



2023 THEME RESOURCES

Marist
ASSOCIATION OF
ST MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT

CONTENTS PAGE

Theme Image Reflection	3-4
Words from Pope Francis: A Revolution of Love and Tenderness.....	5
Beginning of Year Mass - Prayer and Scripture Readings.....	6-11
Student Prayer Reflections	
Created and Called to Simplicity - Prayer Meditation	13
Created and Called to Love One Another	14-15
Created and Called to be Thankful	16
Created and Called by God to do Something Special for Others	17-18
Created and Called to set the world on fire	19-20
Staff Prayer Reflections	
Created and Called for Inner Peace	22
Created and Called for Peace.....	23
Created and Called to Oneness with God.....	24
Created and Called for Service to Others – Visio Divina.....	25
Created and Called into Simplicity.....	26-27
Created and Called to A revolution of love and tenderness.....	28
Created and Called – Chosen by God!	29
Finding God Within Us and in Creation	30
Marist Themed Prayers.....	31-33
Everyday Prayers.....	34-36
Further Scripture References.....	37-42

created
+ called

a revolution of love and tenderness

Created + Called *a revolution of love and tenderness*

“Be who God created you to be and you will set the world on fire.” These words from St Catherine of Siena express a desire to be our deepest and truest selves in response to being known and loved by a God who, as Herbert McCabe OP says beautifully, is “helplessly and hopelessly in love with us”. God’s love changes us. It ignites the flame of desire in our hearts to be God’s love in the world. It ignites a revolution, a revolution fueled by God’s love!

So, what might this revolution look like? When the prophet Micah was faced with the stirrings of revolution in the air because of the mistreatment of the lowly and oppression of the poor, God gave a clear message of what to do. “What does the Lord require of you? Do justice, love tenderness, and walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8) Only this. These are perhaps unexpected qualities to associate with revolution.

In *Evangelii Gaudium (EG)*, another unexpected figure is presented by Pope Francis. He encourages believers to look to Mary so we can “believe once again in the revolutionary nature of love and tenderness” (EG, 288). In Mary, we see the qualities of humility, tenderness and concern for others are not virtues of the weak but of the strong. This is captured powerfully in Mary’s song of praise, the *Magnificat* (Lk 1:46-55), where she has literally been ignited by the divine fire of God’s love. In response to living her true identity, Mary is created and called to ‘magnify’ the Lord with her whole being, and this ignites a transformation in others. Her prayer speaks of a revolution that “brings down the mighty from their thrones” and “raises the lowly”, through bringing forth the “loving tenderness of the heart of our God” (Lk 1:78) and the birth of a new world (EG, 288).

At times though, we might feel that we don’t really understand who God has created us to be, or it feels we are far from setting the world on fire. Artists like Michelangelo offer us consolation. He believed the sculptor was a tool of God, not creating but simply revealing the powerful figures already there. He once said, “I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set it free”. Let us trust that we are already created as God desires us to be. In fact, trust that, as St Catherine joyously declared, God is “pazzo d’amor” for us – literally, ‘crazy in love’ with us. Let us not be afraid to do something great with our lives and our love.

During the Nazi holocaust, the young 13-year-old Anne Frank wrote in her diary about the power of justice, tenderness and walking humbly with her God, saying: “The sharpest weapon of all is a kind and gentle spirit”. She also said: “How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.” Today, the revolution of love and tenderness starts with you and me.

Let us pray that we may all be living signs of the Father’s tenderness and love (Water From the Rock, 102) as we set the world on fire with God’s love.



Tony Clarke
Director of Mission and Life Formation

Words for Pope Francis: A Revolution of Love and Tenderness

Evangelii Gaudium n.288

There is a Marian “style” to the Church’s work of evangelization. Whenever we look to Mary, we come to believe once again in the revolutionary nature of love and tenderness.

In her we see that humility and tenderness are not virtues of the weak but of the strong who need not treat others poorly in order to feel important themselves.

Contemplating Mary, we realise that she who praised God for “bringing down the mighty from their thrones” and “sending the rich away empty” (Lk 1:52-53) is also the one who brings a homely warmth to our pursuit of justice.

She is also the one who carefully keeps “all these things, pondering them in her heart” (Lk 2:19). Mary is able to recognise the traces of God’s Spirit in events great and small. She constantly contemplates the mystery of God in our world, in human history and in our daily lives.

