

# The Lord's Prayer

## Session Focus

This session explores the Lord's Prayer as the perfect prayer for disciples of Jesus. We will study what the prayer requests of God, the Scriptural basis for the prayer, and ways to connect the Lord's Prayer to our own lives. The prayer to Our Father is at the center of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel, and is central to our prayer lives as disciples of Jesus Christ.

## Learning Objectives

This session on the Lord's prayer guides learners of all ages to:

- comprehend that the Lord's prayer is the most perfect prayer because it was given to us by Christ himself
- value and appreciate the Lord's Prayer as petitioning God for what we need in the right order
- know how to pray the Lord's Prayer meaningfully

## Session Overview

**Part 1. (20 minutes)**      **Gathering and Opening Prayer Service**

**Part 2. (15 minutes)**      **All Ages Learning Experience**

**Part 3. (75-90 minutes)**      **In Depth Learning Experiences**

- Learning Format: Activity Centers - participants rotate through selected activities in the same room or in separate rooms.

**Part 4. (15 minutes)**      **Sharing Learning Experiences**

**Part 5. (10 minutes)**      **Closing Prayer Service**

## Design for In-Depth Learning: Learning Activity Centers

The Learning Activity Center Format provides structured learning activities at a variety of stations or centers in a common area. Learning activity centers are self-contained learning experiences, focusing on a specific topic or theme. They include brief presentations by the facilitators, interactive and experiential activities, group discussion and sharing. Each center can utilize a different learning method, such as drama or role play, creative arts, prayer, ritual, film, games, demonstrations, exhibits, and music.

One of the best ways to envision a Learning Activity Center Format is to imagine visiting a children's museum or one of the Epcot pavilions at Walt Disney World in Orlando. You will find a variety of interactive, experiential exhibits, media presentations, and staff-facilitated learning activities.

Learning Activity Centers can be used with all age groups. They can be developed for an intergenerational audience or for particular age groups, such as families with children or adolescents or



adults. Learning Activity Centers can also be utilized in the families with children learning program within the Age Group Format.

## Scheduling

Learning Activity Centers are designed to be conducted within a 20-30 minute timeframe. Depending on the session design, this will allow three or four learning periods to be offered during the In Depth Learning Experience.

Here is a sample schedule with four rounds of learning centers:

- 6:00 Hospitality and Dinner
- 6:30 Part 1. Gathering and Prayer
- Part 2. All Ages Learning Experience
- 6:50 Round 1: Learning Activity Centers
- 7:15 Break (move to next center)
- 7:20 Round 2: Learning Activity Centers
- 7:45 Break (move to next center)
- 7:50 Round 3: Learning Activity Centers
- 8:15 Break (move to next center)
- 8:20 Round 4: Learning Activity Centers
- 8:45 Part 4: Presenting the Home Activities (no small group sharing)
- Part 5: Closing Prayer

Here is a sample schedule with three rounds of learning centers:

