# Opening Prayer Service

## Gather

We pray that all people will come to God through his Son Jesus Christ. We celebrate the unity which praying together as a faith community makes happen. We thank God for the prayer which Jesus gave us when he taught his apostles the Lord’s Prayer.

God, we praise you for your great care for us. You loved us enough to send your own Son to teach us how to live, to teach us how to pray. We are grateful for the prayer which bears his name. Be with us this day as we seek to pray together as a community. Be with us as we lift our minds and hearts to you. Amen.

## Listen

Matthew 6:7-15

Luke 11:1-13

## Respond

Presider:

As a response to Jesus’ gift of the Our Father, let us unite as we celebrate the “OUR” which Matthew’s Gospel calls us to live when we pray. Our response will be: Keep us united in your love.

Presider:

We pray to our Father as people from around the world. We pray for unity among continents, among nations, among communities, and in our own parish and families. God, be with us.

Assembly: Keep us united in your love.

1st Reader:

We pray to our Father in unity with our brothers and sisters in the Middle East. We pray for peace in the world, for peace among cultures, for peace in our church community and our families. God, be with us.

Assembly: Keep us united in your love.

2nd Reader:

We pray to our Father in unity with our sisters and brothers in Asia. We pray for relief from the natural disasters which make life so hard for people around the world and we pray that those who have much will share their blessings with those who suffer. God, be with us.

Assembly: Keep us united in your love.

3rd Reader:

We pray to our Father in unity with our brothers and sisters in Latin America. We pray for justice and compassion, so that all people can obtain the resources they need to live lives of dignity and hope.

Assembly: Keep us united in your love.

4th Reader:

We pray to our Father in unity with our sisters and brothers in Europe. We pray for a rebirth of faith in you and a renewed commitment to living our faith in the world. God, be with us.

Assembly: Keep us united in your love.

5th Reader:

We pray to our Father in unity with our brothers and sisters in Africa. We pray for a mission spirit to share the Good News. We pray for a deeper respect for tradition and culture. God, be with us.

Assembly: Keep us united in your love.

6th Reader:

We pray to our Father in unity with our sisters and brothers in the Arctic and the Antarctic. We pray for shelter and warmth for all of humankind. God, be with us.

Assembly: Keep us united in your love.

7th Reader:

We pray to our Father in unity with our sisters and brothers in Australia and New Zealand. We pray for native peoples across the globe, for human rights and respect for property. God, be with us.

Assembly: Keep us united in your love.

8th Reader:

We pray to our Father in unity with our sisters and brothers in Canada and Mexico. We pray that, just as we share borders, we may also share resources and a commitment to cooperation. God, be with us.

Assembly: Keep us united in your love.

Presider:

As a sign of our unity, let us join hands and pray the prayer which Jesus taught us to pray. May the first word of this prayer remind us of our common humanity. Please pray the Lord’s Prayer in your first language. Our Father…

## Go Forth

Presider: God, as we enter deeper into the meaning of the Lord’s Prayer for our lives, be with us. Open our hearts to your love and your desire for unity among all people. We ask this humbly in the name of your Son, Jesus. Amen.

# Handout #1.

# Dialogue Between Matt and Luke

Interviewer:

To appreciate the Lord’s Prayer in all its richness, we are going to hear from the two evangelists whose Gospels recount how Jesus gave his apostles this prayer. Please welcome St. Matthew and St. Luke to our assembly. St. Matthew, we’ll start with you since your version of the Lord’s Prayer is the one the Church chose to make our daily prayer. You placed Jesus’ giving us this prayer in the context of the Sermon on the Mount. Why is that?

St. Matthew:

The Sermon on the Mount sums up Jesus’ message! And to me, the Lord’s Prayer is key to understanding what Jesus was all about. It is one of the basic foundations of our faith.

Interviewer:

That’s cool! St. Luke, you tell the story of the Lord’s Prayer in a different context—one of prayer rather than teaching. Can you tell us why?

St. Luke:

I remember Jesus teaching the Lord’s Prayer after he had been praying himself. I figured if Jesus—God’s own Son—felt the need to pray, then the rest of us humans need to pray too. And what I remember so vividly about Jesus and prayer was his absolute trust that the Father would give him what he needed.