She is the woman of prayer and work in Nazareth, and she is also Our Lady of Help, who sets out from her town “with haste” (Lk 1:39) to be of service to others. This interplay of justice and tenderness, of contemplation and concern for others, is what makes the ecclesial community look to Mary as a model of evangelisation.

We implore her maternal intercession that the Church may become a home for many peoples, a mother for all peoples, and that the way may be opened to the birth of a new world.

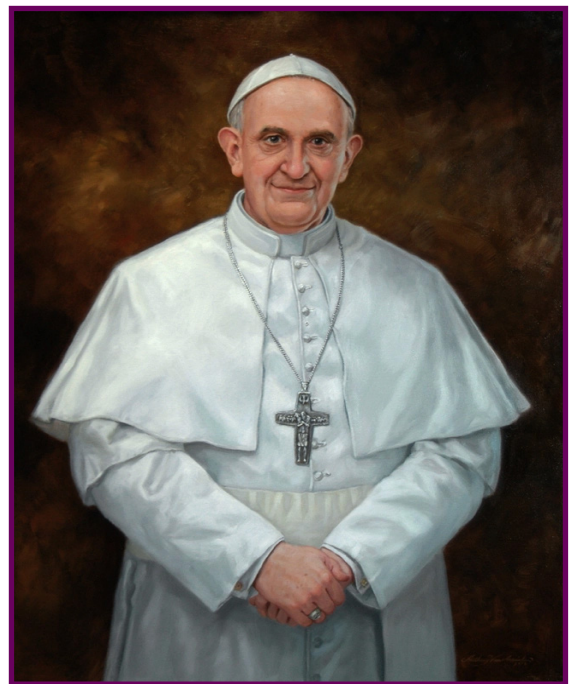
It is the Risen Christ who tells us, with a power that fills us with confidence and unshakeable hope: “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev 21:5).

With Mary we advance confidently towards the fulfilment of this promise, and to her we pray:

*Mary, Virgin and Mother,
you who, moved by the Holy Spirit,
welcomed the word of life
in the depths of your humble faith:
as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One,
help us to say our own “yes”
to the urgent call, as pressing as ever,
to proclaim the good news of Jesus.*

*Mother of the living Gospel,
wellspring of happiness for God’s little ones,
pray for us.*

Amen. Alleluia!



Anthony VanArsdale, Pope Francis Portrait (2013).
Photo: Anthony VanArsdale.

Beginning of Year Mass - Prayer and Scripture

Created and Called: A revolution of love and tenderness

2023 Marist Theme

It is suggested that the Acknowledgement and Introduction are read by Student Leaders.

Acknowledgement

Reader 1: We acknowledge and pay our respects to the <INSERT NAME eg: Gadigal People of the Eora Nation> as the original and ongoing custodians of the land upon which we gather to pray today. We commit ourselves to actively working alongside the First Nations people of this ancient land for healing, reconciliation, and justice.

We are, as Marists, an inclusive and welcoming community. We acknowledge that all are created in the image of our loving God, and called to live our lives glorifying the Lord. People of all faiths, genders, sexualities and cultures are therefore welcome and respected equally in the Marist Catholic community.

Introduction

Reader 2: In 2023, we are invited by our Marist theme – Created and Called: a revolution of love and tenderness, to look at our lives and to see how we might better be the people that God has created and called us to be.

People like Saint Marcellin Champagnat, <option to INSERT dual charism founder if applicable> and Saint Mary MacKillop demonstrate to us in practical ways, that all people are created as children of God, and each of us are called to care for creation, and to demonstrate love, forgiveness, compassion and tenderness to all whom we meet.

Reader 3: As a Marist Catholic community, we have Mary, whom St Marcellin called, ‘Our Good Mother’, to be our model of love and tenderness. For Mary said when the Angel Gabriel announced that she would be the mother of Jesus, ‘my soul magnifies the Lord’. In other words, let everything we do and say, everything we think and feel, all our actions and deeds, be done so that looking at me, people will see God more clearly.

That is our invitation, our challenge, and our discipleship. For it is when we act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly, we are living our lives as a revolution of love, a revolution that we are all called and created to be.

Note: The prayers of the Mass are from the Votive Mass of Our Lady, Mother of the Church. Roman Missal p.1411. Scripture readings are taken from the Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Lectionary II, p.1367. Readings of the day may also be selected. The readings and Prayers of Intercession could be adapted to suit other liturgical settings.

