what is pleasing to you and efficacious in drawing me toward my final goal of union with you for all eternity.*

## Never receive Communion in the state of mortal sin

*Mortal sin makes you spiritually dead. One who is in the state of mortal sin cannot be nourished by the Eucharist because nourishment is only for the living. Neither can that person be united with Christ or purified by receiving him in the Holy Eucharist, because mortal sin prevents that.*



Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.

(1 Corinthians 11:27–30)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I knowingly receive Holy Communion while in the state of mortal sin? Do I realize the terrible spiritual damage I inflict on myself each time I commit this sacrilege?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, in the words of your servant Saint Patrick of Ireland, I pray that you would “open the understanding of my unbelieving heart, so that I should recall my sins” and thus confess them before I approach the altar to receive you in the Holy Eucharist.*

## Remember to pray for bishops, priests, and deacons

*Saint Paul, one of the original bishops of the Church, frequently asked for prayers.*



Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving; and pray for us also, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison, that I may make it clear, as I ought to speak.

Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer every one.

(Colossians 4:2–6)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

How often (if ever) do I pray for my bishop and the deacons and priests of my diocese?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, grant your grace in abundance to my bishop and to all the clergy of the Church who are in communion with him. Fill them, I pray, with prudence, fortitude, and holy zeal for the salvation of souls that they may effectively fulfill the mission you have entrusted to them.*

## Our blessed hope of Christ's return

*Sooner or later, Jesus Christ will return in glory. Will you be ready?*



For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

(1 Thessalonians 5:14–18)

For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

(Titus 2:11–13)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

What am I doing to prepare for the return of the Lord, if it should happen during my lifetime? And if it is appointed that I should die before that blessed day, what am I doing to prepare to meet him face-to-face when I die?

### CLOSING PRAYER



*Lord Jesus, I praise and thank you for your many gifts, including your promise to return to gather unto yourself all who love you. I want to be in their company! Help me, Lord, to persevere in my faith until you call me.*

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## We are “born again” through Baptism

*To be born-again the “Bible way” is through the sacrament of Baptism.*



This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him.” Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit....

After this Jesus and his disciples went into the land of Judea; there he remained with them and baptized.

( John 3:2–6, 22)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

When I was baptized, I was “born from above” and “born again.” But since that day, I have had countless opportunities to experience an ever deeper conversion and renewal of my heart through prayer and the sacraments.

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, thank you for the gift of my rebirth through the sacrament of Baptism. Please help me to live in a manner worthy of the new life you have given me.*

## The Lord grants some the gift of celibacy

*God's invitation to consecrated celibacy is a gift, not a burden; a blessing, not a curse.*



But he said to them, “Not all men can receive this precept, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it.”

(Matthew 19:10–22)

I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.

I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman or girl is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

(1 Corinthians. 7:7–9, 32–35)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

The Church in her wisdom has maintained the ancient practice of consecrated celibacy as a way for priests, bishops, and religious to more closely pattern themselves on Jesus Christ, who was himself celibate.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*I thank you, Lord, for calling some men and women to minister to your people in celibacy for the sake of the kingdom and as living reminders of your own love for all people. Bless and protect their chastity with the graces they need for holy perseverance.*

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## “What must I do to be saved?”

*For those who have faith in Jesus, Baptism is the doorway into the Church.*



And brought them out and said, “Men, what must I do to be saved?” And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, with all his family. Then he brought them up into his house, and set food before them; and he rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God.

(Acts 16:30–34)

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

(Matthew 7:21)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I seek to know what God asks of me? Or do I simply tell God what I ask of him?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, show me each day what I must do to be saved. I believe in you, and I trust in you alone for my salvation. Help me with your gift of grace to live out my faith through good works and upright living.*

## A servant is not greater than his master

*Jesus foretold that the world would treat his disciples the way it treated him.*



“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also.”

( John 15:18–21)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

I am not greater than Jesus, so why should I expect the world to like and accept me as his follower when it did not like and accept him?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, inspired by the words of your servant Pope Benedict XVI, I pray that I may not flee for fear of the wolves, that I may learn to love you more, and that I may learn to love your flock more and more.*

## How blessed are the members of God's household

*Although you have not yet arrived in the promised land of heaven, you are well on your way. Do not forget that this world is not your true home. You are simply passing through.*



So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

(Ephesians 2:19–22)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I overly attached to the passing things of this world? Do I yearn for my heavenly homeland and my union there with God?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, you created this earthly life for my happiness and filled it with many good things. And yet, I know you want me to spend my life here preparing for my eternal life in the world to come. Help me to keep my priorities always in conformity with your will for me.*

## The first celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation

*In the sacrament of confirmation, God gives you strength to carry out your mission in life as a Christian. Learn from the example of the Apostles how this grace energizes the soul with a special increase of sanctifying grace.*



When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

(Acts 2:1–4)

I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

(1 John 2:14)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in my life? Do I ask him to stir up in my soul the powerful graces I received when I was confirmed?

### CLOSING PRAYER



*O Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life, through the sacrament of confirmation, accomplish in me your will that I may be strong in your word, always ready to publicly confess my faith, and equipped to engage victoriously in spiritual combat with the enemies of my soul.*

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## Seek ways to build up others

*The more you forget yourself and seek the good of others, the more like Christ you will become.*



If your brother is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died. So do not let what is good to you be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit; he who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

(Romans 14:15–19)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I self-centered and self-serving? Do I make any serious effort to help those around me with their spiritual and corporal needs? Do I put myself and my wants first and everyone else second?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, you know how often my actions are motivated by selfishness. Teach me to be like you, with an open and generous heart, that I may serve you by serving my neighbor.*

## To attain eternal life, feed upon the Bread of Life

*In the first part of his “Bread of Life Discourse,” Jesus emphasizes that the first step we must take is coming to him and believing in him. Everything else follows from there.*



Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me; and this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

( John 6:35–40)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Jesus wants me to draw near to him in faith. What aspects of my life do not conform with that? Do I just go through the motions of being a follower of Christ?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I believe that you are the true bread that came down from heaven for my salvation. Feed me with the Holy Eucharist the heavenly manna of your truth.*

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## Have confidence in Christ the Good Shepherd

*If you stay close to Christ, all will be well. He does only what is best for you, even if, at times, it is hard to understand why he permits certain difficulties to happen.*



The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;  
he makes me lie down in green pastures.  
He leads me beside still waters;  
he restores my soul.  
He leads me in paths of righteousness  
for his name's sake.  
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I fear no evil;  
for thou art with me;  
thy rod and thy staff,  
they comfort me.  
Thou preparest a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
thou anointest my head with oil,  
my cup overflows.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life;  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
for ever.

(Psalm 23:1–6)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I a “lone ranger” Christian, trying to do things my way rather than God’s way? Do I listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd? Do I heed his voice?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, never permit me to stray away from you. I desire always and only to stay close to you. I trust you and will not fear whatever my life may hold, for you are with me.*

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## Christ's sacrifice fulfills the Mosaic sacrifice

*The economy of animal sacrifice prescribing the Old Covenant was abolished by Christ's atoning death on the Cross. Those temple sacrifices merely symbolized, prefigured, and pointed toward Christ's true and perfect sacrifice.*



Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with blood not his own; for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

(Hebrews 9:23–28)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

At the end of my life, I will stand before the Lord and receive his judgment. If I am found eagerly waiting for him in the state of grace, that judgment will be the blessed portal through which I will pass into eternal life.

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, I trust in your perfect sacrifice for me. Save me, Lord!*

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# The institution of the sacrament of Confession

*Through the profound healing and cleansing that takes place in the sacrament of Confession, Christ grants peace and pardon to sinners.*



On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

( John 20:19–23)

## IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

How often do I receive the sacrament of Confession? Do I neglect this wonderful gift that the Lord has given to me through the ministry of the priesthood?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*I give you thanks, Lord, for your precious gift of the sacrament of Confession. Your mercy endures forever.*

## Christ entrusts Mary to the Apostle John

*Jesus willed that his own mother should become a mother to Saint John and, insofar as John represents all members of the Church, she becomes our mother as well.*



So the soldiers did this. But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

( John 19:25–27)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

I see in this passage a glimpse of the doctrine of Our Lady's perpetual virginity. For if she had in fact had other children besides Jesus, it would have made no sense for him to have entrusted her into the care of a man, John, who was not one of her sons.

### CLOSING PRAYER

*At the Cross her station keeping, stood the mournful mother weeping, close to her son to the last. Through her heart, his sorrow sharing, all his bitter anguish bearing, now at length the sword has passed. O thou mother, fount of love, touch my spirit from above. Make my heart with thine accord. Make me feel as thou hast felt. Make my soul to glow and melt with the love of Christ my Lord. (Stabat Mater)*

## The Angels and Saints present our prayers to God

*Though the holy angels may be “out of sight,” they should never be “out of mind,” for by God’s command, they minister to and help us in countless unseen ways.*



And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth; and he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer; and he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne; and the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God.

(Revelation 5:6–8, 8:3–4)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I show due reverence and gratitude toward the holy angels? Do I invoke their powerful intercession with God?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, allow me to unite my prayers with those which your angels in heaven offer up like sweet-smelling incense before your throne.*

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## Intercede and pray for one another

*Prayer is the predominant activity of the Christian life, and prayer for others should always play an essential role. Remember: Thinking about someone is not the same thing as praying for someone.*



First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way. This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony to which was borne at the proper time.

(1 Timothy. 2:1–6)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

How much time do I spend praying for others? When I tell someone, "I'll pray for you," do I really mean it? Do I actually follow through with it?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I do want to lead a quiet and tranquil life in all dignity and devotion, and I desire this blessing for others too. Grant me the grace to pray earnestly and often for those who need my prayers, especially those to whom I have promised them.*

## Christ gave the Apostles the ministry of reconciliation

*Christ continues his saving work through the Church he established and in particular through the sacraments. The Apostles, being the first priests of the New Covenant, received from him the mission of appealing to sinners and reconciling them with God.*



Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

(2 Corinthians 5:17–20)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Yes, I confess my sins directly to God, as I should, but do I also seek reconciliation with him through the sacrament of Confession, as Christ directed?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, you know how many and great are my offenses against you. Have mercy on me, and humble me so that I will not fear or hesitate to confess my sins to the priests, whom you have entrusted with the sacred ministry of reconciliation.*

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## The Lord is very close to you

*Take courage. Do not be afraid. Remember that because God loves you he has drawn near to you and desires that, empowered by his grace, you should draw near to him.*



O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me!  
 Thou knowest when I sit down and when I rise up;  
 thou discernest my thoughts from afar.  
 Thou searchest out my path and my lying down,  
 and art acquainted with all my ways.  
 Even before a word is on my tongue,  
 lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.  
 Thou dost beset me behind and before,  
 and layest thy hand upon me.  
 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
 it is high, I cannot attain it.  
 Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?  
 Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?  
 If I ascend to heaven, thou art there!  
 If I make my bed in Sheol, thou art there!  
 If I take the wings of the morning  
 and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,  
 even there thy hand shall lead me,  
 and thy right hand shall hold me.

(Psalm 139:1–11)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Without a doubt, even the lowliest things and circumstances in this life can be channels of God's grace and reminders of his loving presence. Do I



reverence and show gratitude for all the “little ways” in which he reveals his love for me?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, open my eyes to see how near to me you are, even in the little things of in my life, things I so easily overlook as insignificant. Teach me to recognize and be attentive to your loving providence in every good thing I encounter, large and small, visible and invisible.*

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# The healing power of the Anointing of the Sick

*God created human nature as a composite of body and soul—not a soul “trapped” in a body. To bless us bodily as well as spiritually, Christ instituted this sacrament of healing and strength.*



Is any one among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects.

( James 5:13–16)

## IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Confession of sins is an important part of the Christian life. The more I turn away from sin the stronger I will become spiritually, growing in righteousness. The more God’s grace makes me righteous, the more powerful my prayers will become.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I want to be healed of my self-inflicted wounds of sin and of the misery they cause me and others. I ask for your healing in body and soul that I may grow in righteousness and pray ever more effectively for others.*

## Pray, pray, pray for vocations

*Just as the Lord said, “Ask and it shall be given to you,” he tells us here to implore God to send more laborers into the harvest, particularly priests and religious.*



And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

(Matthew 9:35–38)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

What am I doing to help rectify the “priest shortage” problem? Anything? Do I pray for more priestly vocations? Do I take seriously the Lord’s promise that if we ask in prayer for something he desires for us, he will give it to us?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, have compassion on your Church! Because of our countless sins of omission and commission we are harassed and helpless in many ways. Please strengthen and guide those who have stepped forward to embrace the priestly or religious vocation you have called them to, and send us many, many more of them!*

## The scriptural basis for Apostolic succession

*Like links in an unbreakable chain, each Catholic bishop in every generation stands in a direct and uninterrupted line of apostolic succession stretching back in time to the original Apostles.*



In those days Peter stood up among the brethren (the company of persons was in all about a hundred and twenty), and said, “Brethren, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David, concerning Judas who was guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered among us, and was allotted his share in this ministry. (Now this man bought a field with the reward of his wickedness; and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their language Akel’dama, that is, Field of Blood.) For it is written in the book of Psalms,

‘Let his habitation become desolate,  
and let there be no one to live in it’;  
and

‘His office let another take.’

So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.” And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsab’bas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthi’as. And they prayed and said, “Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two thou hast chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside, to go to his own place.” And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthi’as; and he was enrolled with the eleven apostles.

(Acts 1:15–26)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I show due respect and proper filial obedience to my bishop, not because of who he is as a person but because of the important office he holds as a successor of the Apostles?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, thank you for my bishop. Strengthen and guide him as he shepherds your flock. Grant him the grace of true repentance for his sins, assistance with his shortcomings, and a desire to rely ever more fervently on you. Augment and invigorate his goodness and talents, for his salvation and for the good of your Church.*

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## The solemn duties entrusted to bishops and priests

*Saint Augustine (354–430) wrote: “What I am for you terrifies me; what I am with you consoles me. For you I am a bishop; but with you I am a Christian. The former is a duty; the latter a grace. The former is a danger; the latter, salvation.”*



Command and teach these things. Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Till I come, attend to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophetic utterance when the elders laid their hands upon you. Practice these duties, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. Take heed to yourself and to your teaching; hold to that, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

(1 Timothy 4:11–16)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

God has entrusted bishops and priests with a grave and weighty responsibility to defend and care for the Church. When they die, each must render an account of how faithfully or unfaithfully he discharged his sacred duty. I resolve, therefore, to assist them with my prayers and encouragement.

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I pray that you would bless and sustain each and every bishop, priest, and deacon of your Church. Grant them clarity of mind, an*

*abundance of grace, persistence in carrying out their appointed work, and courage to boldly teach the truth, regardless of human respect.*

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## Divorce and remarriage is a serious sin

*Few people these days see anything wrong with divorce and remarriage. But the Bible reminds us of the Lord's somber warnings about it. This is why following the Church's annulment process is so important.*



“And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries a divorced woman, commits adultery.”

(Matthew 19:9)

And he said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

(Mark 10:11–12)

“Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.”

(Luke 16:18)

Thus a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies she is discharged from the law concerning the husband. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

(Romans 7:2–3)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...



Is this one of Jesus' "difficult sayings" that I choose to simply ignore or reject? Do I realize that if I divorce my spouse and attempt remarriage without the Church having formally declared that my marriage was not sacramentally valid, that I am committing a mortal sin?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, help me avoid giving in to the temptation to do something that you have declared to be sinful, even if everyone around me says it's "okay."*

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## The saints pray for others in this life and in heaven

*Our Christian duty to pray for others does not cease when we depart this life and go to heaven. If anything, the saints are far more desirous of praying for us now that they stand in God's presence—and their prayers are far more powerful than before.*



For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

(Romans 1:9–12)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I invoke the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints? Although I ask God directly for my intentions, do I also ask his friends the saints to pray for me that he would impart the gifts that I seek?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*I praise you and thank you, Lord, for your glorious saints. Let me never forget about them or cease asking them to pray for me.*

## We are one body in Christ

*The biblical doctrine of the communion of saints is anchored on the teaching that no member of the body of Christ can say to any other member (whether on earth or in heaven), “I do not need you.”*



For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single organ, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” ...

If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

(1 Corinthians 12:12–21, 26)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

By virtue of my Baptism, I am a member of the Body of Christ. Am I a healthy and productive member of the Body, contributing to its overall

health and wellbeing? Or am I diseased with unrepentant sin and thus causing the other members to suffer?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, preserve the health and unity of your Body, the Church. Grant that I may always be worthy of the great gift you have given me of participating in its life and growth.*

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## Our Lady and the Saints in heaven are encouraging us

*Never forget that you have friends in high places. Call on their help!*



Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

(Hebrews 12:1–2)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Is my life a race toward heaven, or am I sitting off to the side content to watch others run the race? The prize I should be seeking with all my strength is nothing less than eternal life in the presence of the Blessed Trinity and in the company of the angels and saints.

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, help me stay focused on the one thing in my life that really matters: knowing and loving you. Let me be strengthened by the prayers of your saints as I keep my eyes fixed on you, so that I may finish my race to heaven victoriously.*

## Jesus performs his first recorded miracle

*Jesus performed his first public miracle because his mother, Mary, asked him to.*



On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples. When the wine failed, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Now six stone jars were standing there, for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast.” So they took it. When the steward of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, “Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.” This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

( John 2:1–11)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

The Lord knows what I need before I do. He will give me everything necessary to live a life pleasing to him. I will invoke the Blessed Virgin Mary’s loving intercession and ponder her humble command: “do whatever he tells you.”

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, bless me with those things I lack that are necessary for me to do good for others and love you as I should. When you call me from this life, grant me your kind admittance to the heavenly wedding feast you have prepared for those who love you.*

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# An apocalyptic vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary

*Jesus Christ will triumphantly crush the head of the dragon and his mother, Mary, the “woman” prophesied in Genesis 3:15, is the dragon’s implacable enemy. She is the mother of all Christians.*



And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery. And another portent appeared in heaven; behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth; she brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which to be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days....

Then the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

(Revelation 12:1–6, 17)

## IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I recognize and honor the Blessed Virgin Mary’s special role in God’s plan of salvation? Do I invoke her prayerful intercession?



## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, I stand with you in the battle against the evil one. Give me the graces I need to emulate your mother's fidelity to you and her absolute, unwavering opposition to sin.*

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## Children are a blessing from God

*Children are a blessing from God, not a burden or a complication. He wants you to be open to his will for your life and not place any selfish restrictions on his loving providence.*



Lo, sons are a heritage from the Lord,  
the fruit of the womb a reward.  
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior  
are the sons of one's youth.  
Happy is the man who has  
his quiver full of them!  
He shall not be put to shame

(Psalm 127:3–5)

We know that in everything God works for the good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.

(Romans 8:28)

When a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world.

( John 16:21)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I open to life in my marriage? If God should decide to bless my marriage with children, more children, even many children, will I lovingly accept them in a spirit of trust knowing that he will never be outdone in generosity?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I am so often tempted to try to control every facet of my life, including those areas that only you can truly determine. Banish my fears and lack of trust and replace them with a willing confidence in your boundless wisdom and love for me.*

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## The devil always strikes at the shepherd

*Pray, pray, pray for the bishops and pastors of the Church, for they have a very heavy responsibility before God.*



So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the wild beasts....

As I live, says the Lord God, because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd; and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep; therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my sheep at their hand, and put a stop to their feeding the sheep; no longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.

“For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness.”

(Ezekiel 34:5, 8–12)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I earnestly pray that God would send his Church good and holy bishops, or am I one of those who just carps and complains about “bad bishops” but does nothing to help?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Eternal Shepherd, purify and strengthen the bishops and pastors of the Church, especially those who falter or run away from their duties. Bless your Church, Lord, with many dedicated, faithful, and courageous men to guard and guide your flock.*

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## Jesus made Simon Peter the first pope

*Simon Peter denied Christ three times. But after he repented of his treachery, and made a three-fold public profession of his love for the Lord, when Christ entrusted him with the office of supreme pastor (shepherd) of the Church.*



When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” A second time he said to him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.

( John 21:15–17)

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren.

(Luke 22:31–32)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

If the Lord would restore even someone like Peter, who swore a public denunciation of him—“I do not know this man of whom you speak!”—I have faith that he will restore me from my many sins if I repent of them.

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, your grace is more powerful than my sin. You restored Peter and even made him the chief shepherd of your Church. I ask, Lord, that you would forgive my sins and help me love and follow you, in unity with the successor of Peter, for the rest of my life.*

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## The devil's original lie is his same one today

*As the catastrophe of Adam and Eve's sin proved so devastatingly, it is suicide to accept the lies of the devil. Woe to you if you do, for he will never quit and you will never win.*



Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.

(Genesis 3:1–7)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

I have all the evidence I could possibly need to prove that the devil will say anything in an effort to destroy me. So why do I allow myself to listen, even for a moment, to his malignant, lying whispers?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus Christ, keep the evil one far away from me and far away from my family and friends! I ask you, Lord, to bind and restrict all his*



*malevolent efforts to drag me into sin. Give me the strength to not ever even pause to consider his lies.*

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## Trust in the Lord and he will fight for you!

*Take courage! Rely on the Lord and be stout of heart, trusting in his mercy and protection.*



And Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be still.” The Lord said to Moses, “Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward.”

(Exodus 14:13–14)

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

(Joshua 1:9)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

*My life can suddenly become overwhelmed with unexpected challenges, misfortune, and ominous storms of trouble and strife. Do I quickly lose hope and begin sinking beneath the dark waters of my own fears? Or do I turn to the Lord with trust in times of distress?*

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Save me, Lord, and protect me from all temptations to doubt your love for me.*

*Jesus, I trust in you!*

## A powerful prayer in times of danger and distress

*There is no challenge in this life that is too big for you and God to handle together.*



The Lord is my light and my salvation;  
whom shall I fear?  
The Lord is the stronghold of my life;  
of whom shall I be afraid?  
When evildoers assail me,  
uttering slanders against me,  
my adversaries and foes,  
they shall stumble and fall.  
Though a host encamp against me,  
my heart shall not fear;  
though war arise against me,  
yet I will be confident.  
Deliver me, O Lord, from evil men;  
preserve me from violent men,  
who plan evil things in their heart,  
and stir up wars continually.  
They make their tongue sharp as a serpent's,  
and under their lips is the poison of vipers.  
Guard me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked;  
preserve me from violent men,  
who have planned to trip up my feet.

(Psalm 27:1–3, 140:1–4)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

After all the countless good things God has done for me and all the myriad ways he has proven his love to me, why do I still sometimes doubt his promises?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Thank you, Lord, for your loving protection. When dangers, hardships, and hindrances crowd around me, I seek refuge in your love for me, O mighty King.*

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## God manifests his power in our weakness

*“At the very white-hot center of this tension between the divinity of the mission and the poor, weak, human instrumentality there is always the outpouring of the love of Christ.... This tension is greatest, perhaps, for those who try to love him with total surrender.” (Fulton J. Sheen)*



But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

(2 Corinthians 4:7–11)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

What a mystery is God's love for me! That he should desire to fill the weak and fragile vessel of my humanity with his own limitless beauty and power should bring me to my knees in awestruck wonder and gratitude.