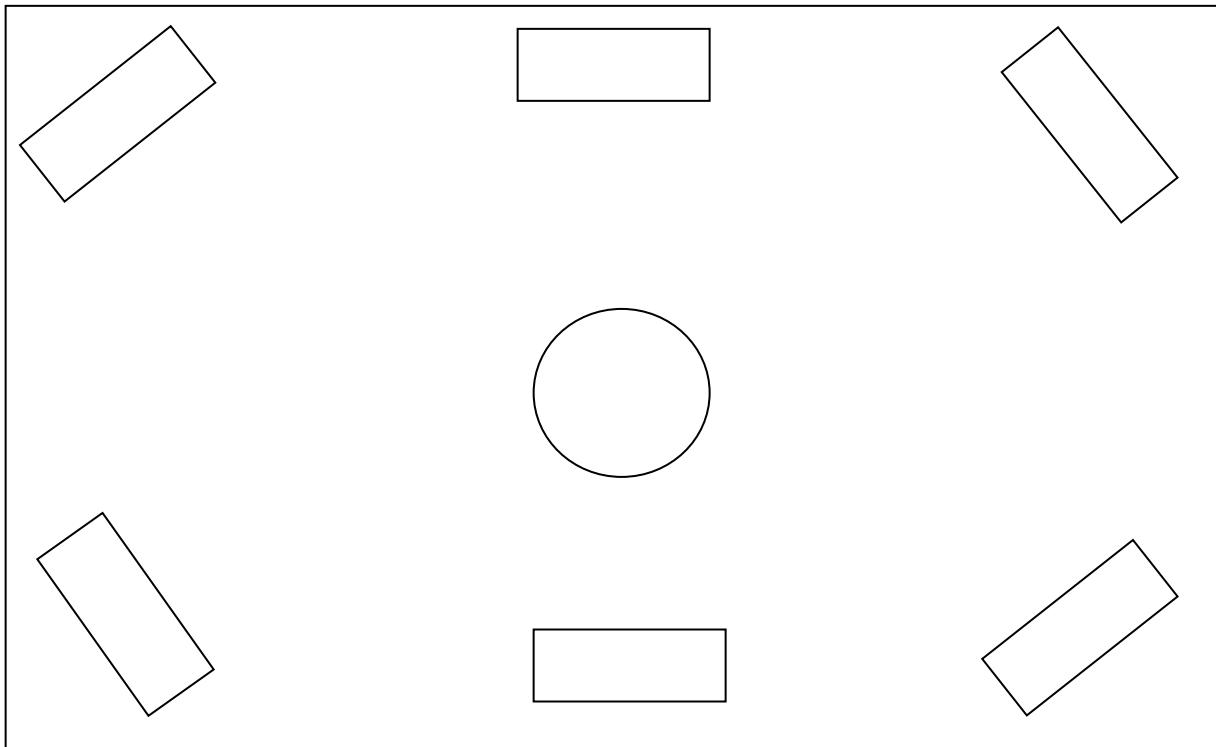
- 6:00 Hospitality and Dinner
- 6:30 Part 1. Gathering and Prayer
- Part 2. All Ages Learning Experience
- 7:00 Round 1: Learning Activity Centers
- 7:25 Break (move to next center)
- 7:30 Round 2: Learning Activity Centers
- 7:55 Break (move to next center)
- 8:00 Round 3: Learning Activity Centers
- 8:25 Break (gather in intergenerational groups)
- 8:30 Part 4: Sharing Learning Reflections and Home Application
- 8:50 Closing Prayer

## Organizing the Activity Centers

There are two ways to set up activity centers: one large room, or multiple break-out rooms.

If you arrange all of the learning centers in one large meeting gym or parish hall, set-up the centers around the outside of the room (see example). The center space can become a storytelling center with a carpet or chairs for children to sit. The example below shows six different learning centers plus the storytelling center. You may still need separate rooms if you have a learning center that focuses on prayer (worship space) or shows a film (meeting room).





Keep in mind the following when organizing in one room:

- Make sure there is adequate space between learning centers so that people are not interrupted by the activity at other centers.
- Set-up each learning activity center with tables and chairs (or carpeted floor space) for participants to listen, discuss, and create. Children and teens can use the floor, but adults will need chairs.
- Assign each learning center a number and post the number on the wall and floor at each center.

If you arrange learning centers in multiple rooms such as meeting rooms, classrooms, parish hall, gym, worship space, assign one learning center to each space. This format resembles a conference where people move from room to room for each session. Place the learning center name outside each room and develop a list of centers with locations, and a map if necessary, so that people can easily find the correct room.

## Organizing Groups

Once you have determined how many learning centers you will offer, you can organize participants accordingly. If you offer four learning centers, you can organize the participants into four groups of equal size and assign each group a specific sequence that they will move through the learning centers. Assign a number to each learning center and an alphabet letter to each group, then describe how they will move through the centers: Group A: 1-2-3-4; Group B: 2-3-4-1, Group C: 3-4-1-2, and Group D: 4-1-2-3. If you offer three learning centers, there would be three groups rotating among the three learning centers. Keep families together in one group.

If you offer more than three or four learning centers, allow people to choose the learning centers they are going to experience. Remind them that if a particular center is crowded, they can move to another center and then return to their first choice in another round. Families with children should stay together because the activities require parents to work with their children.

## Staffing

Each center is facilitated by a team of facilitators who guide the participants through the activity plan. The teaching team facilitates the overall learning plan for the center: making presentations, guiding learning activities, organizing discussions, and so on. The number of team members needed depends on the complexity of the activities and the number of participants at a learning center. Teams should have at least two or three people, but some centers will require five or six people. Older adolescents can also serve as members of the teaching team, and are especially valuable in facilitating creative activities and dramatic presentations.