Collect / Opening Prayer

O God, Father of mercies,
whose Only Begotten Son, as he hung upon the Cross,
chose the Blessed Virgin Mary, his Mother,
to be our Mother also,
grant, we pray, that with her loving help
your Church maybe more fruitful day by day
and, exalting in the holiness of her children,
may draw her embrace all the families of the peoples.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

First Reading (*Isaiah 61:9-11*)

Reader: A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

My people will be famous throughout the nations,
their descendants throughout the peoples.
All who see them will admit
that they are a race whom the Lord has blessed.
I exult for joy in the Lord,
my soul rejoices in my God,
for he has clothed me in the garments of salvation,
he has wrapped me in the cloak of integrity,
like a bridegroom wearing his wreath,
like a bride adorned in her jewels.
For as the earth makes fresh things grow,
as a garden makes seeds spring up,
so will the Lord make both integrity and praise
spring up in the sight of the nations.

The Word of the Lord

ALL: *Thanks be to God*



Responsorial Psalm (1 Samuel 2:1. 4-8. R. v.1)

Reader: My heart rejoices in the Lord, my Saviour

Response: ***My heart rejoices in the Lord, my Saviour***

Reader: My heart rejoices in the Lord,
I find my strength in my God;
my mouth laughs at my enemies
as I rejoice in your saving help.

Response: ***My heart rejoices in the Lord, my Saviour***

Reader: The bows of the mighty are broken
but the weak are clothed with strength.
Those with plenty must labour for bread,
but the hungry need work no more.

Response: ***My heart rejoices in the Lord, my Saviour***

Reader: It is the Lord who gives life and death,
he brings people to the grave and back;
It is the Lord who gives poverty and riches.
he brings people low and raises them on high.

Response: ***My heart rejoices in the Lord, my Saviour***

Reader: He lifts up the lowly from the dust
from the dung heap he raises the poor
to set them in the company of princes,
to give them a glorious throne.

Response: ***My heart rejoices in the Lord, my Saviour***

Gospel Acclamation (Luke 11:28)

All: Alleluia, alleluia!
Blessed are they who hear the word of God
and keep it.
Alleluia.

Gospel (Luke 1:46-56)

Priest: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke:

All: **Glory to you Lord**
(All make a small sign of the cross on the forehead, the lips and heart)

Priest: Mary said:
‘My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord
and my spirit exults in God my saviour;
because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid.
Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me blessed,
for the Almighty has done great things for me.
Holy is his name,
and his mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear him.
‘He has shown the power of his arm,
he has routed the proud of heart.
He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly.
The hungry he has filled with good things, the rich sent empty away.
He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his mercy
– according to the promise he made to our ancestors –
of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.’

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back home.

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise be to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayers of Intercession

Priest: Grateful to God for the many blessings received through Marist and Catholic education in Australia, and aware of our dependency upon God for all that is good, let us offer up our needs to the Lord with humility and confidence.

Reader: For the Church:
We pray for Pope Francis and all our spiritual and Church leaders, that they be blessed with courage and wisdom to face the challenges of leading the Church in this modern world.

Created and called, we pray.

All: *Lord hear our prayer.*

Reader: For World Leaders:
May the Holy Spirit guide and inspire our leaders to stand up against the injustices of the world, to care for the most vulnerable in society and work towards peaceful solutions to conflict.

Created and called, we pray.

All: *Lord hear our prayer.*

Reader: For the World Around Us:
We pray that we see the beauty of creation around us and recognise the sacredness of the earth; may we grow deeper in our respect and care for our common home and make choices that protect and care for our environment.

Created and called, we pray.

All: *Lord hear our prayer.*

Reader: For Reconciliation:
Let us honour and respect the traditions and culture of our Indigenous brothers and sisters. May we listen compassionately to their hurt and pain so that we may achieve peace, justice and reconciliation amongst all of God's children.

Created and called, we pray.

All: *Lord hear our prayer.*

Reader: For our own intentions:
(pause) We pray with Mary, Our Good Mother and Mother of the Church, that she walks with us, sharing our joys and sufferings of every day, and modeling a total trust in God.

Created and called, we pray.

All: *Lord hear our prayer.*

Priest: Heavenly Father, by the intercession of St Marcellin Champagnat and the Blessed Virgin Mary, we ask that you hear our prayers, which we unite with the sacrifice of your Son, who lives and reigns forever and ever.