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus Christ, I offer you my weakness, that you would animate it with your strength, my sufferings, that the triumph of your passion, death, and Resurrection would shine forth in me.*

## Avoid these kinds of people

*The old adage is true: Show me your friends and I'll show you your future.*



But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of stress. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it. Avoid such people.

(2 Timothy 3:1–5)

I appeal to you, brethren, to take note of those who create dissension and difficulties, in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught; avoid them.

(Romans 16:17)

O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, for by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith.

Grace be with you.

(1 Timothy 6:20–21)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I reckless about choosing my friends or do I exercise care and caution? Do I feed my appetite for entertainment with media that promotes or even celebrates violence, immorality, and pride? Am I willing to discontinue a bad friendship out of love for Christ?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I want to seek holiness, and I know there are certain people and things that are barriers to my achieving that goal. Help me, therefore, to choose my friends prudently and do my best to avoid all near occasions of sin.*

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# God will not turn away one who is contrite of heart

*If you want to live, turn to the Lord in faith and repentance.*



Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him,  
on those who hope in his steadfast love,  
that he may deliver their soul from death,  
and keep them alive in famine.

Our soul waits for the Lord;  
he is our help and shield.

Yea, our heart is glad in him,  
because we trust in his holy name.

Let thy steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us,  
even as we hope in thee.

that he may deliver their soul from death,  
and keep them alive in famine.

“You give your mouth free rein for evil,  
and your tongue frames deceit.”

(Psalm 33:18–22, 50:19)

For thus says the high and lofty One  
who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:  
“I dwell in the high and holy place,  
and also with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit,  
to revive the spirit of the humble,  
and to revive the heart of the contrite.”

(Isaiah 57:15)



## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I truly sorry for all the sins of my life, and am I willing to turn my back on them, once and for all? When I sin and then repent, is it out of fear of punishment only, or because my sins have offended God, who is deserving of all my love?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Jesus, in the words of the good thief on the Cross, remember me when you come into your kingdom! Save me from my sins, Lord, for you are my help and my salvation.*

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## The key to getting into heaven

*The Bible is clear: faith alone cannot save you. You must do the will of the Father if you wish to be saved.*



“Not every one who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.’

“Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.”

(Matthew 7:21–27)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I a pseudo-Christian who’s all talk and no action? Am I building the house of my faith on the solid rock of obedience to Christ’s teachings, or on the shifting sand of following my own whims and preferences?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, help me with your saving grace to build my house firmly upon the rock.*

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## A terrible warning to those who call evil “good”

*This passage describes with hideous precision pro-abortion politicians with their lying rhetoric about abortion being “good for women.”*



Woe to those who call evil good  
and good evil,  
who put darkness for light  
and light for darkness,  
who put bitter for sweet  
and sweet for bitter!  
Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes,  
and shrewd in their own sight!  
Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees,  
and the writers who keep writing oppression,  
to turn aside the needy from justice  
and to rob the poor of my people of their right,  
that widows may be their spoil,  
and that they may make the fatherless their prey!  
What will you do on the day of punishment,  
in the storm which will come from afar?  
To whom will you flee for help,  
and where will you leave your wealth?

(Isaiah 5:20–21, 10:1–3)

IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I guilty of the things described in this passage? Abortion truly makes the unborn child “fatherless” and “motherless” and “prey” for the abortionist. Do I speak out against this terrible crime against the unborn?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, save this wicked generation from itself. Have mercy on those who participate in the evil of abortion. Convert their hearts, Lord, and give them the grace to repent before the day of punishment draws nigh.*

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## This is how God wants you to love him

*What God asks of you is not at all complicated.*



“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart.”

(Deuteronomy 6:4–6)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I keep the Lord’s teachings on my heart? Are they in my heart? Is my love for him ardent and unfeigned or is it just lip service?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, my God, help me to love you as I ought. Teach me to love and live according to your holy commandments all the days of my life.*

## Truth divides as well as unites

*Christ is calling you to be his disciple. Are you ready and willing to answer the call?*



“Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s foes will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.”

(Matthew 10:34–39)

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build, and was not able to finish.’ Or what king, going to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends an embassy and asks terms of peace. So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

(Luke 14:26–33)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Is there anyone or anything in my life that I value more highly than Jesus Christ? Am I willing to endure the loss of human respect, even that of someone I love, for the sake of fidelity to the Lord and to his teachings?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I have heard you calling in the night, but my will is flimsy and I am afraid of many things. Help me respond to your call with courageous love, not counting the cost of being your disciple. Lift up my drooping hands and strengthen my weak knees.*

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## A warning to those who stubbornly persist in sin

*Simply put, if you obstinately refuse to turn to the Lord and abandon your sins, you are a fool. And you will not inherit the kingdom of heaven.*



For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles.

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error.

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct. They were filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them.

(Romans 1:18–23, 26–32)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Are the fleeting pleasures of sin worth more than a peaceful conscience, friendship with God, and the glories of eternal life? Of course not! So why do I persist in sinning? Have I forgotten that only hell awaits those who refuse God's grace and die unrepentant in that wretched state?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, without your mercy and grace, I could never escape the filthy pit of my sins; nor, without you, could I keep myself from falling back into it. Save me, Lord.*

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## Overcome evil by the good you do for others

*Just as water quenches fire, a liberal dose of charity can extinguish anger, envy, and enmity.*



Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; never be conceited. Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” No, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

(Romans 12:9–21)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Does my pride prevent me from showing charity to others, especially those who do and say things to offend or irritate me?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, you are meek and humble of heart. Teach me to love others as you love me. Though I don’t deserve your love and frequently offend you with*

*my sins, you always forgive me. Help me to be charitable to others, especially my enemies, out of love for you.*

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## Christ's friends do what he commands

*Obedience to the Lord's commandments will not make your life difficult or miserable. Quite the contrary! It will liberate you from the slavery of sin and bring you real, lasting joy.*



“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. This I command you, to love one another.”

( John 15:9–17)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Is it not true that I sometimes secretly *relish* the feelings of anger and desire for vengeance I feel toward those who have offended me? How ridiculous! I must banish those petty attitudes and love others as Christ loves me.

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I repent of all the ways in which I don't live up to your commandment to show love to my neighbor. I want to experience the fullness of love which comes from your grace at work, in my dealings with others.*

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## Charity, the queen of virtues, must reign in your heart

*“If you don’t have love in your heart, you have the worst kind of heart trouble.” (Bob Hope)*



If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

(1 Corinthians 13:1–7)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I jealous, boastful, arrogant, or rude with others—outwardly or in my own mind? Do I nurse grudges and resentments against others? Do I secretly rejoice when people I do not like experience a defeat or setback?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, help me with your grace to overthrow and cast out from my heart all traces of hardheartedness toward others! Let all my thoughts, words, and deeds be rooted in charity for others.*

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## Be cheerful in your giving

*Think of how often others have been generous with you, even at times when you did not deserve their generosity.*



The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. As it is written,

“He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor;  
his righteousness endures for ever.”

(2 Corinthians 9:6–8)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

I love generosity when I am the beneficiary of its blessings, but am I instinctively generous toward others when I will receive no benefit as a result? How can I cultivate generosity toward others in my daily life?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, you have lavished countless good gifts upon me, even though I am utterly unworthy of them. Teach me to imitate your divine largesse so that I may help others generously and cheerfully, knowing that you gave me every good thing I have.*

## Before you were conceived, God knew you

*Never forget that God did not have to create you. But he did create you. From all eternity, he knew and loved you and brought you into existence so that you could love him in return.*



For thou didst form my inward parts,  
thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise thee, for thou art fearful and wonderful.  
Wonderful are thy works!  
Thou knowest me right well;  
my frame was not hidden from thee,  
when I was being made in secret,  
intricately wrought in the depths of the earth.  
Thy eyes beheld my unformed substance;  
in thy book were written, every one of them,  
the days that were formed for me,  
when as yet there was none of them.

(Psalm 139:13–16)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Even though some things in this life may be difficult and painful, do I ever thank God for creating me? Do I discern in my own existence the primordial truth that God created me out of love and, therefore, for the sake of my happiness?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, I am so very grateful for your unmerited gift of being. Of all the possible people whom you could have created, you chose to create me.*

*Enlighten my mind and soften my heart that I may respond in love to your awe-inspiring gift.*

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## Turn from sin and you will live

*God does not desire that anyone should be lost to damnation. He has provided the means of avoiding hell to everyone, though some tragically refuse to heed him.*



None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness which he has done he shall live. Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity and does the same abominable things that the wicked man does, shall he live? None of the righteous deeds which he has done shall be remembered; for the treachery of which he is guilty and the sin he has committed, he shall die.

“Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die for it; for the iniquity which he has committed he shall die. Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is lawful and right, he shall save his life. Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions which he had committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. Yet the house of Israel says, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ O house of Israel, are my ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just?”

“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, says the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of any one, says the Lord God; so turn, and live.”

(Ezekiel 18:22–32)

## IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I headed toward heaven or hell? Do I take God’s warnings about sin seriously or do I brush them off thinking that just because I think I’m a “good person” everything will be okay?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Justify me, O Lord, by your grace, a gift I do not merit but for which I beg you. Look not on my sins, but on the faith of your servant, and grant me the peace and unity of your kingdom where you live for ever and ever.*

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## Worry about your own sins, not your neighbor's

*Who am I, a sinner, that I should sit in judgment of my neighbor?*



Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

(Matthew 7:3–5)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

My own heart is a mystery to me, so how can I presume to judge the hearts of others? Why do I so easily forget my own grievous sins and waste precious time brooding over the real and perceived sins of others? What folly!

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord! Cure me of my contemptible disease of judging others. In the words of your Servant, Saint Patrick of Ireland, let me always recognize myself as "a sinner, most uncultivated and least of all the faithful, and despised in the eyes of many."*

## Do you know where your treasure is?

*If you think this life is about amassing money and earthly possessions, your thinking is wrong.*



“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

(Matthew 6:19–21)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

What a fool I am for wasting precious time and energy scrabbling together a welter of worthless earthly “stuff,” rather than laying up treasure in heaven. What will I do when this life ends and I am forced to leave behind all my material possessions?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, help me detach from any worldly possession or relationship that is spiritually detrimental to my love for you. Teach me to seek first the kingdom of heaven and, only then, attend to the necessities of this life.*

## Signs of the end

*Yes, you may be living in or near the end times, but it is quite possible that you are not. Regardless, you must be on guard lest you be taken by surprise on the day when your life ends.*



And Jesus answered them, “Take heed that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: all this is but the beginning of the sufferings.

“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and put you to death; and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because wickedness is multiplied, most men’s love will grow cold. But he who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come.”

(Matthew 24:4–14)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I caught up in a spiritually unhealthy mania of speculation and needless worry about the end of the world? Do I realize that when God calls me from this life my own personal “end of the world” will arrive? Am I watching and praying for that day?

### CLOSING PRAYER



*Lord, if it be your will that my life should coincide with the end times, I accept it with trust in your loving providence. Regardless of whether I live to see your second coming, I beg for all the graces I need to prepare for the day you call me forth from this life.*

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## Purgatory is real

*Remember, Revelation 21:27 declares that “Nothing unclean will enter heaven.”*



According to the commission of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it. Let each man take care how he builds upon it. For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble—each man’s work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?

(1 Corinthians 3:10–16)

But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

(Revelation 21:27)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

If I died today, can I honestly say I would be ready to meet the all holy God face to face? Are there not things in me that are “unclean” and in need of purification before I will be ready and worthy to behold the glorious presence of the Triune God?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Thank you, Lord, for your infinite mercy, for paying the eternal penalty for my sins, and for your fiery love that, after death, purifies those souls that love you and are destined for heaven, removing all vestiges of sin that would prevent their eternal union with you.*

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## The folly of assuming you have plenty of time

*Like an hourglass with a certain number of grains of sand within it, God has appointed your life to last only a certain number of days, and you have absolutely no idea how many there are. So why do you foolishly assume that you have “plenty of time”?*



Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and get gain”; whereas you do not know about tomorrow. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and we shall do this or that.” As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

( James 4:13–17)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

I have no idea when my life will end. All I know is that death will come for me eventually. Am I doing anything to prepare for the real possibility that God may call me, sooner rather than later? If he called me into eternity today, would I be ready?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, help me value the preciousness of the time you have given me in this life and to use it well. Don’t let my death take me by surprise; unprepared to meet you face to face.*

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## God will reward your confidence in him

*What good is it for you to profess your “faith” in Christ and yet live in a way that shows you don’t really trust in his promises?*



But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on the prisoners, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised.

“For yet a little while,  
and the coming one shall come and shall not tarry;  
but my righteous one shall live by faith,  
and if he shrinks back,  
my soul has no pleasure in him.”

But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and keep their souls.

(Hebrews 10:33–39)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I just a “big talker” when it comes to trusting in God’s promises, or do I really and truly *trust* him, such that I am willing to endure whatever trials I may suffer in defense of my profession of faith?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Jesus, teach me to walk by faith. Let me never doubt that you will be faithful to your promises, and preserve me from all temptations to be unfaithful to mine.*

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## Be considerate to others

*Remember, you can evangelize others through your good example, but you can also anti-evangelize through bad example.*



Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall....

Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.

(1 Corinthians 8:9–13, 10:24)

Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

(Philippians 2:3–4)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I ever consider how my careless words and actions can cause others to stumble in their efforts to follow Jesus Christ? Do I make any conscious effort to encourage and edify others?

### CLOSING PRAYER



*Lord, help me to be watchful for opportunities to strengthen the faith of others and to be on guard against doing anything to confuse or weaken them.*

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## Do not despise others

*What foolishness it is when you look down on others. What do you have of your own to boast about in God's eyes?*



Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?

(Malachi 2:10)

But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be liable to the hell of fire.

(Matthew 5:22)

Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; never be conceited.

(Romans 12:16)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I spiteful toward others? Do I think highly of myself but disdain those whom I regard as "beneath" me? Do I seek praise for myself but become irritated or impatient when others receive praise instead of me?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, my pride and anger so often get the better of me. Heal me of these defects, I pray, that I may become ever more charitable and sincere in my attitudes and actions toward others.*

## Life is short. Pray hard

*If you are wise, you will make the best possible use of the time God has given you on earth. Otherwise, if you fritter away your time, when it is all gone you will have little, if any, good to show for it.*



What is man, and of what use is he?

What is his good and what is his evil?

The number of a man's days is great if he reaches a hundred years.

Like a drop of water from the sea and a grain of sand

so are a few years in the day of eternity.

Therefore the Lord is patient with them

and pours out his mercy upon them.

He sees and recognizes that their end will be evil;

therefore he grants them forgiveness in abundance.

(Sirach 18:8–12)

Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and we shall do this or that."

( James 4:15)

"All flesh is like grass

and all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers, and the flower falls."

(1 Peter 1:24)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

There is nothing wrong with enjoying rest and relaxation with benign activities. But do I waste my time on truly frivolous or, worse yet, sinful

pastimes?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*My Lord, starting this very moment, I resolve to make good use of your gift of time. Help me to use it wisely and in ways that are helpful to others and pleasing to you.*

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## Sin has both eternal and temporal consequences

*Hammering a nail into a piece of wood is analogous to committing a sin. Removing the nail is analogous to God forgiving the sin. The hole which remains is analogous to the temporal effect or consequence due to sin. It must be repaired and the wood restored to its original state.*



And to Adam he said,  
 “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,  
 and have eaten of the tree  
 of which I commanded you,  
 ‘You shall not eat of it,’  
 cursed is the ground because of you;  
 in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;  
 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you;  
 and you shall eat the plants of the field.  
 In the sweat of your face  
 you shall eat bread  
 till you return to the ground,  
 for out of it you were taken;  
 you are dust,  
 and to dust you shall return.”

(Genesis 3:17–19)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Adam and Eve’s original sin caused catastrophic consequences for themselves and the rest of humanity, including toil, pain, sickness, and

death. Christ's atoning sacrifice paid the eternal penalties due to sin, though it did not eliminate sin's temporal effects.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Eternal Father, I am heartily sorry for all the sins that I have committed and for all the sins that I have caused others to commit. Accept my sincere penance as reparation for the damage my sins have caused and may it be restitution to those against whom I have sinned.*

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## Hell is real and people really go there

*“The safest road to hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.” (C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*)*



And to grant rest with us to you who are afflicted, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.

(2 Thessalonians 1:7–9)

And they marched up over the broad earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever....

“But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

(Revelation 20:9–10, 21:8)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

*Of course the devil wants me to think that hell is not real. And why wouldn’t he? Nothing would serve his venomous purposes better than for me to be lulled into a false sense of security, imagining that “hell” is just medieval, religious hokum. Have I fallen for that lie?*

## CLOSING PRAYER

*O my Jesus, forgive us our sins. Save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to heaven, especially those most in need of thy mercy.*

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## You cannot imagine the glory of heaven

*The difference between the comfort of the womb and the happiness of this earthly life is just a faint comparison to the difference between this life and the unimaginable beauty and joy in eternal life that awaits those who love God.*



But, as it is written,  
“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,  
nor the heart of man conceived,  
what God has prepared for those who love him.”

For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood.

(1 Corinthians 2:9, 13:9–12)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

How can I expect to make any progress toward heaven as long as I am unwilling to put aside the childish things that keep me firmly rooted in the trivialities of this passing world?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, thank you for being patient with me as I struggle to turn away from childish things and turn toward, seeking after that fullness of*

*understanding that you offer me. I want to be with you in heaven, and trust solely in your merciful grace to get there.*

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## “Love your neighbor” is not just a slogan

*Sure, it's easy to talk about loving others in the abstract, but actually doing it is something else altogether. Keep in mind that God is unimpressed with the former but absolutely insistent on the latter.*



And the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that he is one, and there is no other but he; and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And after that no one dared to ask him any question.

(Mark 12: 32–34)

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

(John 13:34)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Christ’s command that I love my neighbor is at the heart of his gospel. But has that command really sunk into my heart?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*My Lord, help me go beyond my superficial thinking and talking about “loving others” and, by your grace, enable me to actually do it.*

## There is mighty power in the name of the Lord Jesus

*Speak the holy name of Jesus only with great reverence, and invoke it in devout confidence whenever you encounter obstacles or are accosted by the devil's stratagems. The evil one flees from the sacred name of Jesus!*



“And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

(Mark 16:17–18)

The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!”

(Luke 10:17)

But Peter said, “I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”

(Acts 3:6)

“I will deliver him; I will set him on high because he acknowledges my name.”

(Psalm 90:14)

“The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the just man runs to it and is safe.”

(Proverbs 18:10)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I guilty of the sin of taking the Lord's name in vain? Do I teach those under my authority to reverence the Lord's name and admonish them when I hear them insult it?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.*

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## Cultivate the fruits of the Spirit in your own soul

*If you want a healthy soul, you must have a steady diet of the fruits of the Holy Spirit.*



But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

(Galatians 5:22–25)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I realize that the only way I can effectively root out my vices is to cultivate their opposing virtues? Does my life radiate virtues such as peace, joy, patience, and self-control? If not, what am I doing to change that?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*My God, in the words of Saint Thomas Aquinas, I pray, "Plant deep in me all the virtues that I might be devout in divine matters, discerning in human affairs, and burdensome to no one in fulfilling my own bodily needs. Order me inwardly through a good life, that I might do what is right and what will be meritorious for myself and a good example for others."*

## Honor your father and mother

*Never forget that God in his wisdom chose your mother and father to give you the precious gift of life, a gift you cannot repay.*



Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you.

(Exodus 20:12)

Whoever glorifies his father will have long life,  
and whoever obeys the Lord will refresh his mother;  
he will serve his parents as his masters.

(Sirach 3:6–7)

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth.”

(Ephesians 6:1–3)

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

(Colossians 3:20)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I disrespectful to my parents or to their memory? Do I neglect them? Am I attentive to their needs, whether emotional, spiritual, or material? Do I pray for my parents each day? If my mother or father has wronged me somehow, have I forgiven them from my heart?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Eternal Father, I humbly ask your blessing for my mother and father. Have mercy on them. Please reward them for all the good they have done in this life and forgive them for whatever ways they have fallen short of your commands. May I rejoice with my parents forever in heaven, praising your goodness.*

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## Our Lady's canticle of praise to the Lord

*The more you love God as Mary did, the more he will do for you what he did for her.*



And Mary said,  
“My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.  
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed;  
for he who is mighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.  
And his mercy is on those who fear him  
from generation to generation.  
He has shown strength with his arm,  
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts,  
he has put down the mighty from their thrones,  
and exalted those of low degree;  
he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent empty away.  
He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
as he spoke to our fathers,  
to Abraham and to his posterity for ever.”

(Luke 1:46–55)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Is my own relationship with the Lord like the one expressed here by the Blessed Virgin Mary? Her joy, peace, and humility are the beautiful

consequences of a life wholly given over to God, without reservation.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I give you thanks and praise for your blessed mother's radiant example of trust in your love. Help me to become more like her each day.*

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## Hating others is a form of murder

*When you are tempted to hate someone, just remember the pain and anguish you experienced when someone hated you. How could you inflict that pain on someone else?*



We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love remains in death. Any one who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But if any one 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? Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth.

(1 John 3:14–18)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I serious about living an authentic Christian life or not? If I am, there can be no room in me for anything but the love of Jesus Christ. If I hold grudges and despise others, how can I call myself a follower of his?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, even though I do not deserve your love, you still love me. Even though I sin against you in many ways, large and small, you still forgive me. Teach me to be like you—to love even those who dislike me and to forgive everyone, even those who hold something against me.*

## Never be ashamed of your holy calling

*These are wicked times. Christianity is increasingly coming under attack and persecution by a world that reviles the Lord Jesus Christ, his gospel, and his Church. You must, therefore, stand firm in your Christian conviction and not be frightened or cowed by opposition.*



Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but take your share of suffering for the gospel in the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago, and now has manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, and therefore I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.

(2 Timothy 1:8–12)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I willing to stand up for Jesus and his Church even if it might mean that I suffer? What is more important to me, truth or human respect?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, you know how easily discouraged I can become when trials and obstacles come my way. Give me the strength and courage I need to be humble and courageous when I encounter opposition or even persecution for your name's sake.*

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## Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit

*God created your body out of love for you, and he wants you to make good use of it out of love for him.*



Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two shall become one." But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

(1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:15–20)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Knowing how tempting it is to misuse the wonderful gift of my body, what am I doing to ensure that I am a worthy temple of the Holy Spirit? Am I modest in my attire? Attentive to my health? Do I avoid sinful actions that would defile my body?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Thank you, O Lord, for the marvelous gift of my body. I resolve today to do nothing that would jeopardize the hallowedness of my body for I want*

*you to dwell within me all the days of my life. Please give me the graces I need to resist temptations to misuse my body.*

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## Hold fast to your hope in Christ

*Do you really desire to be a true Christian in more than name only? If so, then make this passage the pattern of your life and that is what you will become.*



Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

(Hebrews 10:19–25)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Is my Christianity merely something I do for an hour a week on Sunday? Or am I committed to the Lord Jesus Christ with my whole heart? Do I draw near to him with a heart full of love and confidence?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Jesus, my king and high priest! Teach me to love and follow you as I should and to encourage others to do the same. Help me hold fast to my hope in you without wavering.*



## Christ's gospel is contained in Scripture and Tradition

*“There exists a close connection and communication between Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end.” (Dei Verbum, 9)*



But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter.