St. Matthew:

I love how Jesus placed us in solidarity with each other by having us pray to OUR Father, not my Father. It really taught me that we pray with and for each other.

St. Luke:

And Jesus was so strong on taking care of the poor, the marginalized, the forgotten in our society. They are also part of the OUR when we pray to our Father.

St. Matthew:

I was also struck by how Jesus kept the Father as the primary focus of his prayer. The first part of the Lord’s Prayer is a prayer for God’s kingdom to be realized, for people to live on earth doing God’s will the way people in heaven do it. I know a lot of you people here on earth like to picture your ancestors and departed loved ones experiencing perfect joy in heaven, and all because they are doing God’s will perfectly!

St. Luke:

I think we’re all called to live out the kingdom which Jesus made real. Every time we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we’re asking God for the courage and the love and the faith to live the way Jesus taught us to live.

St. Matthew:

Another powerful part of the Lord’s Prayer is how Jesus had us remembering the awesomeness of God. We remember God’s home—heaven. We honor God’s name.

St. Luke:

Remember how things were back in the day, Matt? The Jewish people wouldn’t even speak God’s name out loud. That’s how much respect they had for God. I hate to say this, people, but some of you don’t respect God’s name very much. You use it in anger or when you mess up. You could learn something from pondering Jesus’ words, “hallowed be thy name.”

St. Matthew:

A truly human part of the Lord’s Prayer is that Jesus teaches us it’s OK to ask for what we need—our daily bread.

St. Luke:

Yeah, that’s good. The problem is too many people think daily bread is the gourmet version—bread dipped in extra virgin olive oil instead of the simple tortilla. I wonder how many of us realize how little we need materially speaking to live happy and fulfilled lives. I wonder if we trust God enough to accept what he provides.

St. Matthew:

We both remembered the scariest part of the Lord’s Prayer—where we actually tell God to forgive us *to the extent we forgive others.*

St. Luke:

Do you think people realize that’s what they’re saying when they pray this prayer? I mean, let’s face it. God’s forgiveness and mercy are so much bigger, more generous, more unconditional, than the forgiveness of mere mortals. If we tell God to forgive us no more than we forgive others, we’d better be ready to be *really, really* forgiving.

St. Matthew:

It’s certainly something to pay attention to when praying the Lord’s Prayer!

St. Luke:

Then there’s the prayer for God’s help in resisting temptation. We both remember Jesus teaching that! Temptation is all around us, and we need all the help we can get to resist the things in life which lure us away from God.

St. Matthew: Evil exists in the world. There is no doubt about it. We need God’s grace to be faithful.

St. Luke:

Amen to that!

St. Matthew:

And Amen to all of you! God bless you as you explore the meaning of the Lord’s Prayer in your own lives.

St. Luke:

And remember—this prayer may be almost 2000 years old, but it still is the perfect prayer.

# Handout #2.

# Lectio Divina and the Lord’s Prayer

## The Passage: Matthew 6:7-15

“When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then in this way:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your 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 do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

## The Four Steps of Lectio Divina

**1. Read**

Listen to the Scripture passage, then share words from the text which especially strike you. Read the words from the text. Do not paraphrase or interpret them. Let the passage itself speak to you.

**2. Meditate**

Listen to the passage a second time. Be open to what God is saying to you in this passage. It might be different from what God said to you the last time you prayed this Scripture.

**3. Pray**

Listen to the passage a third time. Then pray for the courage, strength, or fidelity needed to respond to whatever God is asking of you at this time. If God is telling you to continue as you are, pray a prayer of thanksgiving or adoration. If God is asking you to change, pray a prayer of contrition for past failures or a prayer of petition for whatever you will need to change.

**4. Contemplate**

Listen one last time to the passage. Then prayerfully rest in the Word of God. Let it penetrate the marrow of your being.

# Handout #3.

# The Kingdom of Heaven is Like. . .

## Kingdom Parables: Matthew 13

“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not so good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?’ He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ But he replied, ‘No, for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn’ (24-30).”

“He put before them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches’ (31-32).”

“He told them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened’ (33).”

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field (44).”