All: *Amen*

Preface

Priest: The Lord be with you.

All: *And with your spirit.*

Priest: Lift up your hearts.

All: *We lift them up to the Lord.*

Priest: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: *It is right and just.*

Priest: It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, and to proclaim your greatness with due praise, as we honour the blessed Virgin Mary.

Receiving your word in her Immaculate Heart, she was found worthy to conceive him in her virgin's womb and, giving birth to the Creator, she nurtured the beginnings of the Church.

Standing beside the Cross, she received the testament of divine love and took to herself as sons and daughters all those who by the Death of Christ are born to heavenly life.

As the Apostles awaited the Spirit you had promised, she joined her supplication to the prayers of the disciples and so became the pattern of the Church at prayer.

Raised to the glory of heaven, she accompanies your pilgrim Church with a mother's love and watches in kindness over the Church's homeward steps, until the Lord's Day shall come in glorious splendour.

And so, with all the Angels and Saints, we praise you, as without end we acclaim:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts ...

Prayer over the Offerings

Priest: Receive our offerings, O Lord,
and transform them into the mystery of salvation,
so that by its power we may be set a flame
with the charity of the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church,
and with her may be united more closely
to the work of redemption.
Through Christ our Lord.

All: *Amen*

Prayer after Communion

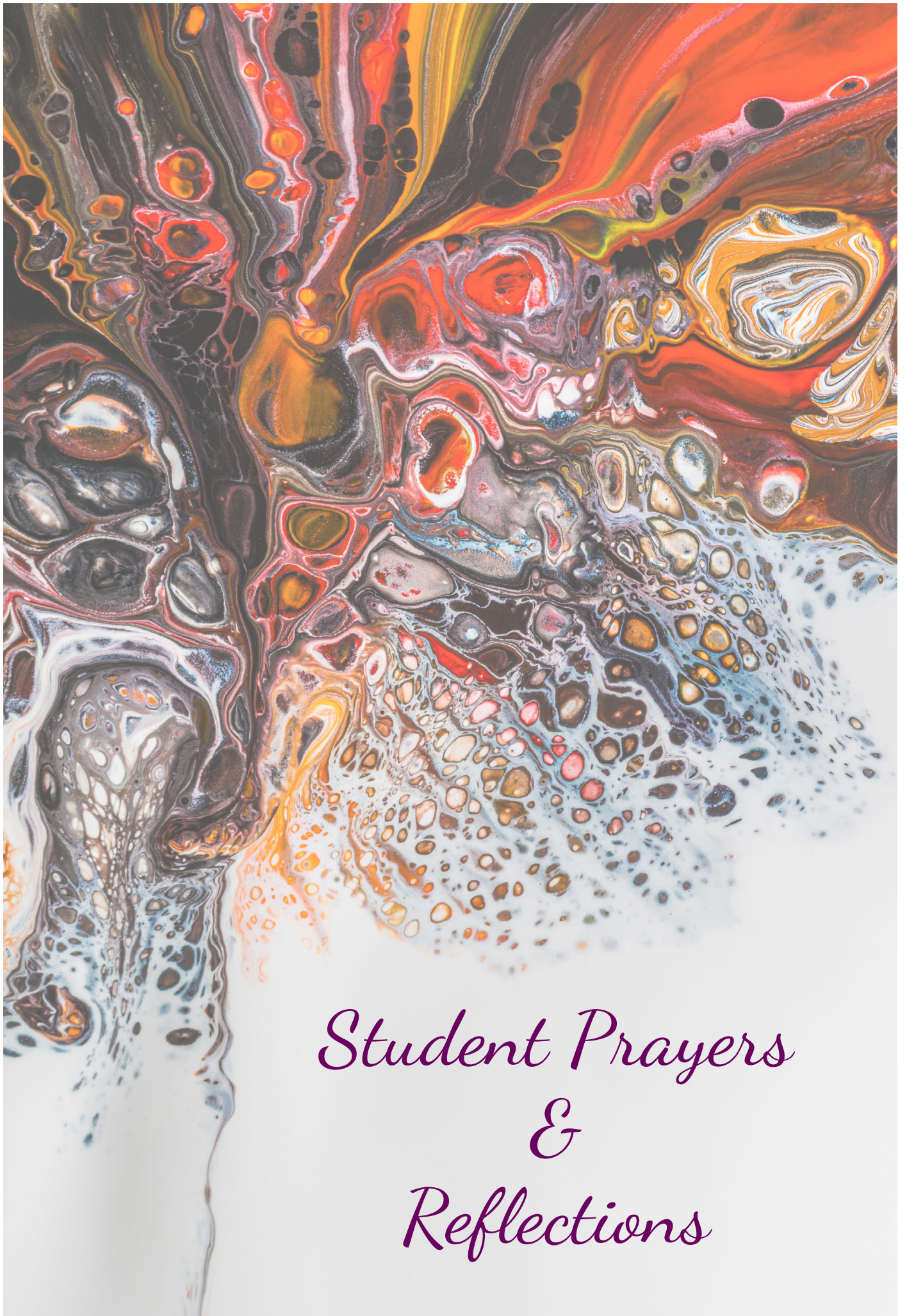
Priest: Having received the pledge of redemption and of life,
we humbly pray, O Lord,
that, with the Blessed Virgin's motherly help,
your Church may teach all nations
by proclaiming the Gospel
and, through the grace of the outpouring of the Spirit,
fill the whole earth.
Through Christ our Lord.