(2 Thessalonians 2:13–15)

Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.

(2 Timothy 1:13–14)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I pay careful attention to the teachings of Christ and the Apostles as they come down to me in both Scripture and Apostolic Tradition?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, let me never fail to guard and live according to the truth that has been entrusted to me in your Church. Help me to become more diligent in*

*studying your doctrines and more faithful in living them out in my daily life.*

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# Marriage and family form the foundation of God's plan

*God ordained marriage between a man and a woman to be the bedrock of human society.*



Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called Woman,  
because she was taken out of Man.”

(Genesis 2:18–24)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I dissent from the Church's teaching on the sanctity of marriage, either in my thoughts or actions? Do I exercise my vote in support of laws or candidates that oppose the natural law revealed by God regarding the importance and sanctity of marriage?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, at a time when your holy institution of marriage is increasingly attacked by those who wish to abolish your law, help me to be clear in my understanding of this sacrament, winsome and convincing in my efforts to explain it to others, and faithful to it myself.*

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## Don't become discouraged, even when times are tough

*This life is not called a “vale of tears” for nothing. Don't be surprised by difficulties and setbacks. Conquer them by grace and peace that comes from being God's beloved son or daughter.*



Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons?—

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,  
nor lose courage when you are punished by him.  
For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves,  
and chastises every son whom he receives.”

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time at their pleasure, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

(Hebrews 12:3–11)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Have I lost courage because of the troubles I've experienced in this life? Do I trust God to be faithful to his promise that, no matter what may happen, he loves me and will see me through even the most difficult challenges I might experience?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Jesus, I trust in you. I have faith that no matter what trials I may have to go through in this earthly sojourn toward my heavenly home, you are with me and whatever you may permit to happen to me, it will be for my benefit as long as I remain united with you.*

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## Rely on God's saving power, not on yourself

*The one who imagines he can “do it himself,” without God's help, is woefully mistaken.*



Trust in the Lord with all your heart,  
and do not rely on your own insight.

A man's steps are ordered by the Lord;  
how then can man understand his way?

He who trusts in his own mind is a fool;  
but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.

(Proverbs 3:5, 20:24, 28:26)

Why, we felt that we had received the sentence of death; but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.

(2 Corinthians 1:9)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I so proud that I think I don't need to rely on God's guidance and assistance for the needs of my daily life? Do I realize that no good thing that I have comes from me but only from God?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I rely too much on my own efforts and not nearly enough on your strength. Show me how to reverse this attitude so that I may know and live according to the truth that, without you, I can do nothing.*

## Judge not, lest you be judged

*As Saint Paul reminds us, you should not even judge yourself because only God truly knows your heart. So why do you judge others?*



For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.

(Matthew 7:2)

And he said to them, “Take heed what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you.

(Mark 4:24)

“Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

(Luke 6:37–38)

But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. I do not even judge myself. I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.

(1 Corinthians 4:3–4)

IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...



It is true that I sometimes (perhaps often) judge the hearts of those around me. This is an especially despicable form of pride that I must root out by cultivating the virtues of humility and charity.

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Have mercy on me, O Lord. Purify me from my foolish pride that causes me to presume I can do what only you can do—judge others. Give me holy discernment to rightly judge outward actions, but help me to avoid thinking I can judge someone's inward heart.*

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## Stern warnings about the evil of drunkenness

*Only fools disregard God's warnings against drunkenness and carousing.*



These also reel with wine  
and stagger with strong drink;  
the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink,  
they are confused with wine,  
they stagger with strong drink;  
they err in vision,  
they stumble in giving judgment.

(Isaiah 28:7)

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit ...

(Ephesians 5:15–18)

Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

(Galatians 5:19–21)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I intemperate in how much alcohol I consume? Do I get drunk? Am I enmeshed in a quagmire of my own sinful, sensual appetites?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I want to be worthy in your eyes to inherit the kingdom of heaven!  
Take away from me, I beg you, anything in my life that would prevent me  
from achieving this blessed goal.*

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## The end does not justify the means

*We may never do evil to achieve a good goal.*



But if through my falsehood God's truthfulness abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

(Romans 3:7–8)

“For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous,  
and his ears are open to their prayer.  
But the face of the Lord is against  
those that do evil.”

(1 Peter 3:12)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

This life is filled with temptations to employ evil actions in pursuit of good objectives. Have I been guilty of falling into this form of immorality? Have I given bad advice to others, suggesting that they do something I know is immoral simply because they want to achieve some good outcome?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, help me stand firmly and without fear on the solid foundation of the natural law, so clearly enunciated in the moral teachings of the Church. Never let my desire for a good thing become corrupted and diverted by resorting to evil as a means of achieving it.*

## The end of the world will come when God commands it

*Watch and pray that you may not be taken by surprise on that terrible day.*



When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale; the sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong, and every one, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?”

(Revelation 6:12–17)

For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

(Matthew 24:27, 29–31)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Whether I live to see the end of the world or not, one thing is certain: I must eventually die and be judged by Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9:27). What am I doing to prepare myself for this inevitability?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I desire nothing else than to faithfully do your will in this life so that I will be ready for the day I meet you face to face.*

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## Praise the Lord for his steadfast love

*The one person you can always count on is God.*



Transgression speaks to the wicked  
 deep in his heart;  
 there is no fear of God  
 before his eyes.  
 For he flatters himself in his own eyes  
 that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated.  
 The words of his mouth are mischief and deceit;  
 he has ceased to act wisely and do good.  
 He plots mischief while on his bed;  
 he sets himself in a way that is not good;  
 he spurns not evil.  
 Thy steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens,  
 thy faithfulness to the clouds.  
 Thy righteousness is like the mountains of God,  
 thy judgments are like the great deep;  
 man and beast thou savest, O Lord.  
 How precious is thy steadfast love, O God!  
 The children of men take refuge in the shadow of thy wings.  
 They feast on the abundance of thy house,  
 and thou givest them drink from the river of thy delights.  
 For with thee is the fountain of life;  
 in thy light do we see light.  
 O continue thy steadfast love to those who know thee,  
 and thy salvation to the upright of heart!  
 Let not the foot of arrogance come upon me,  
 nor the hand of the wicked drive me away.  
 There the evildoers lie prostrate,

they are thrust down, unable to rise.

(Psalm 36:1–12)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I honestly trust in God's steadfast love or, rather, do I really trust only in myself? Which type of person described in this passage am I most like? The arrogant one who flatters himself thinking that his sins are secret or the humble one with an upright heart?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, I am so grateful for your steadfast love which endures forever. Teach me to be steadfast and faithful in my love for you and for those around me.*

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## It's not too late to cry out to God for grace and healing!

*Are you content to remain where you are in the wasteland of sin and selfishness or are you now ready to be transformed and made truly happy by God's grace? What could possibly be an easier decision to make than this?*



O Lord, Father and Ruler of my life,  
do not abandon me to their counsel,  
and let me not fall because of them!  
O that whips were set over my thoughts,  
and the discipline of wisdom over my mind!  
That they may not spare me in my errors,  
and that it may not pass by my sins;  
in order that my mistakes may not be multiplied,  
and my sins may not abound;  
then I will not fall before my adversaries,  
and my enemy will not rejoice over me.  
O Lord, Father and God of my life,  
do not give me haughty eyes,  
and remove from me evil desire.  
Let neither gluttony nor lust overcome me,  
and do not surrender me to a shameless soul.

(Sirach 23:1–6)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Even if I have lived my life till now in a fog of sin and dissipation, I can still return to the house of my Father. He will accept me lovingly if I would

just rise and go to him.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I am wretched and unhappy without you in my life. I repent of my sins and ask you to receive me back into the loving embrace of your grace and truth.*

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## In your misery, call out to God for mercy and comfort

*In your misery and loneliness, ask God to comfort you. He will.*



Turn thou to me, and be gracious to me;  
for I am lonely and afflicted.  
Relieve the troubles of my heart,  
and bring me out of my distresses.  
Consider my affliction and my trouble,  
and forgive all my sins.  
Consider how many are my foes,  
and with what violent hatred they hate me.  
Oh guard my life, and deliver me;  
let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in thee.  
May integrity and uprightness preserve me,  
for I wait for thee.

(Psalm 25:16–21)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I only think about God when times are difficult? Do I only pray when I'm in trouble? Or do I live always with an awareness of God's love for me and his presence in my life?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*I need you, Lord, for everything. Whether my circumstances are easy or difficult, happy or doleful, peaceful or tumultuous, I will trust in you for all that I need. Thank you, Lord.*

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# Motherhood is a crown of glory for women

*Marriage is a holy institution and motherhood is its crowning glory.*



For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, rule their households, and give the enemy no occasion to revile us.

(1 Timothy 2:13–15, 5:14)

## IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I see motherhood and family life as the great gift and blessing from God that it is, or has my attitude been tainted with the world’s disdain for bearing and raising children?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*God my father, I thank you and praise you for your boundless generosity in dignifying women with the unique blessing of motherhood. Thank you for my own mother, Lord. I pray that you would reward her many sacrifices and grant her the crown of salvation.*

## Modesty is a sure sign of love for God

*Humility is among the most precious and powerful of virtues. From it flow many other virtues, such as modesty, chastity, moderation, meekness, and patience.*



Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

(Philippians 4:8)

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience.

(Colossians 3:12)

And keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are abused, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

(1 Peter 3:16)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I modest or impudent in my actions and attitudes? Do I dress modestly and seek to practice custody of the eyes, or do I tend toward lasciviousness in my attire and in my words. Do I look with lust upon others? Am I impatient and hard-headed?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, make me truly humble. Help me with your grace to detach and discard the tentacles of pride that try to encircle my heart.*

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# Those who love and obey God will go to heaven

*The choice is yours: You can go to heaven or to hell. How you live your life will determine where you end up. So, which will it be for you?*



Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and every one who loves and practices falsehood.

(Revelation 22:14–15)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

If I want to avoid hell and go to heaven, am I cooperating with God's saving grace so that will happen? Or am I deceiving myself by imagining that I can wallow in unrepented sin and yet still get to heaven?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Wash me clean, O Lord, with your mercy and grace. Keep me from walking away from you. Never let me become ensnared by sin and disobedience but teach me to be faithful to your loving commandments that I might be forever in the company of your saints in heaven.*



## There is a type of curiosity that is not pleasing to God

*Curiosity about the universe is fine, but do not pry into other people's lives. Just as "knowledge of sensible things is directed to something harmful, as looking on a woman is directed to lust, even so the busy inquiry into other people's actions is directed to detraction." (St. Thomas Aquinas)*



Reflect upon what has been assigned to you,  
for you do not need what is hidden.  
Do not meddle in what is beyond your tasks,  
for matters too great for human understanding have been shown you.  
For their hasty judgment has led many astray,  
and wrong opinion has caused their thoughts to slip.  
A stubborn mind will be afflicted at the end,  
and whoever loves danger will perish by it.

(Sirach 3:22–16)

When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?"  
Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!"

(John 21:21–22)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I have an inordinate or inappropriate curiosity about people and things that are none of my business or beyond my intellectual capacity? Am I a busybody, a scandalmonger, a meddler, or a snoop? Have I acknowledged these sins in the sacrament of Confession?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Keep me humble, Lord, and focused on what you want me to be attentive to. Don't let my curiosity get the better of me and lead me into sin.*

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## Always reverence and glorify God's holy name

*Consider the fact that in the Old Covenant, taking the Lord's name in vain merited capital punishment—that's how serious this issue is in God's eyes.*



I will thank thee for ever,  
because thou hast done it.  
I will proclaim thy name, for it is good,  
in the presence of the godly.

(Psalm 52:9)

Save us, O Lord our God,  
and gather us from among the nations,  
that we may give thanks to thy holy name  
and glory in thy praise.

(Psalm 106:47)

Daniel said:  
“Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever,  
to whom belong wisdom and might.

(Daniel 2:20)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I glorify and honor God's holy name in my speech, or do I blaspheme him with crass, disrespectful, or even sacrilegious words? Do I

teach my children and others under my influence to have reverence for God, or do I scandalize them by my bad example?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, may I never offend you by taking your name in vain! Teach me to honor your holy name as a means of honoring you.*

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## The Lord is near to you, especially when you need him

*This life is filled with dangers, uncertainty, and sudden calamities. But fear not, for the Lord is with you, even when he doesn't appear to be.*



Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Beth-sa'ida, while he dismissed the crowd. And after he had taken leave of them, he went up into the hills to pray. And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. And he saw that they were distressed in rowing, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw him, and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; have no fear." And he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded.

(Mark 6:47–51)

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him.

And a great storm of wind arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care if we perish?"

And he awoke and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" And they were filled with awe,

and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?”

(Mark 4:35–41)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I have faith in God’s protection? Do I lose hope and sink toward despair when troubles seem too much for me, or do I call upon the Lord for his help? Do I have faith?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, strengthen my faith and teach me to trust you in all things, especially when I cannot see your presence in a given situation. I know you are there.*

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## In the battle for eternal life, you cannot be neutral

*Have you chosen which side you will be on?*



“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

(Luke 16:13)

“I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.

For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

Therefore, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent.

(Revelation 3:15–19)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

I know that God loves me and that he chastises and refines those he loves. Do I respond to him in faith and obedience, or am I content to remain blind, naked, and ashamed in my lukewarmness? What will it take to rouse me from my lethargy?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, enkindle your grace in my poor, dank soul so that I may burn with ardent love for you!*

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## Obey Christ and his Church

*How can you call yourself a Christian if you refuse to heed the words of those whom the Lord appointed to teach in his name and with his authority?*



“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

(Matthew 18:15–17)

Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you.

(Hebrews 13:17)

“He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

(Luke 10:16)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I ignore or reject those teachings of the Church that do not suit my preferences?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I want to hear your voice and follow you. Therefore, I will humbly listen to and obey—in all things except sin—your appointed shepherds in the Church.*

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## Beware of false prophets, who try to inveigle you

*False teachers trying to subvert the Church are nothing new. See to it that you don't fall prey to their false doctrines.*



But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their licentiousness, and because of them the way of truth will be reviled. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words; from of old their condemnation has not been idle, and their destruction has not been asleep.

(2 Peter 2:1–3)

I appeal to you, brethren, to take note of those who create dissensions and difficulties, in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by fair and flattering words they deceive the hearts of the simpleminded.

(Romans 16:17–18)

[The bishop] must hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it. For there are many insubordinate men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially the circumcision party; they must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for base gain what they have no right to teach.

(Titus 1:9–11)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I understand the teachings of the Faith well enough to recognize when someone is trying to foist a false teaching upon me? Do I ever spend time studying the *Catechism*?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, protect your Church from the scourge of false teachers. Help me to safeguard my knowledge of the truth by study, prayer, and following the magisterium of the Church.*

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## Some will oppose you because you love God

*Your love for God will irk some people. Ignore them and press forward with the work he has given you.*



“Let us lie in wait for the righteous man,  
because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions;  
he reproaches us for sins against the law,  
and accuses us of sins against our training.  
He professes to have knowledge of God,  
and calls himself a child of the Lord.  
He became to us a reproof of our thoughts;  
the very sight of him is a burden to us,  
because his manner of life is unlike that of others,  
and his ways are strange.  
We are considered by him as something base,  
and he avoids our ways as unclean;  
he calls the last end of the righteous happy,  
and boasts that God is his father.  
Let us see if his words are true,  
and let us test what will happen at the end of his life;  
for if the righteous man is God’s son, he will help him,  
and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries.  
Let us test him with insult and torture,  
that we may find out how gentle he is,  
and make trial of his forbearance.  
Let us condemn him to a shameful death,  
for, according to what he says, he will be protected.”

(Wisdom 2:12–24)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I shrink back in fear from those who are affronted by my Christian beliefs? So what if they are? I should pray for them and not be discouraged or diverted by their machinations.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, you know well what speaking and living the truth will cost those who seek to be faithful to you. Help me to remain calm, tenacious, and indomitable when opposition to my faith in you rises up against me.*

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## Yes, Jesus did claim to be God

*Let no one deceive you. Jesus Christ did know he was God, and he did publicly proclaim his divinity. What's more, many who heard this proclamation sought to kill him because they clearly understood that he claimed to be God.*



“I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me, because my word finds no place in you. I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.”

They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do what Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God; this is not what Abraham did. You do what your father did.” They said to him, “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.” Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded and came forth from God; I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.... But, because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? He who is of God hears the words of God; the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.”

“Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you claim to be?” Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing; it is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say that he is your God. But you have not known him; I know him. If I said, I do not know him, I should be a liar like you; but I do know him and I keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day; he saw it and was glad.”

( John 8:37–43, 45–47, 53–56)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I make an effort to explain and defend the Church's teaching on the divinity of Christ?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, I believe in you, I hope in you, I adore you, and I love you. I beg pardon for all who do not believe in you, do not hope in you, do not adore you, and do not love you.*

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## Don't let sin worm its way in through "little things"

*Temptation is a like a coiled serpent, waiting to strike, whenever an opportunity presents itself.*



Many have committed sin for an trifle,  
and whoever seeks to get rich will avert his eyes.  
As a stake is driven firmly into a fissure between stones,  
so sin is wedged in between selling and buying.  
If a man is not steadfast and zealous in the fear of the Lord,  
his house will be quickly overthrown.  
When a sieve is shaken, the refuse remains;  
so a man's filth remains in his thoughts.  
The kiln tests the potter's vessels;  
so the test of a man is in his reasoning.  
The fruit discloses the cultivation of a tree;  
so the expression of a thought discloses the cultivation of a man's mind.  
Do not praise a man before you hear him reason,  
for this is the test of men.  
If you pursue justice, you will attain it  
and wear it as a glorious robe.  
Birds flock with their kind;  
so truth returns to those who practice it.  
A lion lies in wait for prey;  
so does sin for the workers of iniquity.

(Sirach 27:1–10)

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

(Matthew 26:41)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Only a fool imagines himself to be “strong enough” to resist temptations apart from God’s grace! I must seek holiness through prayer and frequent reception of the sacraments if I expect to avoid being dragged down into the pit of sin by my concupiscence.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I believe the teaching of your servant Saint John Vianney: “I tell you that you have less to suffer in following the cross than in serving the world and its pleasures.” Help me to turn away decisively from the empty, sinful pleasures proffered by the world and follow you alone.*

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## The mature Christian controls his tongue

*It is true that loose lips sink ships. They also sink souls.*



Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness. For we all make many mistakes, and if any one makes no mistakes in what he says he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also. If we put bits into the mouths of horses that they may obey us, we guide their whole bodies. Look at the ships also; though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So the tongue is a little member and boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!

And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is an unrighteous world among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the cycle of nature, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by humankind, but no human being can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brethren, this ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening fresh water and brackish?

( James 3:1–11)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I control my mouth, or does my mouth control me? Do I think (and pray) before I speak?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, I would rather keep silent my whole life than say anything that would wantonly hurt or scandalize another person and thus dishonor and imperil my friendship with you.*

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## As you approach old age, remember this advice

*The man or woman who loves and lives for the Lord need not be fearful or depressed as the end of this life approaches. Far from it! As Jesus says, “Stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” (Luke 21:28)*



For old age is not honored for length of time,  
nor measured by number of years;  
but understanding is gray hair for men,  
and a blameless life is ripe old age.

(Wisdom 4:8–9)

Even to your old age I am He,  
and to gray hairs I will carry you.  
I have made, and I will bear;  
I will carry and will save.

(Isaiah 46:4)

The years of our life are threescore and ten,  
or even by reason of strength fourscore;  
yet their span is but toil and trouble;  
they are soon gone, and we fly away.  
Who considers the power of thy anger,  
and thy wrath according to the fear of thee?  
So teach us to number our days  
that we may get a heart of wisdom.  
Return, O Lord! How long?  
Have pity on thy servants!

Satisfy us in the morning with thy steadfast love,  
that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

(Psalm 90:10–14)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Have I prepared myself to die well, whenever God may call me? Do I give thanks to him for each precious day of life, and do I make the best of each day?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, someday, perhaps soon, you will call me from this life. Without you, I cannot be eternally happy or at peace. I ask you, therefore, to intensify your grace in me, deepen and purify my love for you, help me to pray well, and enable me to do as much good for others as I can for as much time as you grant me.*

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# Be humble. God knows everything. You don't

*There is nothing more farcical than a human being trying to contend with God.*



Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:  
 “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?  
 Gird up your loins like a man,  
 I will question you, and you shall declare to me.  
 “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?  
 Tell me, if you have understanding.  
 Who determined its measurements—surely you know!  
 Or who stretched the line upon it?  
 On what were its bases sunk,  
 or who laid its cornerstone,  
 when the morning stars sang together,  
 and all the sons of God shouted for joy?  
 “Or who shut in the sea with doors,  
 when it burst forth from the womb;  
 when I made clouds its garment,  
 and thick darkness its swaddling band,  
 and prescribed bounds for it,  
 and set bars and doors,  
 and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther,  
 and here shall your proud waves be stayed’?  
 “Have you commanded the morning since your days began,  
 and caused the dawn to know its place,  
 that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth,  
 and the wicked be shaken out of it?

( Job 38:1–13)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I trust in God or do I think I can go my own way without his guidance and care?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord save me from my foolish pride. I freely and gratefully acknowledge that are the creator and I am your creature. Enlighten my mind, increase my love for you, and guide my feet along the path that I should follow.*

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## God sends angels to enlighten, guard, and guide us

*The most fundamental way the holy angels minister to mankind is their proclamation of the person and mission of Jesus Christ. We see this repeatedly in the Gospels, such as at the Annunciation, at the Nativity of the Lord, and on the morning of the Resurrection.*



For he will give his angels charge of you  
to guard you in all your ways.

(Psalm 91:11)

For it is written,  
'He will give his angels charge of  
you, to guard you,'

(Luke 4:10)

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

(Hebrews 13:2)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I ever ask my guardian angel for his help in understanding Scripture or when I am faced with a difficult decision? I should—after all, God appointed him specifically to guard and assist me!

### CLOSING PRAYER

*St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.*

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## Suffering for Christ is part of the Christian life

*Contrary to popular opinion, suffering is not entirely bad. Indeed it could have great merit and value in God's eyes when you offered it to him in love.*



But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a wrongdoer, or a mischiefmaker; yet if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God. For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? And

“If the righteous man is scarcely saved, where will the impious and sinner appear?”

Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will do right and entrust their souls to a faithful Creator.

(1 Peter 4:15–19)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Every mother knows the pains of childbirth are worth enduring for the sake of her child. If God in his providence deems it beneficial for me to undergo some suffering, I will unite it to Christ's passion, for my purification and the building up the his body the Church.