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it (45-46).”

1. Which passage did you like best? Why?
2. What do these passages teach you about the Kingdom of God?
3. What would Jesus say the Kingdom of Heaven is like if he were here on earth today? Why?
4. As a family, create a mural of what your family would be like if you embraced the qualities of the kingdom of God—what you’d do, how you’d live, with whom you’d spend time.
5. Share your mural with other families when you are finished.

As a home activity, reflect before you go to sleep each night on how much you lived the values of the kingdom by the choices you made that day. Ask yourself,

“Did my presence in the world today make the kingdom of God more real for others? Or did my actions—or my failure to act—postpone the realization of the kingdom?”

The stone is a way to remind yourself to do the reflection. Each night when you see it on your pillow, examine your conscience. In the morning place the stone on your pillow again so you don’t forget to reflect the following evening.

# Handout #4.

# Discernment

In order to know God’s will for our lives, we must first listen to God. The word discernment is used to describe the process of listening to God’s will. Too often we do all of the talking in prayer. Then we wonder why God doesn’t give us answers to our questions. Perhaps God can’t get a word in edgewise!

Discernment happens when the Holy Spirit becomes part of a decision-making process. We listen to the Spirit by:

* reading Scripture,
* praying,
* consulting with wise people in the faith community,
* examining our God-given talents to build the kingdom,
* considering our faith tradition,
* just listening!

God has a plan for us, but we need to discern what that plan is.

The next time you face a major decision and are trying to determine God’s will, stop and listen to or sing a song like “Open My Eyes” by Jesse Manibusan.

Then pray the Lord’s prayer slowly and reflectively. Finally, ask yourself three questions:

* What would Jesus do if he were here in my position?
* What are the gifts and talents I have which are clues to God’s will?
* What does the world need me to do?

# Handout #5.

# I Am Who I Am

Did you know that the ancient Hebrew community was forbidden to speak God’s name aloud? This guideline revealed their awe and reverence for the Creator. It also was a dramatic contrast to the other tribes which existed at the time, all of whom believed in multiple gods. The Hebrews held up Yahweh as the one true God.

We believe that the name of Yahweh came to us through Moses. When God revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush on Mount Horeb, he told Moses to lead his people out of Egypt. Moses asked God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God instructed Moses to say, ‘I AM WHO I AM. I AM has sent me to you’ (Exodus 3:13-14). The Israelites treasured this revelation because it showed them that God felt a special connection to them and wanted to be revealed to them.

When the Hebrew scribes wrote about God, they were not allowed to write out God’s name in full, again out of reverence. They often used the first and last letters (i.e. Y\_ \_ \_ \_ H), and often used beautiful art to decorate the two letters which they wrote. Everything they did pointed to their realization of the “otherness” and transcendence of Yahweh.

# Handout #6.

# Forgiving and Forgiven

## Reading #1

“Then Peter came and said to him, ’Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ’Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. For this reason the kingdom of heaven can be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ’Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, ’Pay what you owe.’ Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ’Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, 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 slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart’” (Matthew 18:21-35).

## Reading #2

“But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat, do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others what you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:27-36).

## Reading #3

“When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing’” (Luke 23:33-34).

## Reading #4

“The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?’ They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, ‘Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.’ And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ She said, ‘No one, sir.’ And Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again’” (John 8:3-11).

Reflect, journal, or discuss the following questions:

* How hard is it for you to forgive yourself? What effect does not forgiving yourself have on your relationship to others?
* How hard is it for you to forgive others? Do you hold grudges? Can you truly forgive and forget?
* Do you look on mistakes as failures or as opportunities to learn? Do you help create a climate in your home, your workplace, your school, and your church community in which people can admit their mistakes, knowing they will be forgiven?
* How do you feel when you are forgiven? How do you feel when you forgive?

## Commitment to Forgiveness

As someone forgiven by God, I commit to:

* forgiving myself when I mess up
* forgiving others when they hurt me
* praying for those who make my life harder
* encouraging others to forgive when they have been hurt
* doing my part to make our community a place for forgiveness, second chances, and reconciliation.