To present the focus of each learning activity center, ask the teaching teams to present a very brief overview of what they will be doing in each center. Give each participant the list of learning activity centers with short descriptions, a schedule, and the locations of the centers.

## Materials for the Session

### Gathering

- Name tags
- Community building activities
- Opening Prayer Service
- Bible

### All Ages Learning Experience

- Handout #1: Dialogue Between Matt and Luke (for actors only)

### In-Depth Learning Experience

- Handouts
- The materials participants will need are identified in each Learning Activity Center plan.

### Closing

- Closing Prayer Service
- Bible



# Session Plan

## Part 1. Gathering (15-20 minutes)

### **Preparation**

Prepare a newsprint sheet or handout that lists the order of the activities or create a PowerPoint presentation that guides people through the session.

### **Registration and Hospitality**

- Welcome people and ask them to sign in for the program.
- Provide name tags (heart shapes) or invite people to make their own.
- Invite people to share a meal. Depending on the time of day, the program may end with a meal.
- Consider the following activity for participants as they wait to eat or wait for others to finish their meals:

Invite participants to count how many times they've prayed the Lord's Prayer in the past week.

Welcome the participants to the program and introduce the theme of the session, using your own words or the words below:

This session explores the Lord's Prayer. It is called the "perfect prayer" because Jesus himself taught it to his disciples. We will unpack the meaning of the prayer, looking at the seven specific petitions included in the Lord's Prayer. And we will experience this prayer which is such an integral part of our prayer tradition.

### 1. Group Formation

This program utilizes a learning activity center format. Six learning centers are developed for your use. Each activity lasts from 20-25 minutes, allowing everyone to participate in three to four learning activities within a one and a half to two-hour timeframe. Once you have determined how many learning centers you will offer, you can organize participants accordingly.

### 2. Opening Prayer Service

#### **Preparation**

Appoint two participants to proclaim the Scripture passages.

Tape paper feet to the floor in the gathering space leading from several points along the outside wall to the central prayer table.

Have a copy of the Lord's Prayer (decorated or written in fancy script) hanging behind the prayer table.

Invite eight participants of different ages to represent people from around the world in the Opening Prayer. They will process in from the outer walls, each carrying a banner or poster of the Our Father written in a different language. Make sure the languages chosen represent the diversity within your parish as well as the ones in the prayer service.



Provide the readers and eight volunteers with a copy of the Opening Prayer so they know which part of the litany they will be leading.

### **Materials**

- Opening Prayer Handout
- Paper feet
- Cut out people of different cultures (if your parish doesn't have cultural diversity)
- Bible
- The Lord's Prayer printed on a sheet of newsprint or banner in calligraphy or using images and art
- The Lord's Prayer printed in eight different languages (such as Spanish, Tagalog, Chinese, Hindi, Arabic, Italian, and Latin, but especially including the languages spoken by parishioners) on posters or banners which will be carried in the procession and placed around the prayer table.

### **Gather**

Today (Tonight) 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 church community 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 parish 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.



3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

4<sup>th</sup> 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.

5<sup>th</sup> 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.

6<sup>th</sup> 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.

7<sup>th</sup> 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.

8<sup>th</sup> 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. 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.



## Part 2. All Ages Learning Experience: The Origins of the Lord's Prayer (15 minutes)

The All Ages Learning Experience is designed to help the participants explore the meaning of the Lord's Prayer through the lens of Scripture. We will hear from gospel accounts of St. Matthew and St. Luke as they explain their versions of the Lord's Prayer.

### **Preparation**

In advance, ask two parishioners to play the parts of St. Matthew and St. Luke for this session. Give them Handout #1 Dialogue between Matt and Luke ahead of time so they will be comfortable presenting it. You should play the role of Interviewer.

### **Activity Plan**

**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 our ancestors in faith 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 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.

Instruct participants in table groups to discuss what struck them in the conversation between Matthew and Luke. Ask them how Matthew's and Luke's passion for the Lord's Prayer fits into the prayer needs of people today.

Wrap up the All Ages Learning with the following:

As we explore the Lord's Prayer, let's keep the words of Matthew and Luke in mind. Jesus taught us to pray by his own example of praying and by giving us the words with which to petition our Father.