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, as you prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be*

*done.”*

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## You may think you are strong, but you can fall

*It's difficult to imagine a stronger Christian than Saint Paul. If even he recognized the possibility that he could fall into serious sin, then you would be exceedingly wise to admit that the same is true of you.*



Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of me this night; for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” Peter declared to him, “Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.” Jesus said to him, “Truly, I say to you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.” Peter said to him, “Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And so said all the disciples.

(Matthew 26:31–35)

I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

(1 Corinthians 9:27, 10:12)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I pray and receive the sacraments frequently? Is my trust in God’s grace rather than my own “strength”? Do I wander close to near occasions of sin? Do I delude myself thinking I can go “just a little way” toward sin and have the willpower to stop short of crossing the line?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, grant me the graces of humility and prudence; the former, so that I may never forget how weak I am and how easily my will can incline toward sin; and the latter, that I may always make correct moral decisions in accordance with your eternal law.*

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## The divinity of Christ is proclaimed by the angels

*Listen to the angels in heaven, who announce the divinity of Christ. But pay no attention to the false prophets and blind guides, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Scientology, and Iglesia ni Cristo, who try to convince anyone who will listen that Jesus Christ is not God.*



But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

“Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and his name shall be called Emman´u-el”  
(which means, God with us).

(Matthew 1:20–23)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I believe in the divinity of Christ? Have I studied this glorious doctrine in Scripture and the *Catechism*?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down*

*from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.*

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## Matrimony is a living icon of Christ's love for the Church

*The sacrament of marriage between a man and a woman signifies and points toward the nuptial union between Christ the bridegroom and the Church his bride.*



As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

(Ephesians 5:24–27)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I love, honor, and sacrifice willingly for my spouse? Do I act chastely and honorably toward the spouses of others? Do I ask Christ for the graces necessary to preserve and strengthen my marriage? Am I cheerfully open to God's will if he should bless my marriage with children?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I pray that all married men would love their wives with the love, dedication, patience, kindness, and self-sacrifice you give the Church. I pray that all married women would love, honor, cherish, and devote themselves to their husbands as the Church is called to do to you.*

## There is great value in the discipline of rising early

*Time is precious and you have much good yet to do. Why spend any more time sleeping than is absolutely necessary for your health?*



And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed.

(Mark 1:35)

And every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet. And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him.

(Luke 21:37–38)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I sleep too much? Am I undisciplined and lazy in my sleeping habits or do I see rising early as a good and beneficial way of disciplining myself, keeping my will tense, and fighting against the sin of sloth?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, your Apostles Peter, James, and John disappointed you by falling asleep in during your agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. Help me learn from their frailty to “watch and pray” and practice moderation in sleep and all good things, out of love for you.*

## The Kingdom of Christ will never be overthrown

*Don't be troubled by or give any heed to clean-cut door-to-door "missionaries" who "testify" that there was a "total apostasy" of the Church Christ founded and that their church has the "restored gospel." This is nonsense.*



For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government will be upon his shoulder,  
and his name will be called  
"Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."  
Of the increase of his government and of peace  
there will be no end,  
upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom,  
to establish it, and to uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time forth and for evermore.  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

(Isaiah 9:6–7)

Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it."

(Matthew 16:17–18)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I adequately understand and am I prepared to explain why the Church Christ established is permanent, indefectible, and can never be overcome, not even by the gates of hell? Have I carefully considered the amazing implications of Christ's promise, "I will be with you always, even until the end of the world"?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, I firmly believe that your kingdom the Church and your holy gospel has never and will never be overcome by a total apostasy! Glory be to you, Lord Jesus Christ. Glory be to you.*

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## The devil will flee from you, if you follow this advice

*What follows is the secret to living a life pleasing to God and worthy of salvation!*



What causes wars, and what causes fightings among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. Unfaithful creatures! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is in vain that the scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us”? But he gives more grace; therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you men of double mind. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to dejection. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you.

( James 4:1–10)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

So, which will it be? Will I pursue friendship with the world or friendship with God? There is no third option, no middle ground. I must choose one or the other and then live (forever) with the consequences.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I submit myself to you wholeheartedly and with all the love that is in me. Draw near to me, O God. Help me to resist the devil and seek your will for my life for the rest of my days.*

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## Be on guard against detraction, calumny, and backbiting

*Do not underestimate the destructive power of your tongue.*



Cursed be gossips and the double-tongued, for they destroy the peace of many. A meddling tongue subverts many, and makes them refugees among peoples. It destroys strong cities, and overthrows the houses of the great. A meddling tongue drives virtuous women from their homes, and robs them of the fruit of their toil.... A blow from a whip raises a welt, but a blow from the tongue will break bones. Many have fallen by the edge of the sword, but not as many as by the tongue.

Honor and dishonor through speaking! The tongue can be your downfall. Do not be called double-tongued; and with your tongue do not slander a neighbor.

(Sirach 28:13–18, 5:13–14)

Do not speak evil against one another, brethren. He that speaks evil against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.

( James 4:11)

So put away all malice and all guile and insincerity and envy and all slander.

(1 Peter 2:1)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

To what extent have I been guilty of gossip, slander, and detraction.  
Have I confessed these sins?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I repent of all the times I have defiled myself and wounded others by my evil speech. Please forgive me and help me to never fall back into that wicked habit.*

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## Those who love God rejoice in what awaits them.

*Blessed are those who have entered through the narrow gate that leads to eternal life. But woe to those who remain on the wide, easy boulevard of sensuality that leads to hell.*



But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them.

In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be an affliction, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace.

For though in the sight of men they were punished, their hope is full of immortality.

Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself;

But the ungodly will be punished as their reasoning deserves, who disregarded the righteous man and rebelled against the Lord; for whoever despises wisdom and instruction is miserable.

Their hope is vain, their labors are unprofitable, and their works are useless.

Their wives are foolish, and their children evil; their offspring are accursed.

For blessed is the barren woman who is undefiled, who has not entered into a sinful union; she will have fruit when God examines souls.

Blessed also is the eunuch whose hands have done no lawless deed, and who has not devised wicked things against the Lord; for special favor will be shown him for his faithfulness, and a place of great delight in the temple of the Lord.

For the fruit of good labors is renowned,  
and the root of understanding does not fail.

(Wisdom 3:1–5, 10–15)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

It is still not too late to change course, if I realize I am on my way to hell. I can emulate the righteous men and women who have run the race before me and are now secure in heaven with God.

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Watch over me, Lord, I pray, and draw me to yourself. Do not let me fall away and lose my salvation through sin and rebellion. I trust in you, Lord, not in my own efforts.*

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# God will bless and strengthen your faith in him

*So ... are you ready yet to get out of your comfort zone and follow Jesus Christ?*



But the boat by this time was many furlongs distant from the land, beaten by the waves; for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out for fear. But immediately he spoke to them, saying, “Take heart, it is I; have no fear.”

And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water.” He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus; but when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.” Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “O man of little faith, why did you doubt?”

(Matthew 14:24–31)

## IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

I know the Lord is calling me to follow him onward and upward. What’s holding me back? Is it fear? Laziness? Human respect? Apathy? The world, the flesh, and the devil?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I know I am a person of little faith. But I want to say “yes!” to you. Help me, Lord, to overcome my insecurities, to break the silly creature-*

*comfort chains that hold me fast, and to get out of my comfort zone.*

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## A prayer for God's protection in a wicked generation

*Rather than curse this present darkness, let the light of Christ shine forth in prayer.*



Help, Lord; for there is no longer any that is godly;  
for the faithful have vanished from among the sons of men.  
Every one utters lies to his neighbor;  
with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.  
May the Lord cut off all flattering lips,  
the tongue that makes great boasts,  
those who say, "With our tongue we will prevail,  
our lips are with us; who is our master?"  
"Because the poor are despoiled, because the needy groan,  
I will now arise," says the Lord;  
"I will place him in the safety for which he longs."  
The promises of the Lord are promises that are pure,  
silver refined in a furnace on the ground,  
purified seven times.  
Do thou, O Lord, protect us,  
guard us ever from this generation.  
On every side the wicked prowl,  
as vileness is exalted among the sons of men.

(Psalm 12:1–8)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Yes, this generation is steeped in wickedness and depravity, but what am I doing to counteract it?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance. Grant victory to your holy Church over her adversaries. And by the triumph of your life-giving Cross, preserve your flock.*

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## A warning to secular leaders

*Presidents, prime ministers, politicians, and all in governmental authority exercise power for only as long as God permits them to do so. They would do well ponder this passage.*



And Samuel said to Saul, “You have done foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which he commanded you; for now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel for ever. But now your kingdom shall not continue; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart; and the Lord has appointed him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.”

(1 Samuel 13:13–14)

The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will. Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart. To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice. Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin.

(Proverbs 21:1–4)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

My complaining about deficient or malfeasant government leaders is easy to do and more or less inconsequential. But I *can* call down the life-changing power of Almighty God by praying earnestly for them.

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I pray for the health, wellbeing, and salvation of my governmental leaders. Turn their hearts toward your truth, I pray. Grant them wisdom*

*and virtue to carry out their duties for the greater good of all people.*

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## Jesus wishes to give you peace, unity, and salvation

*Like a bridge spanning the chasm between an all holy God and a rebellious people stranded in sin, the Cross of Christ forms a bridge for us to escape our self-inflicted alienation and be reunited with God.*



But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

(Ephesians 2:13–16, 4:4–5)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Jesus unites all who believe in him, Jew and Gentile, male and female, rich and poor alike. Do I cooperate fully and unreservedly with his ministry of reconciliation?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I thank you with all my heart for reversing sin's ancient and relentless onslaught against humanity's relationship with the Father, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

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# Don't let trials of the life rob you of your peace

*Even when the visible Church seems battered, scattered, and demoralized, Christ is still present. The victory is his.*



The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, every man to his home, and will leave me alone; yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

( John 16:32–33)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

When times get tough in the Christian life, do I “bug out” and head for the hills in fear, or do I stand my ground, confident in the Lord's promise that he has overcome the world?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, strengthen my faith especially in those times when I am tempted to think the Church has been routed by the enemy. I trust in you.*

## God warns the empty-hearted hypocrites

*Everyone who works iniquity has an opportunity for grace and restoration in this life. God will forgive all who will repent and turn to him with a contrite heart. But those who refuse to reform will be lost.*



“When you come to appear before me,  
 who requires of you  
 this trampling of my courts?  
 Bring no more vain offerings;  
 incense is an abomination to me.  
 New moon and sabbath and the calling of assemblies—  
 I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.  
 Your new moons and your appointed feasts  
 my soul hates;  
 they have become a burden to me,  
 I am weary of bearing them.  
 When you spread forth your hands,  
 I will hide my eyes from you;  
 even though you make many prayers,  
 I will not listen;  
 your hands are full of blood.  
 Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;  
 remove the evil of your doings  
 from before my eyes;  
 cease to do evil,  
 learn to do good;  
 seek justice,  
 correct oppression;  
 defend the fatherless,  
 plead for the widow.

“Come now, let us reason together,  
says the Lord:  
though your sins are like scarlet,  
they shall be as white as snow;  
though they are red like crimson,  
they shall become like wool.  
If you are willing and obedient,  
you shall eat the good of the land;  
but if you refuse and rebel,  
you shall be devoured by the sword;  
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

(Isaiah 1:12–20)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I seek the Lord’s mercy while I have life and am able to do so, or do I stupidly persist in my rebellion against him?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, you know that my sins are red like crimson! Wash me clean and remove my guilt so that I may be at peace and rest in the security of your loving forgiveness.*

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## Banish all idols from your life

*Idols are stupid, and the worship of idols is the height of stupidity. So don't be stupid.*



Gods made of wood and overlaid with silver and gold are not able to save themselves from thieves and robbers. Strong men will strip them of their gold and silver and of the robes they wear, and go off with this booty, and they will not be able to help themselves. So it is better to be a king who shows his courage, or a household utensil that serves its owner's need, than to be these false gods; better even the door of a house that protects its contents, than these false gods; better also a wooden pillar in a palace, than these false gods.

Like a scarecrow in a cucumber bed, that guards nothing, so are their gods of wood, overlaid with gold and silver. In the same way, their gods of wood, overlaid with gold and silver, are like a thorn bush in a garden, on which every bird sits; or like a dead body cast out in the darkness. By the purple and linen that rot upon them you will know that they are not gods; and they will finally themselves be consumed, and be a reproach in the land.

(Baruch 6:57–59, 70–72)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I harboring any false gods somewhere in the secret recesses of my life? If so, what is my plan for getting rid of them?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, for all the times in my life that I have allowed my idols of wanton pleasure, addictive technology, bad relationships, pride, anger, impure entertainment, or excessive food and drink to become enshrined in my life, I repent with all my heart.*

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## You have a duty to admonish sinners with compassion

*Speak the truth in love and always with respect and discretion, but speak the truth.*



“But the house of Israel will not listen to you; for they are not willing to listen to me; because all the house of Israel are of a hard forehead and of a stubborn heart. Behold, I have made your face hard against their faces, and your forehead hard against their foreheads. Like adamant harder than flint have I made your forehead; fear them not, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house.”

(Ezekiel 3:17–21)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I avoid admonishing someone who rightly needs to be admonished because I fear his or her reaction?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, you know that, like everyone else, I can easily become offended and even defiant when some good soul is charitable enough to admonish me for something amiss in my life. Give me the right words and a humble spirit, Lord, when circumstances require me to admonish someone else.*



## Jesus will turn your sorrow into joy

*One can only imagine the shock and bewilderment the Apostles felt when the Lord told them he must go away. Though they could not understand it at the time, his departure was for their benefit. The same is true of the unexpected setbacks and tragedies we experience in this life.*



“A little while, and you will see me no more; again a little while, and you will see me.” Some of his disciples said to one another, “What is this that he says to us, ‘A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me’; and, ‘because I go to the Father’?” They said, “What does he mean by ‘a little while’? We do not know what he means.” Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him; so he said to them, “Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, ‘A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me’? Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world. So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name. Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

( John 16:16–24)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

When I consider the times when I have been confounded by events that seemed so contrary to what I thought God wanted for me, I should be

mindful that they were permitted by the Lord's inscrutable providence for my own good, as difficult as that may be to fathom.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Stay with me, Lord, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent. Stay with me, Jesus, in life with all its dangers. I need You.*

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## The intercession of the saints is powerful

*We know that the blessed in heaven have been “made perfect” in righteousness (Hebrews 12:23). And because the prayers of a righteous person are powerful, then the most powerful intercessors of all are the saints in heaven.*



After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eli'phaz the Temanite: “My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.” So Eli'phaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Na'amathite went and did what the Lord had told them; and the Lord accepted Job's prayer.

And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.

( Job 42:7–10)

Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects. Eli'jah was a man of like nature with ourselves and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth its fruit.

( James 5:16–18)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I avail myself of the massive prayer power that the saints in heaven can assist me with, if only I asked them to?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*All you holy men and women, pray for me to the Lord our God!*

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# The prophets foretold your salvation in Jesus Christ

*The reward for steadfast faith in Christ is eternal salvation.*



Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy. As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls.

The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired about this salvation; they inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things which have now been announced to you by those who preached the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

(1 Peter 1:3–12)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I see my trials and difficulties for what they really are—  
opportunities for grace in which God can further refine and perfect in  
anticipation of heaven. Have I cultivated the holy habit of offering up to the  
Lord with cheerful resignation my sufferings?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O my God, I offer you every thought and word and act of today. Please  
bless me, my God, and make me good today. Amen.*

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## Keep God's commandments

*God will never ask the impossible of you. He gives you the grace you need to live according to his commandments, but he won't force it on you. You must be willing to accept and cooperate with it. When you do, his grace will enable you to keep the commandments.*



“Take heed lest you forget the Lord your God, by not keeping his commandments and his ordinances and his statutes, which I command you this day: lest, when you have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, who fed you in the wilderness with manna which your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end. Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth; that he may confirm his covenant which he swore to your fathers, as at this day. And if you forget the Lord your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you this day that you shall surely perish. Like the nations that the Lord makes to perish before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the Lord your God.”

(Deuteronomy 8:11–20)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I see that the Lord's commandments are designed to make me truly happy and free? How often do I make an in-depth examination of consciences? Do I consider my sins in light of the Ten Commandments?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I want to hear your voice and obey you so that I might live. Please help me as I strive, trusting solely in the power of your grace, to live according to your commandments.*

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## Strive to live up to your status as a citizen of heaven

*As a member of the household of God, you have been sent forth on an important mission. How well you fulfill this mission will affect not only your own eternal destiny but that of innumerable other people whom you will influence—for good or for ill—during your life.*



And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

(Ephesians 2:17–19)

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Take your share of suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him.

(1 Timothy 2:1–4)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I ready and willing to shoulder my duties as a soldier for Christ my king?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, you have called me and prepared me to serve you in whatever way I can. Please give me clarity of mind, strength of conviction, and a heart*

*burning with charity so that I can accomplish whatever you would have me do.*

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## Call upon the Lord for help in times of distress

*Nobody knows the trouble you've seen, nobody knows your sorrow. Well, nobody except God, that is. He understands the upheavals and problems you face for better than you realize. So call on him for help.*



My eyes are ever toward the Lord,  
 for he will pluck my feet out of the net.  
 Turn thou to me, and be gracious to me;  
 for I am lonely and afflicted.  
 Relieve the troubles of my heart,  
 and bring me out of my distresses.  
 Consider my affliction and my trouble,  
 and forgive all my sins.  
 Consider how many are my foes,  
 and with what violent hatred they hate me.  
 Oh guard my life, and deliver me;  
 let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in thee.  
 May integrity and uprightness preserve me,  
 for I wait for thee.

(Psalm 25:15–21)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Why don't I call on God's help more often? Do I realize that there is absolutely nothing that could happen in my life, however severe, for which he won't have a solution?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Thank you, Lord, for hearing and answering my prayer for help, even if your answer is not the one I am expecting or that I think is the best one.*

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## Shun false prophets

*False prophets, false seers, and false “spiritual masters” are a dime a dozen. They all have one thing in common: They sow confusion, error, and division wherever they go. Don’t let them beguile you. Stay close to Christ and the Church and you will be safe from falsehoods.*



“When you come into the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, any one who practices divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord; and because of these abominable practices the Lord your God is driving them out before you. You shall be blameless before the Lord your God. For these nations, which you are about to dispossess, give heed to soothsayers and to diviners; but as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you so to do.

“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren—him you shall heed—just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’ And the Lord said to me, ‘They have rightly said all that they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not give heed to my words which he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.’

(Deuteronomy 18:9–22)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I give ready credence to alleged “seers” who purport to reveal heavenly things but whose lives and words do not quite harmonize with those of authentic messengers sent by God? Do I push ahead credulously to promote alleged “apparitions” which the Church has not (and may never) deem authentic?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, grant me humility of heart and keenness of mind to correctly discern the truth or falsity of the messages thrust at me by those claiming to be your prophets. Teach me to prudently “test everything and hold fast to what is good,” but never permit me to be deceived.*

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## Find a wise priest to be your spiritual director

*“One great remedy against all manner of temptation, great or small, is to open the heart and lay bare its suggestions, likes and dislikes, to your director; for ... the first condition which the Evil One makes with a soul, when he wants to seduce it, is silence.” (Saint Francis de Sales)*



Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

And the Lord came and stood forth, calling as at other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for thy servant hears.” Then the Lord said to Samuel, “Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel, at which the two ears of every one that hears it will tingle. On that day I will fulfil against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. And I tell him that I am about to punish his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering for ever.”

Samuel lay until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. And Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. But Eli called Samuel and said, “Samuel, my son.” And he said, “Here I am.” And Eli said, “What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you.” So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, “It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him.”

(1 Samuel 3:7–18)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I have a spiritual director? If not, I should ask the Lord to help me find a wise and devout priest to talk to about my interior life.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, you often deign to teach us truths about ourselves through the instrumentality of others who are wise and competent to guide others. I pray that you will lead me to one of your holy servants to whom I can confide the details of my soul and by whose wisdom I may draw closer to you.*

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## You can't please God with mere lip service

*It's quite easy, if you aren't careful, to mistake the sheer profusion of words that come forth from your lips to be actual, heartfelt prayer. Similarly, talking about faith in Christ is not at all the same thing as living out that faith as he commands.*



But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who observes his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But he who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer that forgets but a doer that acts, he shall be blessed in his doing. If any one thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this man's religion is vain. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

( James 1:22–27)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I talk more about my faith in Christ than I live it? Do I actually live it at all, or am I really just giving “lip service” to him but not really serving him?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, I need your help to rise above my sometimes shallow, tepid love for you. Teach me how to put into practice by my concrete actions your truth that I speak with my mouth.*

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## Do not forget your duty toward the poor

*Just imagine how anxious and afflicted you would be if you were suddenly poor, homeless, destitute. You would want others to help you! So why don't you help those who are poor?*



My son, deprive not the poor of his living,  
and do not keep needy eyes waiting.  
Do not grieve the one who is hungry,  
nor anger a man in want.  
Do not add to the troubles of an angry mind,  
nor delay your gift to a beggar.  
Do not reject an afflicted suppliant,  
nor turn your face away from the poor.  
Do not avert your eye from the needy,  
nor give a man occasion to curse you;  
for if in bitterness of soul he calls down a curse upon you,  
his Creator will hear his prayer.

(Sirach 4:1–6)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Is my charity person-specific, or do I merely think sympathetic thoughts about "The Poor" as an abstract group of faceless people I never see or talk to? Do I help others in ways that do not benefit me? Are tax deductions the real, self-interest reason for my charitable giving?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, help me, I pray, to purify my motives from all hidden, self-serving reasons for serving the poor so that I can truly live out your command to*

*give alms without requiring any reward or seeking applause.*

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## Learn how to pray as Jesus taught us to pray

*Pride is as deadly to your prayer life as it is to everything else it contaminates. If you are not watchful, vanity can stealthily become the real motive behind your piety.*



“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when 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.

“And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this:

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 debts,  
   As we also have forgiven our debtors;  
 And lead us not into temptation,  
   But deliver us from evil.

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

(Matthew 6:5–15)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I enjoy compliments about how holy people think I am or how wise they think my advice is? Do I subtly ensure that others see that I pray, fast, or give alms? If so, then my piety is really just for show and human respect, not for God.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Humble my vain and self-seeking heart, O Lord! You know how easily I can drift away from you on the current of my own conceits. Help me root out my pride so that my interior life will be solely for your eyes, not for applause or the admiration of others.*

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## At Mass you are present at the Last Supper and Calvary

*The profound miracle of the Mass entails the re-presentation, in time and space, of the Last Supper, Calvary, and the heavenly sanctuary. By Christ's power, at Mass, you are made truly present at each sacred event.*



Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

(Matthew 26:26–29)

So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Gol’gotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.

But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth—that you also may believe.