All: *Amen*

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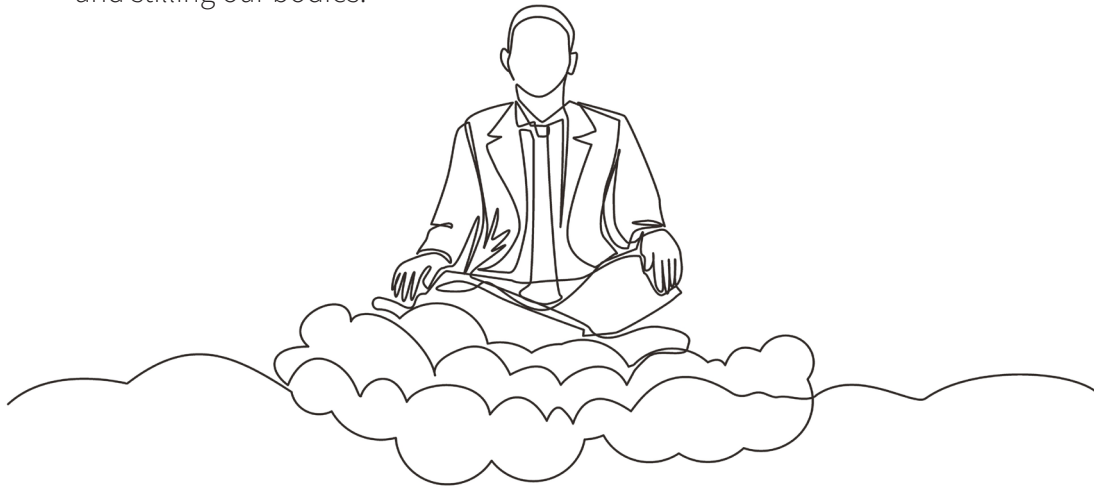
*Student Prayers
&
Reflections*

1. Created and Called to Simplicity - Prayer Meditation

We know that life is very busy. Science tells us that our brains are constantly transforming and are shaped by what we focus on. For example, when we are anxious and busy, focusing on peace can lead to us feeling peaceful. We also know that deep breathing directly impacts the part of the brain where stress dwells, encouraging our nervous system to slow down and eventually melt into the present moment.

Breath prayer engages the physical body and helps us experience God's presence in our bodies and brings together the physical and spiritual parts of our lives.

Focusing on our breath slows down our breathing, which has the effect of slowing down and stilling our bodies.



One way to engage in breath prayer is to imagine breathing out all your concerns and worries into God's presence, while breathing in God's love and care.

Let's begin:

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I invite you to get your body into a comfortable position. As you become still, you might close your eyes and focus on your breathing. Take a deep breath to practice now; inhale slowly and feel your lungs fill with air and exhale... let that breath out again. Repeat.

Now, think about a concern or worry that you have or a person you know in need of help. Thinking about one of these...breathe in.

As you breathe out, feel the air leaving your lungs and picture yourself giving that worry or person into God's care. Repeat. Repeat.

Now, breathe in, imagining God's love filling the empty space where the concern or worry was located inside you. Repeat. Repeat.

Continue your prayer for a short period of time or until you feel you have reached a sense of inner calm as you dwell in the presence of God.