## Part 3. In Depth Learning Experience: Praying the Lord's Prayer (80-90 minutes)

Introduce each center by having a team member who is conducting the center provide a brief overview of what is going to happen at the center. If you wish, give each participant or family the list of learning activity centers with short descriptions, a schedule, and the locations of the centers.

Each learning center is designed for 20–25 minutes, allowing everyone to participate in three or four learning activities. Families with children can do Activities 2, 4, 5, 6, and/or 8. Adolescents and adults can do Activities 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, and/or 8.

- Activity 1. Lectio Divina and the Lord's Prayer (recommended for Adolescents and Adults)
- Activity 2. Our Part in the Kingdom (recommended for Families with Children)
- Activity 3. Discerning God's Will (recommended for Adolescents and Adults)
- Activity 4. Hallowed Be Thy Name (recommended for Families with Children)
- Activity 5. Forgiving and Forgiven (recommended for All Ages)
- Activity 6. Our Daily Bread (recommended for All Ages)
- Activity 7. The Lord's Prayer from a Different Perspective (recommended for Adolescents & Adults)
- Activity 8. Praying the Lord's Prayer with All Our Being (recommended for All Ages)



## Activity 1. Lectio Divina and the Lord's Prayer

This learning activity center engages participants in doing lectio divina with Matthew's passage on the Lord's Prayer.

### Preparation

Make copies of Handout #2 for all participants.

Have a picture of Jesus placed in a prominent place where all participants in the activity can see it.

### Materials

- Picture of Jesus
- Bible
- Handout #2

## Activity Plan

Introduce the activity with the following words or use your own words:

St. Teresa of Avila once said that when prayer was hard for her, she would focus on a picture of Jesus to help her get back into the conversation. Sometimes she would take two chairs, sit in one, and picture Jesus sitting in the other. Then she would imagine him teaching her the Lord's Prayer, word by word and phrase by phrase. She also told her novices to take an hour to pray the Lord's Prayer!

We don't have an hour, but we are going to ponder the Lord's Prayer as it is presented in Matthew's Gospel. The method we will use is called lectio divina, or divine word. We will proclaim the Word of God four times, and each time we hear it we will let the Word penetrate our minds, hearts, and beings. The four steps of lectio are included on the handout. The first time we listen, we will focus on the actual words of the text. The second time we listen, we will meditate on what God is saying to us or asking of us in this passage. The third time through we will pray for whatever God asks of us, and the fourth time we will rest in God's Word. The four steps are Read, Meditate, Pray, and Contemplate. Let's begin.

Ask one participant to read the passage slowly and prayerfully. Then invite any participants who feel comfortable to share the exact word or phrase in the text which most struck them. Instruct them not to interpret or paraphrase at this point, just to let the actual words of Scripture speak.

Instruct participants to listen again to the Word, this time meditating on what God is asking of them *individually* in the passage. Have another participant read the same passage. Pause, then invite sharing of their meditation. Be very clear that the sharing is optional, not required.

Before a third participant reads the passage, encourage prayer over what God is asking them to do. Remind them of the various prayer forms which might be appropriate at this time. For example, if someone hears God saying they want too much for their daily bread, that person may pray a prayer of petition asking God to help them be less materialistic. The passage is read. Pause, then once again invite people to share their prayers out loud, but only if they feel comfortable doing so.



Before the Scripture is read the fourth and final time, describe this step as contemplative. Encourage participants to simply rest in God's Word in silence after the passage has been proclaimed. As St. Thomas Aquinas said, the fruit of contemplation is action. They are letting God's Word energize them to go out and live the Word in the world.

#### **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**

After listening to the Scripture passage, share a word or phrase from the text which especially struck 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. After a few minutes of quiet, share what you hear God calling you to do or to be. If you aren't comfortable sharing your insights, just listen to others. No one should feel obligated to share.

##### **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. If you feel comfortable sharing your prayer out loud, please do so.

##### **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. No words are needed for this last part of the lectio process.



## Activity 2. Our Part in the Kingdom

This learning activity center engages participants in exploring how they are called to live the Kingdom we pray for in the Lord's Prayer.

### Preparation

Make copies of Handout #3 for participants.