( John 19:17–18, 34–35)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I just go through the motions at Mass, or is my attention reverently and prayerfully fixed on the true meaning of what is happening on the altar?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, I seek a deeper, richer, and more spiritually fruitful communion with you and the Church at Mass. Grant, I pray, an ever keener ability to discern your presence in the Divine Liturgy. Help me to enter into the sacred mysteries I am privileged to behold at Mass.*

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## Have faith that God will guide you

*Even when you are groping your way forward in life, not knowing where you are going or how you will get there, you can count on God's guidance and protection. Trust him.*



“After I had given the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neri’ah, I prayed to the Lord, saying: ‘Ah Lord God! It is thou who hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great power and by thy outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for thee, who showest steadfast love to thousands, but dost requite the guilt of fathers to their children after them, O great and mighty God whose name is the Lord of hosts, great in counsel and mighty in deed; whose eyes are open to all the ways of men, rewarding every man according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings; who hast shown signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and to this day in Israel and among all mankind, and hast made thee a name, as at this day. Thou didst bring thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and outstretched arm, and with great terror.’”

( Jeremiah 32:16–21)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I tend to rely more on my own knowledge and ideas to navigate through life and less on God’s loving providence? Do I rely on God at all?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I often pursue my plans and expectations with nary a thought to your will for me. And only when I crash into closed doors, fall on my face in failure, or wind up confused and unhappy, do I turn to you. Help me, God, to seek you first in everything.*

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## A powerful prayer for healing

*Do you seek healing in mind or body? Pray this biblical passage slowly, with all your heart. Meditate on it. Let your tears flow. Have confidence. The Lord will hear and answer you.*



O Lord, rebuke me not in thy anger,  
 nor chasten me in thy wrath.  
 Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing;  
 O Lord, heal me, for my bones are troubled.  
 My soul also is sorely troubled.  
 But thou, O Lord—how long?  
 Turn, O Lord, save my life;  
 deliver me for the sake of thy steadfast love.  
 For in death there is no remembrance of thee;  
 in Sheol who can give thee praise?  
 I am weary with my moaning;  
 every night I flood my bed with tears;  
 I drench my couch with my weeping.  
 My eye wastes away because of grief,  
 it grows weak because of all my foes.  
 Depart from me, all you workers of evil;  
 for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping.  
 The Lord has heard my supplication;  
 the Lord accepts my prayer.  
 All my enemies shall be ashamed and sorely troubled;  
 they shall turn back, and be put to shame in a moment.

(Psalm 6:1–10)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I struggle with poor health or heavy and hurtful emotional burdens?  
Do I carry resentment and grudges I just can't seem to let go of? Am I  
afraid? In pain? Lonely? Hopeless?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Help me, Lord. Help me. I can't make it through this without you. I'm  
hurting and I need you. Help me.*

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## Be attentive to the temporal needs of the Church

*Do you busy yourself with your own needs and wants but pay little, if any, attention to the needs of your parish and diocese? Keep in mind that one of your obligations is to “contribute to the support of the Church.”*



“Thus says the Lord of hosts: This people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.” Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, “Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? Now therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider how you have fared. You have sown much, and harvested little; you eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages earns wages to put them into a bag with holes.

“Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider how you have fared. Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may appear in my glory, says the Lord. You have looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? says the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while you busy yourselves each with his own house. Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. And I have called for a drought upon the land and the hills, upon the grain, the new wine, the oil, upon what the ground brings forth, upon men and cattle, and upon all their labors.”

(Haggai 1:2–11)

IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I make use of my parish's offering envelope program to help underwrite its financial needs? Do I donate to my diocese? Do I donate to pro-life organizations, soup kitchens, and other worthy apostolates? What can I begin doing to help the local Church?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, help me give generously and cheerfully to the Church, without counting the cost. My money is not really mine but has been entrusted to me by you. Teach me to be a good steward of your money, for the good of others.*

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## Seek what God wants, not what you want

*It is easy to get caught up in all the little inward-looking projects you think are important. But what does God want from you? Take a break from your agenda and find out what he is trying to tell you.*



And James and John, the sons of Zeb'edee, came forward to him, and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

(Mark 10:35–45)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

If I want to please the Lord, I need to seek his will for my life rather than rely solely on my own impressions.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Show me, O Lord, what you will for my life, that I may accomplish it,  
for your greater glory.*

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## The Lord is a mighty shield for those who love him

*Upon being elected pope, Blessed John Paul II's first public message was: "Do not be afraid!" He knew the Church was heading into a dark and dangerous storm and that we needed to be encouraged and reminded that God is with us. We are not going into this storm alone.*



“Be strong and of good courage, do not fear or be in dread of them: for it is the Lord your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you.”

(Deuteronomy 31:6)

For I, the Lord your God,  
hold your right hand;  
it is I who say to you, “Fear not,  
I will help you.”

(Isaiah 41:13)

“The Lord will fight for you and you have only to be still.”

(Exodus 14:14)

They will fight against you; but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you.

(Jeremiah 1:19)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I trust that God will not forsake me?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, the road ahead sometimes seems dark and unpredictable and I hesitate to move forward out of fear of what might lie ahead. But I know that you want me to be courageous, not afraid, for you are with me and I am with you. Lord, save your people.*

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## Be prudent in your zeal for the things of God

*Just because you are zealous for God and for the things of God does not give you license to be rude or pugnacious. Beware lest pride should corrupt the “search and rescue” mission he has entrusted to you and it become instead a “search and destroy” mission.*



Jesus said to him, “Friend, why are you here?” Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest, and cut off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?”

(Matthew 26:50–54)

And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him; but the people would not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to bid fire come down from heaven and consume them?” But he turned and rebuked them. And they went on to another village.

(Luke 9:52–56)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

In my efforts to explain, defend, and share the faith with others, do I allow myself to become obnoxious, pushy, or spiteful? Do I make an honest effort to be polite, patient and discreet?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Soften my heart, Lord, and teach me never to see others as enemies or targets or potential conquests. Let me speak to others about you patiently, full of your love and kindness.*

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## We should reverence and venerate God's Holy Angels

*Holy things to the holy! Remember that the angels of the Lord are prodigiously holy beings and worthy of your reverence and devotion. Call upon them to assist you with all aspects of your life, especially when you need protection, guidance, and encouragement.*



“Behold, I send an angel before you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place which I have prepared. Give heed to him and hearken to his voice, do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression; for my name is in him.

“But if you hearken attentively to his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.”

(Exodus 23:20–22)

When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man stood before him with his drawn sword in his hand; and Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us, or for our adversaries?” And he said, “No; but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and worshiped, and said to him, “What does my lord bid his servant?” And the commander of the Lord’s army said to Joshua, “Put off your shoes from your feet; for the place where you stand is holy.” And Joshua did so.

(Joshua 5:13–15)

IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

How can I begin cultivating a holy friendship with God's angels? Let me begin by invoking the special intercession of my guardian angel.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, may your holy angels assist me and keep me in on the path to heaven. Drive far from me, I pray, all the snares of the enemy and let your angels stand guard around me, preserve me in your peace, and let your blessing be always upon me.*

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## Respond generously to God's call

*Jesus gave everything, including his own life, for you. Are you willing to give everything to him?*



As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zeb'edee and John his brother, in the boat with Zeb'edee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

(Matthew 4:18–22)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

What limits have I set on how much I am willing accept God's will for my life? Are there some things too precious to me to give up for the sake of Christ, if he should ask me to do so?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, help me to be completely open to your will for me. Create in me a magnanimous heart that is always willing to respond with generosity to whatever you may ask of me.*

## Do you honestly seek to be a Good Samaritan?

*Think of all the times in your life when a Good Samaritan did something for you, completely unexpectedly and without expecting any benefit for himself. Now it's your turn to go and do likewise.*



And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read?” And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have answered right; do this, and you will live.”

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed mercy on him.” And Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

(Luke 10:25–37)



## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I look for opportunities to help others? Do I walk on by in feigned obliviousness when I see someone hurting or in some way needing my help?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I am selfish and often insensitive to the plight of others! I repent of this lack of generosity and ask you to open my eyes, my heart, and my purse strings so that I will never again hesitate to be a Good Samaritan to those who need my help.*

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## The sacrament of Baptism is necessary for salvation

*Baptism is the sacramental doorway into the Church established by Jesus Christ. It removes our innate condition of original sin, washes away all actual sin and their effects, infuses sanctifying grace, illuminates with God's own presence, and incorporates the one baptized into the Body of Christ.*



He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

(Mark 16:16)

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicode´mus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him.” Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicode´mus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born anew.’”

( John 3:1–7)

Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

(1 Peter 3:21)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I understand the biblical doctrine of Baptism? Have I neglected to have my own children baptized? Have I shirked my responsibility as a godparent?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*I give you thanks, Lord, for your great and glorious gift of Baptism. Grant me the grace to always live up to my baptismal promises to reject Satan and all his works and all his empty promises.*

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# Never forget that Jesus suffered and died for your sins

*Jesus Christ is not your buddy. He is your savior.*



Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

(Romans 23–25)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I have the proper reverence for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Redeemer, creator of the universe, and my personal savior? Am I ever apathetic or disrespectful to him in my thoughts or words? Am I truly grateful that he died for my sins?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Look down upon me, good and gentle Jesus, while before your face I humbly kneel, and with burning soul pray and beseech you to fix deep in my heart lively sentiments of faith, hope and charity, true contrition for my sins, and a firm purpose of amendment, while I contemplate with great love and tender pity your five wounds, calling to mind the words which David, your prophet, said of you: "They have pierced my hands and my feet; they have numbered all my bones."*

## A cautionary tale about human pride

*Pride always emits a horrendous stench. This is why we instinctively recoil in disgust from arrogant and vainglorious people, for they love no one but themselves. Humility, in contrast, is immensely attractive, for it radiates the beauty of a soul that loves God.*



Thus he who had just been thinking that he could command the waves of the sea, in his superhuman arrogance, and imagining that he could weigh the high mountains in a balance, was brought down to earth and carried in a litter, making the power of God manifest to all. And so the ungodly man's body swarmed with worms, and while he was still living in anguish and pain, his flesh rotted away, and because of his stench the whole army felt revulsion at his decay. Because of his intolerable stench no one was able to carry the man who a little while before had thought that he could touch the stars of heaven. Then it was that, broken in spirit, he began to lose much of his arrogance and to come to his senses under the scourge of God, for he was tortured with pain every moment. And when he could not endure his own stench, he uttered these words: "It is right to be subject to God, and no mortal should think that he is equal to God."

(2 Maccabees 9:8–12)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I recognize the serious spiritual problems that my pride causes me?  
Am I too proud to admit that I have a problem with pride?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, a humble and contrite heart you will not spurn. Please forgive my countless sins of pride and teach me to faithfully emulate you,*

*who are meek and humble of heart.*

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## A life well-lived is a life focused on God

*The most important thing you will ever do is die. If you die in the state of grace and friendship with God, you will go to heaven. If you don't, you won't. So why waste your time on anything that would lead you away from the Lord?*



Incline thy ear, O Lord, and answer me,  
 for I am poor and needy.  
 Preserve my life, for I am godly;  
 save thy servant who trusts in thee.  
 Thou art my God; be gracious to me, O Lord,  
 for to thee do I cry all the day.  
 Gladden the soul of thy servant,  
 for to thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.  
 For thou, O Lord, art good and forgiving,  
 abounding in steadfast love to all who call on thee.  
 Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer;  
 hearken to my cry of supplication.  
 In the day of my trouble I call on thee,  
 for thou dost answer me.  
 There is none like thee among the gods, O Lord,  
 nor are there any works like thine.  
 All the nations thou hast made shall come  
 and bow down before thee, O Lord,  
 and shall glorify thy name.  
 For thou art great and doest wondrous things,  
 thou alone art God.  
 Teach me thy way, O Lord,  
 that I may walk in thy truth;  
 unite my heart to fear thy name.

I give thanks to thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart,  
and I will glorify thy name for ever.  
For great is thy steadfast love toward me;  
thou hast delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

(Psalm 86:1–13)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I serious about getting to heaven? What aspects of my life are incompatible with loving God? Am I willing to abandon them so that I can lay hold of the greatest treasure of all?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Help me overcome my attachments to things that keep me from you, O Lord. Let me fix my gaze on you and never turn aside to any distraction.*

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## The priesthood is a sublime calling from God

*The partial and imperfect Old Testament priesthood was but a faint foreshadowing of the perfect and eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ, which the Lord calls some men to participate in to serve the Church.*



“You shall be holy to me; for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.”

(Leviticus 20:26)

Is it too small a thing for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself, to do service in the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister to them.

(Numbers 16:9)

“My sons, do not now be negligent, for the Lord has chosen you to stand in his presence, to minister to him, and to be his ministers and burn incense to him.”

(2 Chronicles 29:11)

For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.... And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,

“Thou art my Son,  
today I have begotten thee”

(Hebrews 3:1, 4–6)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

What do I do to help promote vocations to the priesthood?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, thank you for your precious gift of the priesthood. I weep for the sins committed by priests who have betrayed you, and I give you praise and thanks for the good, dedicated, and faithful priests with whom you have blessed your Church.*

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## These are the things that those who love God should do

*The glories of eternal life are waiting for you, if you would just trust in the Lord and fight for them.*



But as for you, man of God, shun all this; aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the presence of God who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(1 Timothy 6:11–14)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I passive and apathetic toward the battle for my soul that is raging all around me, or am I quick to pick up the weapons of the spirit and fight the good fight?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, strengthen me to lay hold of the salvation you have prepared for all who have faith in you and keep your commandments.*

## Time is precious. Don't procrastinate

*Your time here is precious and, compared to eternity, it is exceedingly brief and will be gone before you know it.*



Do not say to your neighbor, “Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it”—when you have it with you.

(Proverbs 3:28)

To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” But he said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” Another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

(Luke 9:59–62)

Whereas you do not know about tomorrow. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

( James 4:14)

Remember, O Lord, what the  
measure of life is,  
for what vanity thou hast created  
all the sons of men!

(Psalm 89:47)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Jesus is calling me. Why do I procrastinate and make excuses not to follow him?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Here I am, Lord. Send me.*

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## God requires that you make restitution for your sins

*Everyone instinctively understands the natural law concept of restitution. As Saint Thomas Aquinas says, “Since ... the safeguarding of justice is necessary for salvation, it follows that it is necessary for salvation to restore what has been taken unjustly.”*



“Say to the people of Israel, When a man or woman commits any of the sins that men commit by breaking faith with the Lord, and that person is guilty, he shall confess his sin which he has committed; and he shall make full restitution for his wrong, adding a fifth to it, and giving it to him to whom he did the wrong. But if the man has no kinsman to whom restitution may be made for the wrong, the restitution for wrong shall go to the Lord for the priest, in addition to the ram of atonement with which atonement is made for him.”

(Numbers 5:6–8)

Again, though I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ yet if he turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right, if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has taken by robbery, and walks in the statutes of life, committing no iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.

(Ezekiel 33:14–15)

And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold.” And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.”

(Luke 19:8–9)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

What "unfinished business" do I have yet to attend to in the area of making restitution to others for sins I have committed?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, like your servant Zacchaeus, I resolve do what I can to repair the damage I have done to others through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault.*

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## Through Baptism, Christ called you to a virtuous life

*Would you put on a clean set of clothes and then splash your way through a sewer? Then why do you so cavalierly sully your baptismal innocence through willful sin?*



Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for any honest work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all men. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by men and hating one another; but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life. The saying is sure.

I desire you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to apply themselves to good deeds; these are excellent and profitable to men. But avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels over the law, for they are unprofitable and futile. As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is perverted and sinful; he is selfcondemned.

(Titus 3:1–11)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...



Am I honestly striving to live the virtuous life to which Christ has called me, or do I settle for mediocrity instead? Am I simply too lazy to shake off my foolishness and strive to be the excellent and profitable Christian the Lord is calling me to be?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, help me to rise from my stupor of laziness and apply myself to the good deeds you have called me to by your grace.*

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# God's loving providence takes care of all creatures

*This message is so simple that hardly anything else need be said. God loves you and cares for you. Rest in that certitude.*



Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

(Matthew 6:26)

For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

(1 Timothy 4:10)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I trust God? If so, then why do I worry so much about things I cannot control?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Jesus, I trust in you.*

## “Seek good and not evil, that you may live”

*Everyone knows it is better to be good than bad. Doing good brings happiness and doing evil brings misery. So why would any clear-thinking person choose evil over good?*



Therefore because you trample upon the poor  
and take from him exactions of wheat,  
you have built houses of hewn stone,  
but you shall not dwell in them;  
you have planted pleasant vineyards,  
but you shall not drink their wine.  
For I know how many are your transgressions,  
and how great are your sins—  
you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe,  
and turn aside the needy in the gate.  
Therefore he who is prudent will keep silent in such a time;  
for it is an evil time.  
Seek good, and not evil,  
that you may live;  
and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you,  
as you have said.  
Hate evil, and love good,  
and establish justice in the gate;  
it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts,  
will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

(Amos 5:11–15)

IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

What aspects of my life reveal the hidden ways that I choose evil over good? Have I brought these failings to the sacrament of Confession?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, purify me of the evils in my life, great and small. Cast them out by your grace and set my feet firmly on the path of goodness and truth.*

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## A prayer for when life's troubles seem to engulf you

*Rather than call upon the Lord only when the sky is stormy and the sea is rough, wouldn't it be far better if you simply prayed confidently to him every day of your life, rain or shine?*



“I called to the Lord, out of my distress,  
and he answered me;  
out of the belly of Sheol I cried,  
and thou didst hear my voice.  
For thou didst cast me into the deep,  
into the heart of the seas,  
and the flood was round about me;  
all thy waves and thy billows  
passed over me.  
Then I said, ‘I am cast out  
from thy presence;  
how shall I again look  
upon thy holy temple?’  
The waters closed in over me,  
the deep was round about me;  
weeds were wrapped about my head  
at the roots of the mountains.  
I went down to the land  
whose bars closed upon me for ever;  
yet thou didst bring up my life from the Pit,  
O Lord my God.  
When my soul fainted within me,  
I remembered the Lord;  
and my prayer came to thee,

into thy holy temple.  
Those who pay regard to vain idols  
forsake their true loyalty.  
But I with the voice of thanksgiving  
will sacrifice to thee;  
what I have vowed I will pay.  
Deliverance belongs to the Lord!”

(Jonah 2:2–9)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I a loyal friend of Christ, or do I turn to him only when times are tough and I need something? If the latter is true of me, then can I really say I’m his friend?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Teach me, Lord to be your constant companion and devoted disciple,  
not one who ignores you except for when I get into trouble and need help.*

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## The Great Day of the Lord is coming. Be ready

*The Lord said, “no man knows the day or the hour” of his second coming. So only a fool would assume that that day will not take him by surprise.*



“For behold, the day comes, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who fear my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go forth leaping like calves from the stall. And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts.

“Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and ordinances that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.

“Behold, I will send you Eli’jah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse.”

(Malachi 4:1–6)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I ready to meet the Lord if he should return today?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, help me live each day in a manner worthy of your grace. May I never grow lax and lazy in my commitment to you but, rather, watch and*

*pray that I will be ready on the day you call me forth from this life.*

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## Rely on God's power, not your own feeble efforts

*Question: Who is stronger, wiser, and knows everything, you or God?*



But I said, “I have labored in vain,  
I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;  
yet surely my right is with the Lord,  
and my recompense with my God.”  
And now the Lord says,  
who formed me from the womb to be his servant,  
to bring Jacob back to him,  
and that Israel might be gathered to him,  
for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord,  
and my God has become my strength—

(Isaiah 49:4–5)

Commit your way to the Lord;  
trust in him, and he will act.

(Psalm 37:5)

Trust in the Lord with all your heart,  
and do not rely on your own insight.

(Proverbs 3:5)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Why don't I trust God as I should and follow his law faithfully in all things? What possible reason could I have to prefer my own “wisdom” over

God's?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*I am sorry, Lord, for my foolish insistence on so often insisting on doing it "my way." Help me overcome my pride and learn to trust you.*

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## The righteous example of our spiritual forefathers

*Pay careful attention to the good example and holy lives of your spiritual forefathers and foremothers, the saints. They have much to teach you.*



“Now, my children, show zeal for the law, and give your lives for the covenant of our fathers.

“Remember the deeds of the fathers, which they did in their generations; and receive great honor and an everlasting name. Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness? Joseph in the time of his distress kept the commandment, and became lord of Egypt. Phin´ehas our father, because he was deeply zealous, received the covenant of everlasting priesthood. Joshua, because he fulfilled the command, became a judge in Israel. Caleb, because he testified in the assembly, received an inheritance in the land. David, because he was merciful, inherited the throne of the kingdom for ever. Eli´jah because of great zeal for the law was taken up into heaven. Hanani´ah, Azari´ah, and Mish´a-el believed and were saved from the flame. Daniel because of his innocence was delivered from the mouth of the lions.

“And so observe, from generation to generation, that none who put their trust in him will lack strength. Do not fear the words of a sinner, for his splendor will turn into dung and worms. Today he will be exalted, but tomorrow he will not be found, because he has returned to the dust, and his plans will perish. My children, be courageous and grow strong in the law, for by it you will gain honor.”

(1 Maccabees 2:50–64)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I read the lives of the saints? Do I ever humbly invoke their intercession as I seek to follow the pattern of holiness they have given me?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*I give you thanks, almighty God, for the treasury of your saints. These holy men and women have proven their fidelity to you in countless ways. May I learn to imitate their virtue and holy charity so that, someday, you will count me among their company.*

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## Woe to him who causes scandal to others

*Scandal devastates everyone and everything it touches. Flee, therefore, from any occasion that could give rise to scandal. And if you have caused scandal, prostrate yourself before the Lord in sorrowful repentance, seeking his forgiveness for the damage you have wrought, and resolve to make restitution.*



“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung round his neck and he were thrown into the sea. And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. For every one will be salted with fire. Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

(Mark 9:42–50)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Have I forgiven those who have scandalized me in some way? Do I pray for their repentance and salvation? Do I exploit scandals for my own purposes, as a way to attack the Church?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, preserve me from the abominable tragedy of causing scandal.  
Keep me close to you and never let me become captivated by anything or  
anyone who would lead me down that wretched road.*

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## God does not show partiality to different races

*The color of your skin and the place where you were born is utterly irrelevant in God's eyes.*



Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. And they were amazed and wondered, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?”

And Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.”

(Acts 2:5–12, 10:34–35)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I harbor animosity toward certain ethnic groups? Do I insult others because of their skin color, native language, or economic status? Do I ignore the needs of the Church universal and content myself with the local Church only?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Banish from me, O Lord, any shameful and unjust attitudes and suspicions I may have toward others based on their ethnicity or social circumstances. Let my love for you be manifested in my love for others, regardless of who they are and where they come from.*

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## Open your heart to the truth of Christ's authority

*Countless Christians, from the Apostles themselves down to the present generation, have suffered and sacrificed to deliver the Good News of Jesus Christ to you.*



Working together with him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says,

“At the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the day of salvation.”

Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. We put no obstacle in any one's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, watching, hunger; by purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

Our mouth is open to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. In return—I speak as to children—widen your hearts also.