# Handout #7.

# Our Daily Bread

## Inventory of “Stuff”

1. List all the food you ate in the last 24 hours.
2. Count how many coats, sweaters and jackets you have for cold or cool days (depending on where you are in the country, of course). \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. How many pairs of shoes do you have? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Count the number of electrical appliances you have in your home. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. How many cell phones, televisions, computers, and tablets are in your home? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. How many cars, trucks, bikes, and other methods of transportation does your family have? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. How much “stuff” do you think you have in relation to other people in your church community? Your town or city? The United States? The world?

## Reflection and Discussion

* What is the most basic difference between your lifestyle and that of the people identified in the poverty video?
* What does this reality compel you to do?
* How does God give you your daily bread? How does God give daily bread to the people living in poverty?

# Handout #8.

# A Central American Adaptation

*Our Lord, who is in us here on earth . . .* How is Our Lord present on our earth? What are the signs of God’s presence?

*Holy is your name in the hungry who share their bread and song . . .* How do the poor make God’s name holy by sharing their bread and their song? What does sharing song mean to you? How does hearing that the poor are sharing what they have with others make you feel about your own sharing?

*Your Kingdom come—a generous land that flows with milk and honey . . .* What strikes you about this image of the Kingdom? Does it match your own vision?

*Let us do your will, standing up when all are sitting down, and raising our voice when all are silent . . .* What do these people see as God’s will for their lives and God’s challenge to them? How has God called you to be a voice for the voiceless? For whom do you speak?

*You are giving us our daily bread in the song of the bird and the miracle of the corn . . .* In what ways does God give you your daily bread? What miracles are you blessed with?

*Forgive us for keeping silent in the face of injustice, for burying our dreams, for not sharing bread and wine, love and the land, among us now . . .* For what do you need to ask forgiveness? When have you kept silent when you should have spoken? What dreams have you buried? When have you not shared?

*Keep us from the temptation of shutting our hearts in fear; of resigning ourselves to hunger and injustice; of taking up the same arms as the enemy . . .* What are your biggest temptations? When have you shut your heart in fear? Have you been complacent about the poverty and hunger in our world? How have you taken up the same arms as the enemy? Who is the enemy?

*But deliver us from evil. Give us the perseverance and the solidarity to look for love, even if the path has not yet been trodden, even if we fall. Help us to know and rejoice in your Kingdom which is being built for ever and ever. Amen . . .* Why do you think the writers link being delivered from evil with asking for perseverance? How do you stand in solidarity with those who lack so much in their lives? How do you rejoice in God’s Kingdom—and how are you helping to build this Kingdom?

(Janet Morley, *Bread of Tomorrow*).

# Handout #9.

# Praying with Our Whole Being

Our Father…

Gesture:

Who art in heaven…

Gesture:

Hallowed be Thy name…

Gesture:

Thy kingdom come…

Gesture:

Thy will be done…

Gesture:

On earth…

Gesture:

As it is in heaven…

Gesture:

Give us this day…

Gesture:

Our daily bread…

Gesture:

And forgive us…

Gesture:

Our trespasses…

Gesture:

As we forgive…

Gesture:

Those who trespass against us…

Gesture:

And lead us not into temptation…

Gesture:

But deliver us from evil…

Gesture:

For the kingdom…

Gesture:

The power…

Gesture:

And the glory are yours…

Gesture:

Now…

Gesture:

And forever…

Gesture:

Amen.

Gesture:

# Prayer Service

## Gather

Jesus our Lord, we thank you for teaching us how to pray. We thank you for the words you gave us with which to petition your Father and our Father. Help us to pray in solidarity with people around the world who need our prayers and our actions to live the way God wants them to live. We ask this through your Spirit. Amen.

## Listen

John 17:6-18

## Respond

Jesus prayed for us the night before he died. He talked to his Father about how he shared the Father with his friends. We know the Father because of the Son. We know how to pray to the Father because of the Son. As a response of gratitude for the gifts the Father bestowed on us in Jesus, let’s sing the Lord’s Prayer together. One of our groups will use gestures to express the meaning of the prayer as we sing it.

## Go Forth

As we conclude our study and reflection on the Lord’s Prayer, let us offer a sign of peace to each other. May this be a sign of our solidarity with each other and with all God’s people.