### Materials

- Handout #3
- Bibles
- Large sheets of paper and markers or crayons
- Small smooth pebbles, one for each participant

## Activity Plan

Introduce the activity with the following words or in your own words:

When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we pray "Thy kingdom come." What is the kingdom? Let's listen to how Jesus described his dream for the world—the kingdom—when he lived among us here on earth.

Ask four participants to each read aloud one of the Kingdom parables from Matthew's thirteenth chapter.

**Reader 1:** "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 sow 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'" (Matthew 13:24-30).

**Reader 2:** "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'" (Matthew 13:31-32).

**Reader 3:** "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'" (Matthew 13:33).

**Reader 4:** "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" (Matthew 13:44).

Then invite families to discuss the following questions:



- Which passage did you like best? Why?
- What do these passages teach you about the Kingdom of Heaven?
- What would Jesus say the Kingdom of Heaven is like if he were here on earth today? Why?

Instruct each family or each group of three or four adults and teens to create a mural of what their family or group would be like if they embraced the kingdom of God—what they'd do, how they'd live, with whom they'd spend time. Invite them to share their mural with other families or teams when all are finished.

Pass out the stones and offer the following instructions:

A good way to stay in touch with Jesus' dream of the kingdom is to reflect before you go to sleep on how much you live the values of the kingdom by the choices you make each day.

Ask yourself, "Did my presence in the world today make the kingdom of God more real for others? Did I bring a little more love into the world? Or did my actions—or my failure to love—postpone the kingdom?" The little pebble 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 pebble on your pillow again so you don't forget to reflect the following evening.



## Activity 3. Discerning God's Will

This learning activity center offers the opportunity for participants to practice discernment in their efforts to live out “thy kingdom come, thy will be done” when praying the Lord’s Prayer.

### Materials

- Handout #4: Discernment
- *Open My Eyes* by Jesse Manibusan or another appropriately reflective song that helps participants enter into prayerful discernment; device for sharing the song
- Bibles

## Activity Plan

Introduce the activity by sharing the following or using your own words:

In order to know God’s will for our lives, we must listen to God. Another word for listening to God’s will is the process we call discernment. 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 is a process of inviting the Holy Spirit to become part of one’s decision-making. We listen to the Spirit by reading Scripture, praying, consulting with wisdom people in the faith community, examining our God-given talents to build the Kingdom, considering our faith tradition, and then just listening! God has a plan for us, but we need to *discern* what that plan is.

Ask three people to proclaim the following Scripture passages. While they are reading, encourage the participants to apply the attitude of Jesus and Mary to their own lives and their own openness to doing God’s will. Ask for a volunteer to read the first passage.

**Reader #1:** “Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission” (Hebrews 5:7-8).

Instruct participants to reflect on how much they practice “reverent submission” to God’s will in their own decision-making and share their thoughts with someone sitting next to them.

After a few minutes, invite a second reader to proclaim Scripture.

**Reader #2:** In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want” (Matthew 26:39).

Instruct participants to quietly repeat the words, “Not what I want but what you want” over and over like a mantra. Then invite a third reader to proclaim the last passage.

**Reader #3:** Mary surrendered her will to the Father when she proclaimed, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).

Then continue:



When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we pray in solidarity with Mary. We also pray to be servants of the Lord by uniting our will to the will of God.

Pass out Handout #4: Discernment. Go over the actions involved in discernment which are listed in the handout.

- Reading Scripture
- Praying
- Consulting with wisdom people in the faith community
- Examining our God-given talents
- Considering our faith tradition
- Listening

Instruct participants to choose a significant decision they need to make soon. Invite them to enter into discernment of God's will for their lives. Tell them to assume a comfortable position, with their eyes closed and their hands on their laps, palms up. Begin by listening to or singing together *Open My Eyes* by Jesse Manibusan or another appropriately reflective song that helps participants enter into prayerful discernment. Then pray the Lord's Prayer together, slowly and reflectively.

Once the song and prayer have concluded, ask the participants to reflect on the following three questions:

- What would Jesus do if he were 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?

If time permits, invite them to gather in groups of three to process their discernment and/or to seek advice from one another.



## Activity 4. Hallowed Be Thy Name

This learning activity center offers the opportunity for participants to reflect on the reverence and awe which are due to the God who created us and loves us unconditionally, the God to whom we pray “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.”