(2 Corinthians 6:1–13)

## IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I like the Corinthians, whom Saint Paul described as “children” whose hearts are “restricted” by their affections—affections for childish and vain things—rather than the things that really matter?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, I thank you for the tenacious persistence of all those courageous men and women in the Church who have overcome hardship and adversity to ensure that I would know the truth. Help me widen my heart to receive it.*

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## Now that you live in the light, do these things

*As a Christian, you have a unique and indispensable role to play in the building up of the “spiritual house” of the Church. You are literally a part of its construction!*



Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation; for you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God’s sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture:

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and he who believes in him will not be put to shame.”

To you therefore who believe, he is precious, but for those who do not believe,

“The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner,”

and

“A stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall”;

for they stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.

(1 Peter 2:2–10)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Have my spiritual eyes adjusted yet to the light of Christ that I have been called into? Do I believe in his mighty deeds and declare them fearlessly to others?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Help me, Lord, to take part willingly and confidently in the work of your Church, helping others come out the darkness of sin and alienation into the light of Christ's saving truth.*

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## Bishops and priests must teach sound doctrine

*Like it or not, bishops, priests, and deacons will be judged strictly by the Lord on whether they taught sound doctrine during their ministry. Woe to those who intentionally do not.*



But as for you, teach what befits sound doctrine. Bid the older men be temperate, serious, sensible, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Bid the older women likewise to be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind, and submissive to their husbands, that the word of God may not be discredited. Likewise urge the younger men to control themselves. Show yourself in all respects a model of good deeds, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech that cannot be censured, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us. Bid slaves to be submissive to their masters and to give satisfaction in every respect; they are not to be refractory, nor to pilfer, but to show entire and true fidelity, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

Declare these things; exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

(Titus 2:1–15)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I encourage my bishop and parish pastor to teach orthodox doctrine, even if just through my prayers for them?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Have mercy on the bishops and priests of your holy Church, O Lord! Confirm them in the knowledge of the truth and strengthen their wills to speak the truth, regardless of opposition and loss of human respect.*

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## In heaven, marriage will no longer be necessary

*The sacrament of holy matrimony endures until the death of one of the spouses. There is no need for marriage in heaven because all the blessed will be united to the Triune God, the divine spouse of their souls.*



Saducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection; and they asked him a question, saying, “Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies, having no children, his brother must marry the widow, and raise up children for his brother.’ Now there were seven brothers among us; the first married, and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother. So too the second and third, down to the seventh. After them all, the woman died. In the resurrection, therefore, to which of the seven will she be wife? For they all had her.”

But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God, ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.” And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.

(Matthew 22:23–33)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony is good and necessary and pleasing to God, but it is only a precursor, a symbol of the true and permanent union we will have with God in heaven.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, help me to be prepared to enter into your heavenly marriage banquet with my wedding garment clean and unsullied.*

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## Never seek revenge, not even against your enemies

*Forgive your neighbor for the wrong he has done you, and the Lord will forgive you the far worse sins which you have committed against him.*



Vengeance is mine, and recompense,  
for the time when their foot shall slip;  
for the day of their calamity is at hand,  
and their doom comes swiftly.

(Deuteronomy 32:35)

If I have requited my friend with evil  
or plundered my enemy without cause,  
let the enemy pursue me and overtake me,  
and let him trample my life to the ground,  
and lay my soul in the dust.

(Psalm 7:4–6)

He that takes vengeance will suffer vengeance from the Lord,  
and he will firmly establish his sins.  
Forgive your neighbor the wrong he has done,  
and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray.  
Does a man harbor anger against another,  
and yet seek for healing from the Lord?  
Does he have no mercy toward a man like himself,  
and yet pray for his own sins?  
If he himself, being flesh, maintains wrath,  
who will make expiation for his sins?

(Sirach 28:1–5)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

If I don't forgive others who have offended me, why would I expect God to forgive me my offenses against him?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Teach me to forgive those who have hurt me, Lord, and to forgive them from the heart the way you forgive me.*

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## The Lord will reward those who love and obey him

*God created you to know, do, and enjoy the good.*



Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,  
 and bring the homeless poor into your house;  
 when you see the naked, to cover him,  
 and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?  
 Then shall your light break forth like the dawn,  
 and your healing shall spring up speedily;  
 your righteousness shall go before you,  
 the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.  
 Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;  
 you shall cry, and he will say, Here I am.  
 “If you take away from the midst of you the yoke,  
 the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,  
 if you pour yourself out for the hungry  
 and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,  
 then shall your light rise in the darkness  
 and your gloom be as the noonday.  
 And the Lord will guide you continually,  
 and satisfy your desire with good things,  
 and make your bones strong;  
 and you shall be like a watered garden,  
 like a spring of water,  
 whose waters fail not.

(Isaiah 58:7–11)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

What can I do to more closely fulfill the Lord's calling that I should help others, as I desire that he would help me? What good can I do for others?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Strengthen me, Lord, to do your will and shine with the light of your love as the moon shines with the light of the sun.*

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## Resolve to join the Saints in heaven

*Oh, when the saints go marching in! Lord, how I want to be in that number, when the saints go marching in!*



After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!” And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.”

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?” I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Therefore are they before the throne of God,  
and serve him day and night within his temple;  
and he who sits upon the throne  
will shelter them with his presence.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more;  
the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.  
For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,  
and he will guide them to springs of living water;  
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

(Revelation 7:9–17)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Given Scripture's vivid revelation of the joys of heaven and the ineffable happiness there that awaits those who love and serve the Lord, why would I possibly choose to live my life in a way that would lead me to hell rather than heaven?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, make me a saint. Even though in my weakness and fear I sometimes resist you, make me a saint!*

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## Pray to God daily that you might be saved

*Prayer each day keeps the devil away. If you want to go to heaven, pray, pray, pray.*



Say also:

“Deliver us, O God of our salvation,  
and gather and save us from among the nations,  
that we may give thanks to thy holy name,  
and glory in thy praise.

(1 Chronicles 16:35)

Arise, O Lord!

Deliver me, O my God!

For thou dost smite all my enemies on the cheek,  
thou dost break the teeth of the wicked.

For in death there is no remembrance of thee;  
in Sheol who can give thee praise?

(Psalms 3:7, 6:5)

And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power.”

(Luke 23:42)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

As someone said, If I pray well, I will live well. If I live well, I will die well. And if I die well, all will be well.

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, help me to pray more fervently each day out of love for you and a holy desire to strive for spiritual perfection and, when you call me, eternity with you in heaven.*

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# Knowing God is more precious than any treasure

*The greatest, most precious treasure of all is well within your grasp. You have only to lay hold of it in faith.*



“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

(Matthew 13:44–46)

## IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I esteem the Lord Jesus Christ and his gospel as a priceless treasure for which I would willingly part with any amount of money or possessions? If I do not, then I do not love him, nor do I really know him.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, you are the precious treasure that I want with all my heart. I will gladly give all that I have to have you.*

## The coming of Christ prophesied in the Old Testament

*Countless generations, from Adam forward, waited in anxious hope for the coming of the promised Messiah who would shepherd his flock in safety. How blessed are you to be alive in the era of his appearance.*



“For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the fountains, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them with good pasture, and upon the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on fat pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will watch over; I will feed them in justice.

“And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.

“And you are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, says the Lord God.”

(Ezekiel 34:11–16, 23, 31)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I thankful to God for his having appointed that I should live in the light and saving grace of his son, Jesus Christ, the long promised Redeemer of the world? Innumerable generations longed to see what I see but did not.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory!*

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## Recall Jesus' silence when you are falsely accused

*Even you, a sinner, know the pain of being falsely accused. Imagine the anguish the sinless Son of God experienced when his accusers falsely testified against him.*



He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,  
yet he opened not his mouth;  
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,  
and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb,  
so he opened not his mouth.

(Isaiah 53:7)

And the high priest stood up and said, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?” But Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”

(Matthew 26:62–63)

When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. So he questioned him at some length; but he made no answer. The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then, arraying him in gorgeous apparel, he sent him back to Pilate.

(Luke 23:8–11)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

The Lord faced his accusers in silence. This is an example for me to follow. It is not always necessary to protest my innocence. Sometimes, it is much better to be humble and say nothing, waiting on the Lord's vindication.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Help me, Lord. When people wrongly assume the worst of me and suspect my motives, my instinct is self-defense. But you did not do that when you were falsely accused. Teach me to discern when I should defend myself and when I should say nothing and wait on your vindication.*

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# Your sins are many. Pray to the Lord for his healing

*Like the Prodigal Son, you once were dead, but now you are alive.*



And you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

(Ephesians 2:1–3)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Yes, Christ redeemed me and saved me from my sins (praise him!), but I am still quite capable of back-sliding back into my old ways. I need his merciful protection, and I also need to do penance for the sins in which I once walked.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior, have mercy on me, a sinner.*

## You must come to God on his terms, not yours

*The gospel of Christ and the Church he established to preach and teach it are not subject to a “majority rules” mindset. Christ revealed his plan of salvation to us and we are called to accept and conform ourselves to it, not dictate our own terms or make “counter offers.”*



“For the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place; and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.’ So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing; and he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’ And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’ And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. And on receiving it they grumbled at the householder, saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you, and go; I choose to give to this last as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’ So the last will be first, and the first last.”

(Matthew 20:1–16)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I willingly accept and try to live out the teachings of Jesus Christ as transmitted to me in Scripture, Tradition, and the Church? Do I presume to dissent from a teaching of the Church?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, make me humble and teachable. I want only to know and do your will for me because I know that you love me and will only that which is for my own good and happiness.*

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## God grants wisdom to those who love him

*“Wisdom” means knowledge of what is true combined with a right judgment to act in accordance with truth. To be truly wise, then, strive to know the truth and do the good. Note that even those of modest intelligence can be wise, while many intelligent people are quite foolish.*



Because wisdom will not enter a deceitful soul,  
nor dwell in a body enslaved to sin.

(Wisdom 1:4)

I said to myself, “I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me; and my mind has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.”

(Ecclesiastes 1:16)

The giants were born there, who were famous of old,  
great in stature, expert in war.  
God did not choose them,  
nor give them the way to knowledge;  
so they perished because they had no wisdom,  
they perished through their folly.

(Baruch 3:26–28)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I seek to know the truth and act in accordance with that truth? Or do I make the foolish mistake of thinking I can decide for myself what is “true for me”?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Teach me your truth, O Lord, and give me the will to live according to it, all the days of my life.*

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## The Lord desires the salvation of all people

*It is a grave misunderstanding of Scripture and a detestable heresy to assert that God predestines some people to hell. As Saint Paul said, “we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe” (1 Timothy 4:10).*



“See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”

(Matthew 18:10–14)

Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

(1 Timothy 2:4)

And Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

(Acts 10:34–35)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I understand that God desires to save everyone, though not everyone will be saved? That Christ died for *all*, not just for those who smugly

assume that they are among the elect. Do I pray for the salvation of non-Catholics, trusting in God's mercy to them?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*My Lord and Savior, I praise you and thank you for your priceless gift of salvation, a gift which I do not deserve. Help me to speak convincingly to others about your saving love.*

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## Only God can satisfy your deepest hunger

*“You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you” (Saint Augustine, Confessions).*



There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy upon men: a man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him power to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them; this is vanity; it is a sore affliction. If a man begets a hundred children, and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but he does not enjoy life’s good things, and also has no burial, I say that an untimely birth is better off than he. For it comes into vanity and goes into darkness, and in darkness its name is covered; moreover it has not seen the sun or known anything; yet it finds rest rather than he. Even though he should live a thousand years twice told, yet enjoy no good—do not all go to the one place?

All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied. For what advantage has the wise man over the fool? And what does the poor man have who knows how to conduct himself before the living? Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire; this also is vanity and a striving after wind.

(Ecclesiastes 6:1–9)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

When my heart is restless and in search of something or someone to satisfy its desire for something more, do I realize that I am really searching for God? No creature can fill my capacity for infinite love. Only God can.

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, let me make good and proper use of your creatures and only insofar as they draw me to you. Take away from me, I pray, anything or anyone who would lead me away from you and drag me to hell.*

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## The first pope's first sermon

*Picture yourself in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost as Saint Peter and the other Apostles, with uncontainable joy and zeal, fearlessly preach the Good News of Jesus Christ to a world that had been longing for that very moment since the days of Adam and Eve.*



“Brethren, I may say to you confidently of the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens; but he himself says,

‘The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand,  
till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet.’

Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

(Acts 2:29–36)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I willing to tell others the Good News of Jesus Christ? Can I honestly say that I know the Good News and live according to it?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Blessed were they, Lord, who were alive to witness the first Pentecost of the Church and hear with their own ears the message preached by the blessed Apostles. But more blessed still are they who did not see and hear this directly but believe by faith the promises they gave.*

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## Teach your children well the things of God

*Parents who fail to teach their children the truths of the Faith incur a double punishment. One, for neglecting their God-given duty as parents. And the other, because they are therefore woefully responsible for their children's ignorance of the truth and possible loss of eternal life.*



“Only take heed, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children—how on the day that you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, the Lord said to me, ‘Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children so.’ And you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, while the mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven, wrapped in darkness, cloud, and gloom. Then the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice. And he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is, the ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances, that you might do them in the land which you are going over to possess.”

(Deuteronomy 4:9–14)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I make every effort to properly teach the Faith to those I have an obligation to teach? Do I seek to lead others to the Lord? Am I to blame for not broadening and deepening my own understanding of the Faith?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I am sorry for any ways that I have failed in my duty to teach others about you. Though I may no longer be able to teach them directly, I pray that you would send them teachers and open their ears to hear the truth, and their hearts to believe it.*

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## The Ark of the Covenant foreshadows the Virgin Mary

*The Ark of the Covenant carried within itself the Word of God in Scripture. The Blessed Virgin Mary, who is the Ark of the New Covenant, carried within herself the Word of God in Flesh. We see the two appear together in heaven in Revelation 11:19 and 12:1–2.*



Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting, because the cloud abode upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would go onward; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not go onward till the day that it was taken up. For throughout all their journeys the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel.

(Exodus 40:34–38)

And the angel said to her,

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you,  
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you;  
therefore the child to be born will be called holy,  
the Son of God.”

(Luke 1:35)

IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I understand the Church's teachings about Mary's role in God's plan of salvation? Do I recognize in her the exalted gifts of grace and beauty that God wills to give all who love him?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, just as you commanded Moses to fashion the Ark perfect in every detail, so too and in a far more glorious way, you created your mother Mary as a model of Christian perfection and grace. I give you thanks for the great and wonderful gifts you bestowed on her.*

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## The Lord hears the cries of the poor—so should you

*Do you imagine that you can go through this life ignoring the plight of the poor and not be punished for it when you die and face judgment and have to render to Christ an account of your life?*



But if any one 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?

(1 John 3:17)

This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him,  
and saved him out of all his troubles.

(Psalm 34:6)

For the Lord hears the needy,  
and does not despise his own that are in bonds.

(Psalm 69:33)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

The needs of the poor have a claim on me. I must help them, not just as a faceless, abstract group, but individual people who need the basic necessities of life. What can I do to accomplish this?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I know that you hear the cries of the poor and oppressed people around me. Open my ears that I may hear them too. Open my heart that I*

*would love them with your love. Open my wallet that I would be generous to them.*

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## The Presentation in the Temple shows God's faithfulness

*God will always be faithful to his promises. Be patient. God will act.*



And inspired by the Spirit he came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,  
according to thy word;  
for mine eyes have seen thy salvation  
which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples,  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
and for glory to thy people Israel.”

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him; 34 and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother,

“Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel,  
and for a sign that is spoken against  
(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also),  
that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed.”

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phan'uel, of the tribe of Asher; she was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, and as a widow till she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

(Luke 2:27–38)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I expect "instant results" from God and become impatient when I don't see them? Do I trust God to keep his promises, even when things seem otherwise? Do I pray earnestly for God's will to be accomplished in my life, in my country, in the world?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, teach me to live according to your words in Hebrews 6:12, so that I may not be sluggish, but an imitator of those who through faith and patience inherited the promises.*

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## A warning about disorder with spiritual gifts

*The spiritual gifts are important but, as Saint Paul reminds us, they are by no means the most important, nor are they for everyone. “Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away” (1 Corinthians 13:8).*



If, therefore, the whole church assembles and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

What then, brethren? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn; and let one interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silence in church and speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. If a revelation is made to another sitting by, let the first be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. What! Did the word of God originate with you, or are you the only ones it has reached?

If any one thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord. If

any one does not recognize this, he is not recognized. So, my brethren, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues; but all things should be done decently and in order.

(1 Corinthians 14:23–40)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I attentive to the Holy Spirit's presence in my life, receptive to whatever spiritual gifts he might bestow on me? Do I scorn those who do not adopt my personal form of piety? Do I grasp at or demand spiritual gifts, as if I had a right to them?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Teach me, Lord, to love you above all things, even above your gifts, that I may seek first your kingdom.*

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## A prophetic hymn of praise to the Lord

*From time immemorial, the prophets foretold and longed for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. You now see and experience in Christ the glorious fulfillment of what those in the Old Testament era could only hope for.*



“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,  
 for he has visited and redeemed his people,  
 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us  
 in the house of his servant David,  
 as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,  
 that we should be saved from our enemies,  
 and from the hand of all who hate us;  
 to perform the mercy promised to our fathers,  
 and to remember his holy covenant,  
 the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us  
 that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies,  
 might serve him without fear,  
 in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.  
 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;  
 for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,  
 to give knowledge of salvation to his people  
 in the forgiveness of their sins,  
 through the tender mercy of our God,  
 when the day shall dawn upon us from on high  
 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,  
 to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

(Luke 1:68–79)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Is Christ's role as Messiah, Redeemer, and Savior important to me? Does he make a dramatic, life-changing difference in me? Or do I think of him in purely abstract terms. Is Jesus real to me or just a nice idea I think about now and then?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*“Zion, to thy Savior sing, to thy Shepherd and thy King! Let the air with praises ring! All thou canst, proclaim with mirth, far higher is his worth than the glory words may wing” (“Lauda Sion,” Saint Thomas Aquinas).*

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## A prayer for sinners who seek forgiveness from God

*If you are far from God, deep in sin, and empty inside, pray this prayer.  
If you know someone who fits that description, pray this prayer on that  
person's behalf.*



Hear my prayer, O Lord;  
give ear to my supplications!  
In thy faithfulness answer me, in thy righteousness!  
Enter not into judgment with thy servant;  
for no man living is righteous before thee.  
For the enemy has pursued me;  
he has crushed my life to the ground;  
he has made me sit in darkness like those long dead.  
Therefore my spirit faints within me;  
my heart within me is appalled.  
I remember the days of old,  
I meditate on all that thou hast done;  
I muse on what thy hands have wrought.  
I stretch out my hands to thee;  
my soul thirsts for thee like a parched land.  
Make haste to answer me, O Lord!  
My spirit fails!  
Hide not thy face from me,  
lest I be like those who go down to the Pit.  
Let me hear in the morning of thy steadfast love,  
for in thee I put my trust.  
Teach me the way I should go,  
for to thee I lift up my soul.  
Deliver me, O Lord, from my enemies!

I have fled to thee for refuge!  
Teach me to do thy will,  
for thou art my God!  
Let thy good spirit lead me  
on a level path!  
For thy name's sake, O Lord, preserve my life!  
In thy righteousness bring me out of trouble!

(Psalm 143: 1–11)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I confess my sins to the Lord and to his appointed ministers in the sacrament of Confession? Am I truly horrified by my sins because they offend almighty God, who is deserving of all my love?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, my sins are ugly and horrible. I cannot bear their putrid stench! Save me, O God, and draw me back to you. I love you. I repent of my sins and resolve never to go back into that miserable pit. Heal me, Lord, and restore your grace to my heart.*

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## Contemplate the courage of Saint Stephen

*Are you willing to proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ even if doing so results in opposition, persecution, or even martyrdom?*



“You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.”

Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth against him. But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.” But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together upon him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” And he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

(Acts 7:51–60)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

If I am unfaithful in the little things and small tests I face in this life, why should I think that I will be faithful when a great test arises?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O great Saint Stephen, the Church's first martyr, please intercede with God for me that I might be courageous and calm, as you were, when challenges to my faith confront me.*

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## Learn from Jesus' humility how to be humble

*Pride is a deformation and corruption of love. It subordinates and subjugates love of God beneath love of self. St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that inordinate self-love is the root cause of every sin. The only way to combat and defeat pride is to destroy it with the virtue of humility.*



Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Even if I am to be poured as a libation upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

(Philippians 2:5–18)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I aware of the corrosive effects of pride in my life? They are there whether I give thought to them or not. What am I doing to nurture and strengthen the virtue of humility?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*O Jesus, Son of the Father, I humbly fall to my knees before you and confess with my mouth that you are my Lord and savior! Teach me your humility and help me to conquer my pride by your grace.*

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## Be vigilant and ready for the return of the Lord

*All one need do is consider the latest news of the world to realize why the lesson in this passage is so necessary and important.*



But as to the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When people say, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as travail comes upon a woman with child, and there will be no escape. But you are not in darkness, brethren, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all sons of light and sons of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But, since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we wake or sleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

(1 Thessalonians 5:1–11)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I pay attention to the signs of the times? Do I watch and pray? Or am I so engrossed in busyness, mindless entertainment, and frivolous pastimes that I am oblivious to the devil’s cunning stratagems that glide stealthily around me, seeking where they might catch hold of me?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, help me to keep awake and sober in my anticipation of your return. Let me not slumber in darkness but stand upright in the light wearing the armor of faith, hope, and charity.*

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## In this life, nothing lasts forever

*“Let nothing trouble you, let nothing frighten you. All things are passing. God never changes. Patience obtains all things. He who possesses God lacks nothing. God alone suffices” (Saint Teresa of Avila, 1515–1582).*



For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born, and a time to die;  
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;  
a time to kill, and a time to heal;  
a time to break down, and a time to build up;  
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;  
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;  
a time to seek, and a time to lose;  
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;  
a time to rend, and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
a time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time for war, and a time for peace.

(Ecclesiastes 3:1–8)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I cling to the changing, fleeting, passing things of this world, or do I cling to God?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, keep me close to you, rooted and immoveable in your steadfast love for me. Teach me to regard everything around me as useful only insofar as it brings me closer to you.*

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## The wonder of the cosmos is nothing compared to God

*The universe and everything in it reflects the glory of God. But no matter how beautiful something may be, it is only but a faint reflection of God's own beauty.*



For all men who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature; and they were unable from the good things that are seen to know him who exists, nor did they recognize the craftsman while paying heed to his works; but they supposed that either fire or wind or swift air, or the circle of the stars, or turbulent water, or the luminaries of heaven were the gods that rule the world. If through delight in the beauty of these things men assumed them to be gods, let them know how much better than these is their Lord, for the author of beauty created them. And if men were amazed at their power and working, let them perceive from them how much more powerful is he who formed them. For from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator. Yet these men are little to be blamed, for perhaps they go astray while seeking God and desiring to find him. For as they live among his works they keep searching, and they trust in what they see, because the things that are seen are beautiful. Yet again, not even they are to be excused; for if they had the power to know so much

that they could investigate the world,  
how did they fail to find sooner the Lord of these things?

(Wisdom 13:1–9)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I get caught up in, or even ensnared by, the relative beauty of the things around me such that I forget about God?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, let me see your reflection in the beauty of your creations. Help me make proper use of your creation. Grant that I might ascend to you on the ladder of created things, knowing that the beauty of the natural world, no matter how stupendous, is nothing compared to your glory.*

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## Abraham is your father. You are a “chip off the old block”

*“Abraham is our patriarch and forefather. Anti-Semitism is incompatible with the lofty thought which that fact expresses. It is a movement with which we Christians can have nothing to do.... Through Christ and in Christ we are the spiritual progeny of Abraham. Spiritually, we are all Semites” (Pius XI).*



“Hearken to me, you who pursue deliverance,  
you who seek the Lord;  
look to the rock from which you were hewn,  
and to the quarry from which you were digged.  
Look to Abraham your father  
and to Sarah who bore you;  
for when he was but one I called him,  
and I blessed him and made him many.”

(Isaiah 51:1–2)

Therefore [it is] of faith, that [it might be] by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.

(Romans 4:16)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I harbor feelings of anti-semitism? Have I forgotten that, as a Christian, I am a spiritual descendent of Abraham?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, thank you for glorifying your name through your servant Abraham. Teach me to be a worthy member of his great and noble family that I might imitate his faith and obedience and his boundless love for you.*

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## When you feel unable to pray, ask Jesus to heal you

*Sometimes, sickness or some other distraction makes it difficult or impossible to concentrate on prayer. Make it your permanent intention right now to always pray as best you can, asking God to help you when you are weak or incapacitated.*



And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city. And behold, they brought to him a paralytic, lying on his bed; and when Jesus saw their faith he said to the paralytic, “Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven.” And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, “This man is blaspheming.” But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he then said to the paralytic—“Rise, take up your bed and go home.” And he rose and went home. When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

(Matthew 9:1–8)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I make an effort to pray well, even when I am sick or occupied with other things?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, teach me to pray!*

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## Telling the truth sometimes requires sacrifice

*John the Baptist is an excellent model of courageous Christianity. Model your life on his and you can do great good for others by speaking the truth without fear of the consequences.*



For Herod had seized John and bound him and put him in prison, for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; because John said to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." And though he wanted to put him to death, he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet. But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company, and pleased Herod, so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter." And the king was sorry; but because of his oaths and his guests he commanded it to be given; he sent and had John beheaded in the prison, and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. And his disciples came and took the body and buried it; and they went and told Jesus.

(Matthew 14:3–12)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I willing to speak the truth only when it is convenient and safe for me to do so?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Saint John the Baptist, martyr invincible, who, for the honor of God and the salvation of souls, with firmness and constancy withstood the impiety of Herod even at the cost of your own life, rebuking him openly for his wicked and dissolute life; by your prayers obtain for me a brave and*

*generous heart, in order that I may overcome all human respect and openly profess my faith in loyal obedience to the teachings of Christ.*

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## The final words uttered by Christ on the Cross

*There is an immense wealth of theological information imparted to us in these few, terse, passages. Ponder often and prayerfully Christ's last words in light of the fact that he suffered and died on the Cross for your sins.*



And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, la´ma sabach-tha´ni?” that is, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

(Matthew 27:46)

And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to divide his garments.

And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last.

(Luke 23:34, 43, 46)

When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfil the scripture), “I thirst.” A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, “It is finished”; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

( John 19:26–30)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

How often (if ever) do I reflect on Christ's passion and death? Do I realize that he died for me? Does this cause me compunction and sorrow for my sins, sins which are directly responsible for his death?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, I have no adequate words to express the gratitude, anguish, and awe I feel when I contemplate how the Cross reveals your love for me. Impress upon my heart, I pray, the image of your crucified glory as a perpetual reminder of what you did for me.*

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## Wise advice for young men

*You have heard the exclamation, “If only I knew when I was young what I know now!” It refers to stultitia iuventutis—the foolishness of youth. If you heed this biblical advice, not only will you not be foolish, you will know now what most people learn only much later.*



Speak, young man, if there is need of you,  
 but no more than twice, and only if asked.  
 Speak concisely, say much in few words;  
 be as one who knows and yet holds his tongue.  
 Among the great do not act as their equal;  
 and when another is speaking, do not babble.  
 Lightning speeds before the thunder,  
 and approval precedes a modest man.  
 Leave in good time and do not be the last;  
 go home quickly and do not linger.  
 Amuse yourself there, and do what you have in mind,  
 but do not sin through proud speech.  
 And for these things bless him who made you  
 and satisfies you with his good gifts.  
 He who fears the Lord will accept his discipline,  
 and those who rise early to seek him will find favor.  
 He who seeks the law will be filled with it,  
 but the hypocrite will stumble at it.  
 Those who fear the Lord will form true judgments,  
 and like a light they will kindle righteous deeds.  
 A sinful man will shun reproof,  
 and will find a decision according to his liking.

(Sirach 32:7–24)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I seek heavenly wisdom and how to live in a way pleasing to the Lord, or am I more concerned with pleasure, entertainment, and getting my own way?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, help me rise above the fog of human folly into the pure and clear light of your truth. Teach me to love your wisdom above all else, that I may never depart from it.*

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## Jesus is the son of David

*Consider the mighty King David and how he prefigured his royal descendant, Jesus Christ, the true king of kings. But whereas David was flawed and sinful, Jesus is perfect and sinless.*



“ ‘When your days are fulfilled to go to be with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son; I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from him who was before you, but I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom for ever and his throne shall be established for ever.’ ” In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

Then King David went in and sat before the Lord, and said, “Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me thus far? And this was a small thing in thy eyes, O God; thou hast also spoken of thy servant’s house for a great while to come, and hast shown me future generations, O Lord God! And what more can David say to thee for honoring thy servant? For thou knowest thy servant. For thy servant’s sake, O Lord, and according to thy own heart, thou hast wrought all this greatness, in making known all these great things. There is none like thee, O Lord, and there is no God besides thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

(1 Chronicles 17:11–20)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

What lessons can I learn from reading about the life and times of King David?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, through the intercession of your servant King David, I pray that you would teach me to emulate his greatness and learn from the colossal difficulties he caused himself by his sins.*

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## Give thanks to the Lord for He is good and merciful

*Especially when times are good, food is plentiful, and the sun is shining, most people never give even a passing thought to God. They forget that every good thing in this life is a gift from God. Do not be like them. Give thanks to the Lord in all things.*



O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,  
for his steadfast love endures for ever.  
O give thanks to the God of gods,  
for his steadfast love endures for ever.  
O give thanks to the Lord of lords,  
for his steadfast love endures for ever;  
to him who alone does great wonders,  
for his steadfast love endures for ever;  
to him who by understanding made the heavens,  
for his steadfast love endures for ever;  
to him who spread out the earth upon the waters,  
for his steadfast love endures for ever;  
to him who made the great lights,  
for his steadfast love endures for ever;  
the sun to rule over the day,  
for his steadfast love endures for ever;  
the moon and stars to rule over the night,  
for his steadfast love endures for ever;

(Psalm 136:1–9)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

How often do I give thanks to God from my heart for all his many blessings?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*I give you thanks, almighty God, for all your countless benefits and blessings, those that I know about and those that are hidden from my view.*

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## God loves his creation

*Because it was out of love that God created the cosmos and everything in it, we can be certain that, out of love, he has not withdrawn himself but is present to his creation with kindness, and mercy.*



For thy all-powerful hand,  
 which created the world out of formless matter,  
 did not lack the means to send upon them a multitude of bears, or bold  
 lions,  
 or newly created unknown beasts full of rage,  
 or such as breathe out fiery breath,  
 or belch forth a thick pall of smoke,  
 or flash terrible sparks from their eyes;  
 not only could their damage exterminate men,  
 but the mere sight of them could kill by fright.  
 Even apart from these, men could fall at a single breath  
 when pursued by justice  
 and scattered by the breath of thy power.  
 But thou hast arranged all things by measure and number and weight....  
 Because the whole world before thee is like a speck that tips the scales,  
 and like a drop of morning dew that falls upon the ground.  
 But thou art merciful to all, for thou canst do all things,  
 and thou dost overlook men's sins, that they may repent.  
 For thou lovest all things that exist,  
 and hast loathing for none of the things which thou hast made,  
 for thou wouldst not have made anything if thou hadst hated it.  
 How would anything have endured if thou hadst not willed it?  
 Or how would anything not called forth by thee have been preserved?  
 Thou sparest all things, for they are thine, O Lord who lovest the living.

(Wisdom 11:17–26)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

When God created the material universe, he said, "It is good." When he created man, he said, "It is *very* good." God loves all his creatures, natural and supernatural. I am comprised of both matter and spirit. How does this truth influence how I treat my body and soul?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I marvel that, although you did not need to create anything, including me, you did, out of love. Let me respond to your love in humble gratitude. Help me live this life well so that I can spend eternity praising you in heaven.*

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## Trust in God

*Scripture exhorts us to, “taste and see the goodness of the Lord.” Embrace his will, trust in his love, live your life for him and not for yourself.*



My child, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials. Be sincere of heart and steadfast, and do not be impetuous in time of adversity. Cling to him, do not leave him, that you may prosper in your last days. Accept whatever happens to you; in periods of humiliation be patient. For in fire gold is tested, and the chosen, in the crucible of humiliation.

Trust in God, and he will help you; make your ways straight and hope in him. You that fear the Lord, wait for his mercy, do not stray lest you fall. You that fear the Lord, trust in him, and your reward will not be lost. You that fear the Lord, hope for good things, for lasting joy and mercy. Consider the generations long past and see: has anyone trusted in the Lord and been disappointed? Has anyone persevered in his fear and been forsaken? Has anyone called upon him and been ignored? For the Lord is compassionate and merciful; forgives sins and saves in time of trouble.

(Sirach 2:1–11)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Have I given my life entirely to the Lord? What is stopping me from doing so right now?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Father, I abandon myself into your hands; do with me what you will. Whatever you may do, I thank you. I am ready for all, I accept all. Let only your will be done in me, and in all your creatures. I wish no more than this,*

*O Lord. Into your hands I commend my soul. I offer it to you with all the love of my heart, for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself, to surrender myself into your hands, without reserve, and with boundless confidence, for you are my Father.” (Bl. Charles de Foucauld)*

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## Your guardian angel protects you. Ask for his help

*Sometimes, this life can seem like a lion's den. So be like the Prophet Daniel, who relied on the angel that the Lord sent to protect him. God has appointed an angel to protect you, too.*



Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. When he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish and said to Daniel, “O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?” Then Daniel said to the king, “O king, live for ever! My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths, and they have not hurt me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no wrong.”

(Daniel 6:19–22)

Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?

(Hebrews 1:14)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I rely on the protection and guidance of my guardian angel?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, thank you for the holy angel you appointed to protect me. May he victoriously defend me against the attacks of the devil. May he guide my*

*steps on the path to heaven, strengthen my love for you, intercede for me,  
and help me become worthy of your friendship.*

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# Baptism frees us from the curse of original sin

*Original sin is one of the tragic consequences of Adam and Eve's fall. It makes the soul spiritually "inert." But Christ conquers this in the sacrament of Baptism by eradicating the condition of original sin and all actual sins and infusing sanctifying grace into the soul.*



Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,  
and in sin did my mother conceive me.

(Psalm 51:5)

for God created man for incorruption,  
and made him in the image of his own eternity,  
but through the devil's envy death entered the world,  
and those who belong to his party experience it.

(Wisdom 2:23–24)

Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death  
through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned.

(Romans 5:12)

For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of  
the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

(1 Corinthians 15:21–22)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

I must ponder the connection between original sin and Saint Peter's declaration that "Baptism now saves you" (1 Peter 3:21).

## CLOSING PRAYER

*I thank you, Lord, for the precious gift of the sacrament of Baptism in which you wash away my sins and give me a clean conscience and a heart brimming with grace and love for you.*

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## On the Last Day, all will be revealed, including your sins

*If you lead a holy life, you will have little to be ashamed of at the judgment, when all will be revealed. But if you lead a life of iniquity, that revelation will cause you great pain.*



For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God.

( John 3:17–21)

The misery of an hour makes one forget luxury,  
and at the close of a man's life his deeds will be revealed.

(Sirach 11:27)

Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then every man will receive his commendation from God.

(1 Corinthians 4:5)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

I must begin today—right now!—to live my life in the light of God's saving truth and not in the shadows of furtive sin and rebellion against God. If I want to be saved, that is the only option.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, I desire nothing more than to be fully united with you. Help me put aside all sinful thoughts, words, and deeds that keep me far from you and for which I will have to account in the judgment.*

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## Treat all holy things with proper reverence

*This is an age of tremendous disrespect for God and for holy things. You, however, must be a sign of contradiction to the world, showing by your good example the reverence we owe to the Lord.*



Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Mid'ian; and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and lo, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here am I." Then he said, "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

(Exodus 3:1–5)

You shall keep my sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord.

You shall keep my sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord.

(Leviticus 19:30, 26:2)

Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

(Hebrews 12:28, 10:31)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Does anything in my actions and words manifest a lack of respect for God and the things of God? Do I willingly partake of blasphemous or irreverent forms of "entertainment"? Do I ever use God's name in vain? Do I show respect to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Purify my mind, O Lord, that I would always show great reverence to you and never allow myself to go along with those who blaspheme, mock, or show a lack of respect to you, your saints, or your Church.*

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## Don't delay your conversion!

*“Grace never fails us, never leaves us, unless we leave it. Our good God waits for us patiently in our delays. He increasingly calls us even though we do not answer Him. He knocks at the very door of the heart that is shut to him.” (St. Jane de Chantal)*



Do not delay to turn to the Lord,  
nor postpone it from day to day;  
for suddenly the wrath of the Lord will go forth,  
and at the time of punishment you will perish.

(Sirach 5:7)

And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

(Luke 12:16–21)

Watch therefore—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Watch.”

(Mark 13:35–37)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

When I die, it will be then too late to open the door of my heart to the Lord who has been patiently knocking and waiting for me to allow him into my heart. The time for mercy is now! After death comes judgment and justice.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*I love you, Lord, and throw open wide the doors of my heart to you.  
Forgive my sins, I pray, and never let me be parted from you.*

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## There never will be a “total apostasy” of the Church

*Jesus said: “No one can enter a strong man’s house to plunder his property unless first he ties up the strong man. Then, he can plunder his house” (Mark 3:27). Jesus is the “strong man” guarding his Church. A “total apostasy” could only happen if the devil were stronger than Jesus.*



“Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

(Matthew 28:20)

If I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.

(1 Timothy 3:15)

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesare’a Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do men say that the Son of man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Eli’jah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

(Matthew 16:13–19)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I in any way doubt that Christ has been true to his promise to be with the Church always, even to the end of the world, and that not even the gates of hell could overcome that Church?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I believe and trust in your promises never to permit your Church to be overcome by a total apostasy, and I pray for the conversion to the true Faith of those misguided souls who teach such a perverted doctrine.*

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## Do not be quarrelsome

*There are few things more irritating and repellant than a belligerent, hot-tempered person. Do not be belligerent or hot tempered, for you will afflict those around you and bring down God's judgment upon yourself.*



In proportion to the fuel for the fire, so will be the burning,  
and in proportion to the obstinacy of strife will be the burning;  
in proportion to the strength of the man will be his anger,  
and in proportion to his wealth he will heighten his wrath.  
A hasty quarrel kindles fire,  
and urgent strife sheds blood.

(Sirach 28:10–11)

Have nothing to do with stupid, senseless controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to every one, an apt teacher, forbearing.

(2 Timothy 2:23–24)

The beginning of strife is like letting out water;  
so quit before the quarrel breaks out.

(Proverbs 17:14)

Make no friendship with a man given to anger,  
nor go with a wrathful man,  
lest you learn his ways  
and entangle yourself in a snare.

(Proverbs 22:24–25)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Sometimes, I just need to close my big mouth and say nothing. It is far better that I learn patience by holding my tongue than to spout my opinions, when doing so will cause chaos, controversy, and needless offence.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, teach me humility and how to be silent. I repent of the times when my speech has been careless, contentious, and needlessly hurtful toward others.*

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## Loving your neighbor includes praying for him

*Praying for someone is not the same thing as merely thinking about him or her. Part of your duty as a Christian is to pray for others. Be sure to spend some time in prayer each day invoking the Lord's blessings on others.*



But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

(Matthew 5:44)

I appeal to you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf.

(Romans 15:30)

Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that utterance may be given me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel.

(Ephesians 6:18–19)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

I am very pleased when others pray for me, so, why do I not pray for them? Have I promised my prayers to someone but have not followed through on it? Who do I know who is hurting or in need?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I pray for all who need prayer, for my friends and my enemies. I pray for my benefactors, for my family members, living and dead, for those who will die today, for those who are far from you and steeped in sin. Pour out your healing and blessings on them, Lord.*

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## Pray these words when you feel you have lost all hope

*Even when things seem bleak and hopeless, no matter how difficult the circumstances, trust in the Lord in all things, calling upon his name for deliverance.*



I call upon thee, O Lord; make haste to me!  
Give ear to my voice, when I call to thee!  
Let my prayer be counted as incense before thee,  
and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice!

(Psalm 142:1–2)

“Now therefore, O our God, hearken to the prayer of thy servant and to his supplications, and for thy own sake, O Lord, cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary, which is desolate. O my God, incline thy ear and hear; open thy eyes and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name; for we do not present our supplications before thee on the ground of our righteousness, but on the ground of thy great mercy. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, give heed and act; delay not, for thy own sake, O my God, because thy city and thy people are called by thy name.”

(Daniel 9:17–19)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I ask God for his mercy and help each day, or only when times are tough? Do I cultivate the virtues of faith and hope?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, deepen in me a lively sense of trust in your love for me. Never let me sink into despair or despondency, no matter what trials may array themselves before me. I know and believe that there is no trouble known to man that your grace cannot effortlessly overcome.*

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## If you love God, lust has no place in your heart

*Saint Augustine teaches that the sin of lust is like an iron chain that binds you fast, enslaving your will to perversity. When lust gains entry to your heart, it quickly takes root as a habit. If you don't resist and uproot it, that habit inevitably becomes a necessity.*



But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

(Romans 13:14)

“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two shall become one.” But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

(1 Corinthians 6:13–20)

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you once walked, when you

lived in them. But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth.

(Colossians 3:5–8)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I make concessions to lust, however minor or insignificant they may seem? Do I view pornography and indulge in the sins commonly associated with pornography? Do I lust in my heart after other people? Do I in any way act out my lustful thoughts?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Create in me a clean heart, O Lord. Purify my eyes, my imagination, my memory, my heart, and my will from all the sordid contamination I have brought upon myself and others through my sins of lust. Break the chains that bind me, Lord, and make me chaste.*

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## Always seek the good of your neighbor

*Imagine yourself cold, destitute, and hungry, huddling on a sidewalk with nowhere to go and nothing to eat. A well-dressed person carrying an armload of warm, delicious, freshly made food walks past you without even a glance. How does that make you feel? Now ... reverse the roles.*



Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

(Galatians 6:2)

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

(Romans 12:1)

Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.

(1 Corinthians 10:24)

But concerning love of the brethren you have no need to have any one write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do love all the brethren throughout Macedo'nia. But we exhort you, brethren, to do so more and more.

(1 Thessalonians 4:9–10)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I actually *do* good for others or do I simply *think of myself* as someone who does good for others? In all honesty, how would God rate my

track record on this issue?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, you know how skillfully I rationalize and make excuses for myself. You see my heart and know how I often fail to do what I could and should do to help others. Forgive me, Lord. By your grace, make me a doer of your word, not just a hearer.*

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## The virtue of humility is pleasing to God

*Some people are exceedingly proud of their humility and spare no effort to ensure that everyone knows just how humble they are. Others are downright arrogant and damn(ably) proud of it. What about you?*



For the Lord takes pleasure in his people;  
he adorns the humble with victory.

(Psalm 149:4)

For thus says the high and lofty One  
who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:  
“I dwell in the high and holy place,  
and also with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit,  
to revive the spirit of the humble,  
and to revive the heart of the contrite.”

(Isaiah 57:15)

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

(Matthew 5:5)

Likewise you that are younger be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

(1 Peter 5:5)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

If God is pleased with humility, it is obvious that he is displeased with pride. Have I given any consideration to the fact that pride is a “capital” sin,

meaning that it, like a Hydra Head, leads to many other sins.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, inspired by your servant Saint Alphonsus Ligouri, I pray that if you grant me any virtue or any gift, you will keep it hidden even from me so that I may persevere in my humility and not become proud because of it.*

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## When tempted by unruly passions, trust in God

*It has been said, and rightly so, that there are two unavoidable things in this life: death and taxes. But there is a third: temptation. As sure as night follows day, we all must contend with temptations to sin. It is part of our human condition. So be prepared.*



Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, working death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. So then it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me.

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

(Romans 7:13–24)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

If even Saint Paul wrestled with unruly passions and was battered by temptations, then why should I imagine that I am exempted from the devil's nefarious activity? No. I must don the armor of God and strive to resist temptation whenever it hurls itself against me.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, you know how weak and vulnerable I am, especially when temptations appeal to my predominant faults. Protect me, and give me strength to repel the attacks of the enemy. When I fall, please forgive me and help me back to my feet so I can resume the fight.*

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## Through the gospel, priests become our fathers

*The ancient Catholic custom of calling priests “father” can be traced all the way back to the Apostles. Saint Paul’s own teaching on this issue includes an encouragement that Christians would imitate both his good personal example but also his example of referring to himself as their “father.”*



I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me.

(1 Corinthians 4:14–16)

You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our behavior to you believers; for you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

(1 Thessalonians 2:10–12)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I show proper respect to priests, the men of God who have become my spiritual fathers in the Lord?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus Christ, you ordained that the priests of your Church would minister to your people on their journey homeward to heaven. Grant us in*

*your mercy an abundance of good and holy priests who will faithfully serve  
as worthy spiritual fathers.*

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## Scripture and Tradition are necessary for the Church

*The Church preached the gospel of Christ for years before the first words of the New Testament were written down. Apostolic Tradition is necessary, along with Scripture, and Christians may not pit one against the other or choose one and ignore the other.*



Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed.

(Luke 1:1–4)

Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast—unless you believed in vain.

I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you.

(1 Corinthians 15:1–2, 11:2)

To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. so then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter.

(2 Thessalonians 2:14–15)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

How often do I study the Holy Bible? Do I ignore or reject an Apostolic Tradition simply because it is not explicitly stated in Scripture? Do I realize that the Bible nowhere says or even suggests that anything must be proved from the Bible?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Thank you, Lord, for your great gift of Scripture. Guide and illuminate your Church, I pray, as she preaches, teaches, and hands on the deposit of faith that you and your blessed Apostles delivered to her, once and for all.*

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## Gossip and slander are a form of murder— shun them!