### Preparation

Collect several scrolls and/or framed prayers which have different words for God written on them (e.g., Yahweh, Lord, Father, Creator). Place these around the activity center space.

Give someone Handout #5 ahead of time so they can prepare to read it to the community.

### Materials

- Handout#5 for the reader
- Paints, ink, markers or other art supplies
- Parchment or poster paper
- Examples of artistic illustrations of God’s name

## Activity Plan

Guide the participants through the learning activity, beginning by sharing in your own words or the words below:

Too often in today’s world we hear God’s name spoken carelessly, in anger, or as slang. We seem to have lost our awe for the godliness of God. It wasn’t always that way.

Invite the reader forward to share Handout #5.

Reader: “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.”



Instruct people to gather as families or small groups.

Begin by praying the Lord's Prayer together slowly. Tell participants to dwell especially on the first part of the prayer, which is directed toward God.

Tell the groups that their task is to choose a name or phrase for God which speaks to them of the majesty, power, transcendence, or perfect love of God. They are to illustrate that name for God as beautifully as they can, using their imaginations and their reverence for God to guide them. Point them to the examples you've collected but tell them there is no wrong way to do this. Launch them into the artwork.

After each family or team has finished, invite them to share their work with each other. Then instruct them to share the answers to the following questions within their families or small groups.

- Do you have a sacred space in your home for prayer? If not, where will you put your illustration of God's name?
- Why did you choose this particular place? For example, you might pick the refrigerator because everyone uses it and will see God's name frequently.



## Activity 5. Forgiving and Forgiven

This learning activity center offers the opportunity for participants to reflect on the challenge in the Lord's Prayer to forgive others, and to ask God to forgive them no more than they are willing to forgive others.

### Preparation

Make copies of Handout #6 for all participants.

### Activity Plan

Introduce the activity by sharing the following or using your own words:

It takes courage to ask God to forgive us only to the degree that we are willing to forgive others. After all, God's track record for forgiving is a lot stronger than ours! God doesn't hold grudges—we sometimes do. God doesn't expect us to be perfect, although he asks us to keep trying. We expect our families and friends, our colleagues and fellow students, to be perfect. And we sometimes get really mad at them when they don't deliver. To reflect on what we are really praying for in the Lord's Prayer when we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us," let's begin by listening to what Jesus said to us about forgiveness.

Ask participants to look at Handout #6. Explain that they are going to explore what Jesus taught about forgiving and forgiveness. Ask for four volunteers to each read aloud one of the following passages:

**Reader #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 ).

**Reader #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).

**Reader #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).

**Reader #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).

Invite participants to reflect alone, journal, or discuss in families or triads 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 parish 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?

Pray the Lord's Prayer together. Ask participants to reflect particularly on the words of forgiveness contained in the prayer.

Conclude by inviting the group to stand and take the 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.



## Activity 6. Our Daily Bread

This learning activity center offers participants the opportunity to understand and experience the meaning of the words “Give us this day our daily bread” in the Lord’s Prayer.

### Preparation

Make copies of Handout #7 for all participants.

Preview the short video on poverty (<http://www.povertyusa.org/multimedia/poverty-usa>) and prepare to share it via the internet during the session. Or find another short video addressing poverty in the U.S. on YouTube.

Set up a separate space so the poverty video can be projected on a wall or screen.

### Materials

- LCD projector and laptop computer with internet access
- Projection screen

## Activity Plan

Introduce the activity by sharing the following in your own words or using the words below:

The Lord’s Prayer is a prayer of total trust in God—trust that God will provide us with all we need to live lives of dignity and hope. So we confidently pray to God to give us each day “our daily bread.” Yet we know that there are millions of faithful people in the world who go to bed hungry, or without shelter, or without hope. Why is that? It cannot be that God does not provide because we believe in a God of generosity and abundance. The answer must be that some people have too much while others struggle to survive. Today (Tonight) we are going to examine what share of the daily bread we have, and if we are okay with what we consume.

Instruct participants to take Handout #7 and fill it out as individuals or as families. Allow several minutes for them to complete the inventory.

### 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.
3. How many pairs of shoes do you have?
4. Count the number of electrical appliances 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 the parish? Your community? The United States? The world?