*The effects of gossip and detraction can be compared to scattering the contents of a feather pillow on a windy day. It would be easier get all those feathers back into that pillow than to undo the damage you inflict on another's reputation by your rash words.*



Slander has driven away courageous women,  
and deprived them of the fruit of their toil.  
Whoever pays heed to slander will not find rest,  
nor will he settle down in peace.  
The blow of a whip raises a welt,  
but a blow of the tongue crushes the bones.  
Many have fallen by the edge of the sword,  
but not so many as have fallen because of the tongue.

(Sirach 28:15–18)

“You have heard ... ‘You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be liable to the hell of fire.”

(Matthew 5:21–22)

Do not speak evil against one another, brethren. He that speaks evil against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.... But who are you that you judge your neighbor?

(James 4:11–12)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I speak critically or gossip about other people? Do I reveal their hidden faults? Do I willingly listen to or partake in backbiting conversations about others? Have I posted insulting, mean-spirited, or defamatory comments about people (whether or not they are public figures) on blogs or websites?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*I am profoundly sorry, Lord, for all the times I have injured other people's feelings and damaged their reputations by my words. Help me to undo the harm I have caused and teach me to keep my mouth firmly closed whenever the temptation to do this again arises.*

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## God loves you, and there is nothing you can do about it

*The Lord is very close to you, even when it does not appear so. He wants to give you every good spiritual gift because he loves you. This is why he will never force you to accept his loving plan for you. Love cannot be forced, it can only be wooed and won.*



For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

( Jeremiah 29:11–14)

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. Fear not, for I am with you

(Isaiah 43:1–5)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I willing to totally abandon myself to God's love for me? Do I trust him? Is there something keeping me from seeking the Lord with my whole heart? Something I can't quite let go of?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, what is your plan for me? Show me, I pray, that I may see and embrace it. I am seeking you with all my heart, Lord. Let me find you! Let me let you find me!*

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## Profanity shows that your heart is far from God

*How can you claim to be striving for the “holiness, without which no man will see God” (Hebrews 12:14), if profanity pours forth from your lips like a brackish, filth-polluted river?*



“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.”

(Exodus 20:7)

“[It is] not what goes into the mouth defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.... what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a man.”

(Matthew 15:11)

And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”

Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having in his hand a burning coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth, and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven.”

(Isaiah 6:5–7)

Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear.

(Ephesians 4:29)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Does what comes out of my mouth demonstrate or contradict my claim to love God? Do I use profanity? Do I take God's name in vain, even in seemingly insignificant ways, such as saying "Oh my God!" when expressing surprise? These things are incompatible with the perfection to which God is calling me.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, purify my mind and my speech so that in all things, great and small, I may only reflect your glory and demonstrate my love for you.*

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## God will not reject those who sincerely seek him

*Because God is love (c.f., 1 John 4:8), everything he does is motivated by love. This is why it would be contrary to his nature, and therefore impossible, for him to be the cause of the worst evil possible: not giving all human beings the capacity to freely respond to his love.*



All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out.

(John 6:37)

When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

(Romans 2:14–16)

And Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right and acceptable to him.

(Acts 10:34–35)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I assume that God does not love certain groups of people because of their skin color or where they live? Do I have the attitude that God loves or

favors certain groups of people and not others?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, teach me to love others as you love them and to do what I can to help them love you too.*

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## To be saved, you must repent and do penance

*It is this simple: If you do not turn from your sins and ask the Lord for his mercy and forgiveness, you will not go to heaven.*



In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.... Bear fruit that befits repentance, and do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.”

(Matthew 3:1–2, 8–10)

I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

(Luke 13:3)

Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

(Acts 3:19)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Have I truly repented of my sins? Do I seek salvation by grace through faith or through my own works done outside of God’s grace?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, humble my heart and teach me the way of your salvation and how you love and accept those who are contrite of heart. Banish from me, I pray, any lingering attachment to, or love for my past sins. May I detest their very memory.*

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## Only those who persevere to the end will be saved

*Could a runner “win” the race if he quit running halfway through? Could a sports team stop playing because they got tired and still claim victory? Of course not. And so it is with eternal life. Only those who persevere to the end will receive the victor’s crown of salvation.*



Then I said to myself, “What befalls the fool will befall me also; why then have I been so very wise?” And I said to myself that this also is vanity. For of the wise man as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise man dies just like the fool! So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me; for all is vanity and a striving after wind.

(Ecclesiastes 2:15–17)

Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

(Luke 9:62)

Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast—unless you believed in vain.

(1 Corinthians 15:1–2)

IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I half-hearted and indifferent toward my salvation? Do I expect that, when everything is said and done, God will just let me “get by” with my mediocrity?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Help me, Lord, awaken me from my spiritual torpor and help me shake off my laziness, for I have a race to win.*

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## Do not judge others by their outward appearance

*You would be astonished—shocked, actually—if you only knew who the real saints are. Physical appearance and the quality of clothing reveal nothing whatsoever about the state of a person’s soul. Learn, therefore, to see others through the eyes of Christ.*



“There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Laz´arus, full of sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Laz´arus in his bosom. And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Laz´arus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Laz´arus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.’

(Luke 16:19–25)

My brethren, show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man with gold rings and in fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “Have a seat here, please,” while you say to the poor man, “Stand there,” or, “Sit at my feet,” have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brethren. Has not

God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to those who love him?

(James 2:1–5)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I judgmental and dismissive of others based on appearances? Are people who have money and are physically attractive more important to me than those who are poor and unbecoming? How will God judge such a shallow, worldly attitude?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, forgive me for all the petty, uncharitable, and judgmental attitudes I have harbored toward certain people based solely on their appearance. What a fool I have been to dismiss the lowly and cater to those whose appearance I find attractive.*

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## Be persistent in your prayers and don't lose hope

*Even if you feel that you pray and God never answers, you wait and he never acts, be patient and do not lose hope. God will act when the time is right, and he will bless your patient endurance.*



And he said to them, “Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; and he will answer from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything’? I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him whatever he needs.”

(Luke 11:5–8)

But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

(Romans 8:25)

So that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

(Hebrews 6:12)

But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

(2 Peter 3:8–9)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I so accustomed to instant gratification with modern technology that I expect God to jump through hoops whenever I snap my fingers and ask for something? Bah! I need to humble myself and learn patience. There is no other way around it.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I can be so impatient with myself and others, and even with you! I am sorry for allowing impatience to invade and control my life as it has. Teach me to be peaceful and patient and to wait on your perfect timing.*

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## Without God's help, you cannot withstand temptation

*You delude yourself if you imagine you are strong enough, on your own and apart from God's grace, to withstand the onslaught of temptations with which the devil pelts you. Only with God's help can you hope to remain standing.*



Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of me this night; for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” Peter declared to him, “Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.” Jesus said to him, “Truly, I say to you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.” Peter said to him, “Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And so said all the disciples.

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsem'ane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go yonder and pray.”

(Matthew 26:31–36)

[Jesus said] “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren.” And he said to him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.” He said, “I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you three times deny that you know me.”

(Luke 22:31–34)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

I know from bitter experience how things turn out when I rely on my own "strength," rather than God's grace, to avoid temptation. Things always end badly for me when I tell myself "I will just go *this* far and no further."

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I have proven myself to be utterly weak in the face of the temptations that come from the world, the flesh, and the devil. But your grace is invincibly strong. Protect me, Lord, and shield me when the battle rages.*

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## God is glorified in the glory of his saints

*As the moon reflects the light of the sun, the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the angels and saints reflect the glory of God. Jesus declares that he gives the saints the very glory that the Father gave him.*



There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

(Romans 8:1–8)

When he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his call, and may fulfil every good resolve and work of faith by his power.

(2 Thessalonians 1:10–11)

May [they] all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one.

( John 17:21–22)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I acknowledge the fact that God glorifies his saints? Do I honor and venerate them? Do I make the mistake of assuming that venerating the saints somehow “robs” God of glory?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I give you thanks and praise for the glory that you have lavished upon your servants, the angels and saints. May I too become like they are and as perfectly as I can eternally reflect your glory.*

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## The damned in hell are filled with bitter regret

*Jesus described hell as an “unquenchable fire” pervaded by a “devouring worm” (Mark 9:47–48). Saint Thomas explains the “worm” as the terrifying remorse of conscience experienced by the damned. For all eternity, they are unable either to repent of or turn away their hideous sins.*



What has our arrogance profited us?  
 And what good has our boasted wealth brought us?  
 “All those things have vanished like a shadow,  
 and like a rumor that passes by;  
 like a ship that sails through the billowy water,  
 and when it has passed no trace can be found,  
 nor track of its keel in the waves;  
 or as, when a bird flies through the air,  
 no evidence of its passage is found;  
 the light air, lashed by the beat of its pinions  
 and pierced by the force of its rushing flight,  
 is traversed by the movement of its wings,  
 and afterward no sign of its coming is found there;  
 or as, when an arrow is shot at a target,  
 the air, thus divided, comes together at once,  
 so that no one knows its pathway.  
 So we also, as soon as we were born, ceased to be,  
 and we had no sign of virtue to show,  
 but were consumed in our wicked-ness.”  
 Because the hope of the ungodly man is like chaff carried by the wind,  
 and like a light hoarfrost driven away by a storm;  
 it is dispersed like smoke before the wind,

and it passes like the remembrance of a guest who stays but a day.”

(Wisdom 5:8–14)

## IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Christ warned about hell far more often than he spoke about heaven. Would he give such warnings, so often and so forcefully, if it is unlikely I could go there? Of course not. If I were to die and be judged right now, would I go to heaven or hell?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I trust in you alone for my salvation. Help me persevere in your grace, live according to your teachings, and do the good works you have prepared in advance for me to do. Save me from the fires of hell, and call me to live with you forever in heaven.*

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## Jesus Christ is the fullness of God's revelation

*From the fall of Adam and Eve to the Incarnation, God revealed himself, first through natural revelation (i.e., the created universe), and, partially and gradually, through supernatural revelation (i.e., Scripture, prophets, etc.). Now, in Jesus Christ, God has revealed himself to us fully.*



In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs.

(Hebrews 1:1–4)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Because Jesus Christ is the fullness of God's revelation and, therefore, whoever sees Jesus "has seen the Father" ( John 14:9), I must heed Christ's teaching that "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me " (Luke 10:16).

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus Christ, you are true God and true man, the light of the world that pushes back and illuminates the two-fold darkness into which I was*

*born, sin and ignorance. May I live in the light of your truth for the rest of my days and for all eternity.*

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## The crucifix is a reminder of what Jesus did for you

*The crucifix expresses a profound truth: Jesus Christ died for your sins. When you see an image of Christ crucified, thank him with heartfelt gratitude.*



For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

(2 Corinthians 5:21)

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree.”

(Galatians 3:13)

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

(1 Peter 2:24)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Saint Paul said, “God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Do I ever reflect prayerfully on Christ’s passion and death and how he endured this suffering out of love for me, a sinner?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, in the words of your servant Saint John of the Cross, I pray  
“Whenever anything disagreeable or displeasing happens to me, I will*

*remember Christ crucified and be silent.” Help me always to carry my cross faithfully as I follow you to the joys of heaven.*

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## God wants you to be holy, nothing less

*God wants you to be holy. So what is your excuse for not seeking holiness? The only honest answer would be: “I don’t want to be holy.” But if you say “yes” to his invitation, he will make you holy! And you will live with him forever in heaven.*



Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

(Ephesians 1:4)

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor.... For God has not called us for uncleanness, but in holiness.

(1 Thessalonians 4:3–4, 7)

For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

(Titus 2:11–13)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

If I live my life saying “no” to God’s invitation to holiness, when I die and am called upon to render to him an account of my life, he will say to me sadly, “Thy will be done.” And off I will go into the eternal darkness of hell.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, teach me to always say “yes.” to you. Even when what you ask seems more than I can handle, I pray that you will animate my feeble will with your grace and enable me to spend the rest of my life seeking holiness or die trying.*

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## Pray every day to be worthy of God's gift of salvation

*The sin of “presumption” is not mentioned much anymore. Presumption is the notion that your good works are sufficient to save you. It is also equally false notion that salvation is guaranteed by faith in Christ alone, regardless of how you live your life.*



Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed;  
save me, and I shall be saved;  
for thou art my praise.

(Jeremiah 17:14)

And lead us not into temptation,  
But deliver us from evil.

And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and woke him, saying, “Save, Lord; we are perishing.”

(Matthew 6:13, 8:24–25)

And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power.”

(Luke 23:42)

Why do you call me “Lord, Lord,” and do not do what I tell you?

(Luke 6:46, cf. Matthew 7:21)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I presumptuous of God's mercy, assuming I will be saved either because I trust in my own efforts or because I accept the false doctrine of "salvation by faith alone" and thus disregard Saint Paul's teaching that God will "will render to every man according to his works" (Romans 2:6)?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I trust in your grace alone for my salvation. Help me to avoid both extremes of presumption, neither relying on my own efforts or on the erroneous opinion that as long as I have been "born again" my salvation is absolutely assured.*

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## Seek to know Jesus Christ with all your heart

*Seek the Lord, and you will find him. He is not hiding from you! He wants to disclose himself to you and draw you to himself. The more open and simple your heart becomes the more you will be able to perceive his glorious presence in your life.*



And he made from one, every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us.

(Acts 17:26–27)

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

(Ephesians 3:14–19)

And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

(John 17:3)

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I honestly seek to know the Lord through prayer? Do I study my faith? Do I actively participate at Mass? Do I read Scripture and the Catechism? Am I attentive to the ways God reveals himself to me through other people?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I know that you love me and that you made me to know, love, and serve you. Help me, therefore, to seek you always with a heart full of love for you and confidence in your promises.*

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## Wise men still seek Him

*There is a vast difference between being “worldly wise” versus being truly wise. Those who are wise in their own estimation or who are merely wise in the eyes of the world have not yet discovered that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*



Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him.” When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet:

‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who will govern my people Israel.’ ”

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star appeared; and he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

(Matthew 2:1–11)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I seek after the true wisdom that comes only by knowing God personally? Do I wrongly equate wisdom with mere experience or training? If so, I must learn that true wisdom is an intellectual virtue which enables right judgment in things pertaining to God's eternal law.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, give me the gift of wisdom, that I may judge rightly in all things, according to the light of your truth. Help me to seek you in all things, and never to be satisfied solely with the things of this world.*

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# No one comes to the Father except through Jesus Christ

*There is salvation only in Jesus Christ, “for the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). There is no Buddha, Muhammad, or Brahman door to heaven, nor can any other person in history—past, present, or future—save you from your sins.*



And he said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”

(Mark 16:15–16)

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.”

(John 14:6)

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world.

(1 John 4:14)

For [there is] one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all.

(1 Timothy 2:5–6)

He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him.

(John 3:36)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I trust in Jesus Christ alone for my salvation? Do I realize that while other religions may have some elements of the truth, none of them can save me?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*O Lord, teach me ever more deeply I pray, the truth that eternal life is knowing you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*

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## Respond to God's revelation with faith and obedience

*It is not enough to merely have faith in the Lord. As Saint James says, "even the demons believe" (James 2:19). To have saving faith, one must also obey Christ, in whom faith is placed. If you don't obey Christ, you really cannot be said to have true faith in him.*



For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live."

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen.

(Romans 1:16–25)

We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

(2 Corinthians 10:5)

### IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I trust in my “faith alone” for salvation? Or do I live out my faith through acts of obedience done in grace, which is what Saint Paul described as, “faith working through love”? (Galatians 5:6).

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, I believe in you and I seek with all my heart to live out faith through obeying your teachings. I seek only to respond in faithful obedience to all those things that you have commanded.*

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## You can't have Christ without the Church

*Jesus did not establish "Christianity" as such, he established a single Church, his bride and the means that he chose for the sanctification of the world. To truly be in Christ one must be in his Church. You cannot have one without the other.*



I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband.

(2 Corinthians 11:2)

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a great voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away."

And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water without price from the fountain of the water of life. He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb."

(Revelation 21:2–9)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Am I a devotee of the notion that one can be “spiritual” without being religious (i.e., without belonging to the Church)? If so, then I must face up to the fact that Christ established the Church for my salvation and wants me to be an active, participating member of it.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, teach me to love your Church! I know her members include both good and bad, holy and sinful, zealous and lukewarm, but you are always present in her. Grant me the grace and illumination I need to love and honor the Church as you do.*

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## “The risen Christ says, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit!’ ”

*The Holy Spirit is not a “superfluous” dimension of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is the Paraclete, the Comforter, the Advocate, the revealer and author of Scripture.*



When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

( John 16:13, 20:22)

“If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

(Luke 11:13)

And endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

(Romans 5:4–5)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Is God the Holy Spirit the “forgotten member” of the Blessed Trinity for me? Do I pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance and illumination? Am I open

to his promptings in my life?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*“Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love only what is holy. Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy. Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy”*  
(Saint Augustine).

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## This is what God wants from you

*Don't place pre-conditions on what you will and won't do in response to God's love. Just say "yes" to him. Seek what is true and do what is good. Everything else will follow.*



Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.

(Isaiah 1:17)

He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

(Micah 6:8)

And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

(Mark 10:21)

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

(Ephesians 4:32)

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 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? Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth.

(1 John 3:16–18)

## IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

I see what God is asking of me. Am I willing to say “yes” and then begin doing it?

## CLOSING 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 us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.*

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## Ask God to help you be chaste

*One of the most difficult things in the Christian life is living chastely. But this virtue is at the heart of your integrity as a Christian and without it you will never be able to imitate Christ's purity or practice temperance.*



“I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart”

(Matthew 5:28).

I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I look upon a virgin?

( Job 31:1)

Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own

(1 Corinthians 6:18–19)

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from unchastity.

(1 Thessalonians 4:3)

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness.

(Romans 6:12–13)

## IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

Do I make "provisions for my flesh" by doing things that I know are contrary to the sixth and ninth commandments, things that ruin my purity, turn me away from Christ, and force me down a path of slavery to the flesh?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, your servant Saint Augustine once said, "O God, make me chaste, but not yet." I say, O God, make me chaste now and, like the Leper, I call out to you, "If you will it, you can make me clean" (Mark 1:40).*

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## Remember this passage

*The message of Jesus Christ is not easy, but it is simple. If you follow him, you will experience difficulties and persecutions, perhaps even to the point of losing your life as a martyr. But remain faithful and you will go to heaven and be with God forever.*



And he called to him the multitude with his disciples, and said to them, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? For what can a man give in return for his life?”

(Mark 8:34–37)

### IN GOD’S PRESENCE, CONSIDER ...

God has given me a cross to carry. Am I doing by best, with the help of his grace, to carry it? Or do I imagine that I can follow Christ without carrying the cross, as he told me I must?

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, at times, the cross you have given me is very heavy, and I am tempted to put it aside in favor of an easier life. Strengthen me, O God! Give me the conviction to follow you, regardless of the cost, so that I may save my life.*

# About the Author

Patrick Madrid is a life-long Catholic. He has authored or edited 18 books on Catholic themes, including *Search and Rescue*, *Where Is That in the Bible?*, and the acclaimed *Surprised by Truth* series.

Since 1996, Patrick has published *Envoy* Magazine, and also serves as the director of the Envoy Institute, which is dedicated to teaching Catholics how to explain their Faith more intelligently, defend it more charitably, and share it more effectively.

Commenting publicly on the effectiveness of Patrick's approach to doing apologetics, Cardinal Edward Egan, Archbishop Emeritus of New York, said, "How do you bring a friend or relative back into the Church? First you pray. Then, you follow Patrick Madrid's advice in [his book] *Search and Rescue*."

Prior to launching the *Envoy* apostolate, Patrick worked at Catholic Answers for eight years (1988 to 1996), where he served as vice president.

A veteran of a dozen formal, public debates with Protestant ministers, Mormon leaders, and other non-Catholic spokesmen, he has presented thousands of seminars on Catholic themes, in English and Spanish, at parishes, universities, and conferences across the U.S. and around the world.

Patrick hosts the Thursday edition of EWTN's "Open Line" radio broadcast (3-5 p.m. ET), heard on approximately 200 AM & FM stations across the country, as well as on j2Sirius Satellite Radio channel 130, and globally via shortwave.

Patrick earned a bachelor of science degree in business at the University of Phoenix, as well as a B.Phil. in philosophy and an M.A. in dogmatic theology at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus, OH.

He is an adjunct professor of theology and apologetics at Franciscan University of Steubenville.

Married for 31 years, Patrick and his wife Nancy have been blessed by the Lord with 11 children and 12 grandchildren (so far). They reside in the Diocese of Columbus. His website is [www.patrickmadrid.com](http://www.patrickmadrid.com).



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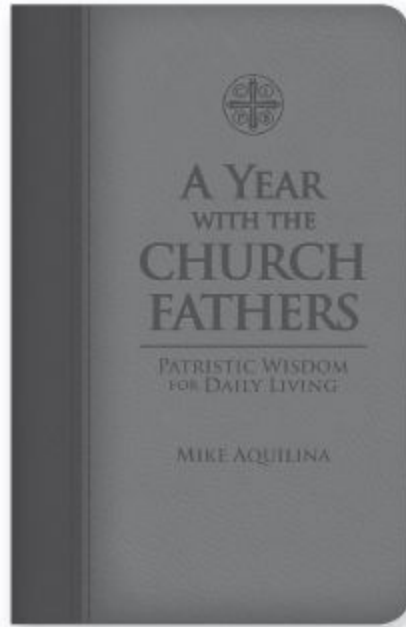
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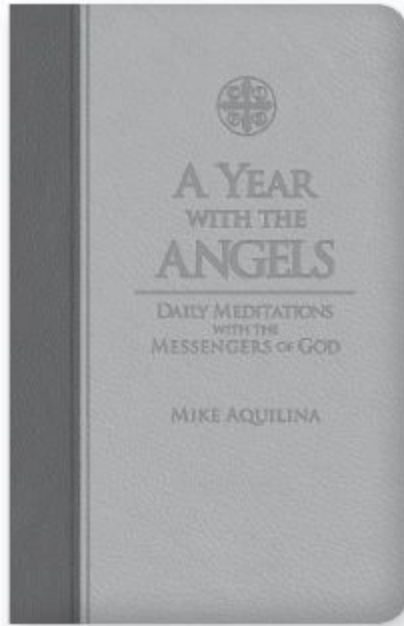


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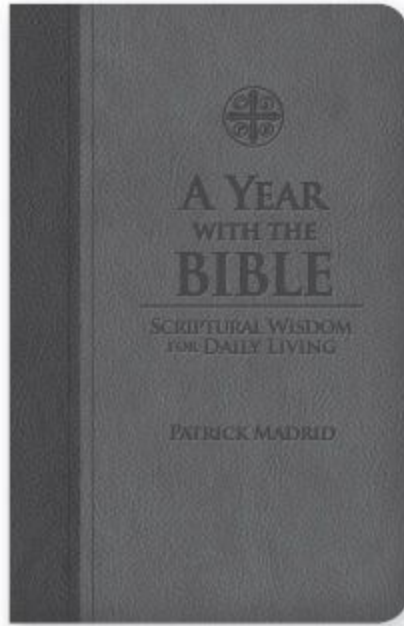


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