Introduce and show the video from the U.S. Bishops’ web site. Ask participants to reflect on and discuss the questions on the handout.



- 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?

Invite them as a whole group to brainstorm ways the parish can share daily bread with those in need. Then conclude the session up with the following:

Jesus foreshadowed the creation of the Eucharist when he multiplied the five loaves and two fishes in order to feed five thousand. Jesus taught us that he alone is our nourishment. He teaches us that if we trust in him, there is enough for everyone and no one will go away hungry. He once proclaimed, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. . . I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh” (John 6:35, 51).

Let us remember that we as disciples of Jesus are called to be bread for a hungry world.

Pray the Lord’s Prayer together.



## Activity 7. The Lord's Prayer from a Different Perspective

This learning activity center offers adolescents and adults the opportunity to explore the prayer through the eyes of the people of Central America.

### **Preparation**

Print Handout #8: A Central American Adaptation for participants.

Gather cloths, crosses, or religious art from Central America. Create a prayer table with these items.

### **Activity Plan**

Introduce the activity by sharing the following in your own words or using the words below:

We pray the Lord's Prayer in context, meaning we bring our own experiences, our own struggles, and our own blessings to prayer. Because each of us is unique, we can all be enriched by the prayers of others. We are going to pray an adaptation of the Our Father written by a group of people in Central America. We will pray with them and journey with them in their own words, then use our words to probe the deeper meaning of each verse. Let's begin.

Instruct participants to read together the words in italics. Pause, then ask the questions and invite people to discuss their answers in with one other person.

*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*).

Invite people to share with all the participants any insights they gained from praying the Central American adaptation of the Lord's Prayer. Ask them why they think there is such a strong emphasis on justice in this prayer.

After the discussion, read the prayer together once again, this time without pauses or questions.



## Activity 8. Praying the Lord's Prayer with All Our Being

This learning activity center offers participants the opportunity to understand the Lord's Prayer from a physical perspective. They will explore the prayer through physical gestures.

### **Preparation**

Copy Handout #9 and have it on the tables for each family or team.

Invite someone from the parish or broader community who does signing to come to this activity. Ask him/her to be prepared to sign the Lord's Prayer, and then to be a resource for the group as participants create their own meaningful gestures for the phrases in the Lord's Prayer.

Another human resource would be a person skilled in liturgical dance movements.

### **Activity Plan**

Introduce the activity by sharing the following in your own words or using the words below:

We can make our prayers more real by praying with our bodies as well as our minds. Let's watch what the Lord's Prayer is like in sign language.

Introduce the person who will sign Lord's Prayer.

After the prayer has been signed, ask participants to share anything which struck them as they prayed with their eyes rather than their lips. After several responses, continue in your own words or using the following words:

We are going to try a simple technique with the Lord's Prayer. Each family or table group will make up gestures which match the meaning of each word or phrase of the prayer. For example, you might discuss what kind of gesture would reflect that the word "Our" at the beginning of the prayer includes *all* of God's people. It might be extending both arms out in an open embrace. Let the movements speak along with the words.

Provide support as families create a gesture for each phrase. Remind them to record their gestures on the handout. Once they have finished, invite sharing of their prayers. Also ask for one volunteer family to share their gestures with the whole community during the Closing Prayer.



## Part 4. Sharing Learning Reflections (20-25 minutes)

For reflection and application on the Lord's Prayer, pass out to participants a copy of the Lord's Prayer. On the back of the prayer, include the following unfinished statements. Give participants a few minutes to reflect on their answers and write them on their prayer cards.

1. For me, the "our" in Our Father especially includes (individuals or groups)...
2. One thing I commit to doing to live out the kingdom is...
3. The daily bread I need from God today is...
4. I commit to forgiving...
5. I ask God's help in resisting temptation from...
6. I praise God for...

Ask participants to gather in intergenerational groups to share what they have learned and created. Invite them to take several minutes to share their responses to the following questions:

- What is one new thing you learned about the Lord's Prayer in this session?
- Why do you think the Lord's Prayer deserves to be called the "perfect" prayer?
- What is one special technique for praying the Lord's Prayer which you plan to integrate into your own prayer life?

## Part 5. Closing Prayer Service (10 minutes)

### 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

Invite the group which volunteered to share their gestures with the assembly to come forward.

Then say: 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.