Slowly open your eyes.

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

2. Created and Called to Love One Another

Leader: Let us pause and remember we are in the presence of God.
In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Introduction

The reality of our world is that many people suffer from famine every day. The facts of hunger as they stand right now are:

- 811 million people are chronically hungry.
- 283 million people are in hunger crises — they are marching toward starvation.
- 45 million people in 43 countries across the globe are in hunger emergencies — in other words, famine is knocking on their door.

The world has often experienced famine. But when has it ever been so widespread, in so many places, at the same time? What can we do?
(pause for 3-4 seconds to reflect in silence)

Opening Prayer

Leader: Let us pray.

Dear God,
As we live each day in Australia,
we pray for those who are starving in our world
and suffering malnutrition.

Help open our eyes to see the need in our world,
and be called to do something.
To alleviate the suffering of our neighbours living in a famine crisis.
Amen.

Reading Jesus offers a response to this question: what can we do? He says in Matthew's Gospel, "In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you". (Matthew 7:12). Jesus goes on later to teach ...

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'" (Matthew 22:34-39)

Reflect

The first thing we need to do is restore our own moral compass. Where we see a need to help another, we should. The highest standard of humanity has always been the Commandments. They are part of all major religions and cultures — and the foundation of the culture of all Marist and Catholic Schools. Unless we act, who will? We are created to, 'Love our neighbour' as our equal. When you see your neighbour as your equal it might just change everything.

Leader:

Let us pray.

Dear God,
create in us a loving heart,
a heart that is open to all,
a heart that gives unconditionally
and asks nothing in return.
Call us to act with justice and peace, and love tenderly,
especially those experiencing famine and starvation today in our world.
Amen.

Marist Litany

Mary Our Good Mother... pray for us
St Marcellin Champagnat... pray for us
St Mary of the Cross Mackillop... pray for us
And may we always remember... to pray for one another.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.



3. Created and Called to be Thankful

Leader: We are called by God to recognise the beauty and wonder in all of creation. The beauty of ordinary moments and places we visit often pass us by if we do not take a moment to stop, give thanks and enjoy all that God had given to us and for us.

Let us use an Australian poem to help us with our prayer today.

In the name of the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Reader 1: Who is my neighbour?

Aussie Thanksgiving by Bruce D Prewer

In the house of God we sing praises,
and renew our vows with joy!

Everybody will come to you, God,
because without you we are lost.
Our sins bully us and get us down,
but you wipe the floor with them.
To be attracted to you is happiness;
only your beauty can satisfy us.
Caught up in awe we are healed.
You are the hope of land and sea.

You keep the Blue Mountains in place
and clothe them in glory.
You quieten Bass Strait storms,
and calm tempestuous people.
We who live in this ancient land
tremble at your handiwork.
You give us magpie songs at dawn,
and the kookaburras at dusk.

Let the country and city celebrate!
Let them sing together for joy!

Leader: We take a few moments in silent gratitude for our own experience of the awe and wonder we encounter through creation. (pause for 30 secs)

Mary Our Good Mother... pray for us
St Marcellin Champagnat... pray for us
St Mary of the Cross MacKillop... pray for us
And may we always remember... to pray for one another

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

4. Created and Called by God to do Something Special for Others

We start our prayer with a Sign of the Cross:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Teacher: Is God asking YOU to do something special for others?

[Read Katie's story below: Katie Stagliano – Farmer for the homeless]

When she was nine years old Katie was given a school project which involved growing a cabbage from a seed. Katie managed to grow a whopping 18 kilogram cabbage. Instead of eating it herself, she took it to a local soup kitchen for the homeless, where it went on to feed over 275 people.

Moved by how many people were helped with just one vegetable, Katie determined to grow more. With this in mind, she set up a number of vegetable gardens to grow whole crops of food to donate.

This project became Katie's Krops, and it quickly spread out into other neighbourhoods, with many young people also growing their own food for donation. So far, thousands of kilos of food have been grown under the Katie's Krops initiative, with many thousands of homeless and vulnerable people able to eat because of the vision and hard work of one girl.



Katie is not so different to you and me. She just saw a need and decided to do something about it.

What might God ask you to do that could make a difference to others?
Let's think about how we can be the people God wants us to be.

- By seeing yourself as the good person God created you to be. (pause)
- By forgiving someone who has hurt you. (pause)

- By taking personal responsibility for your actions. (pause)
- By being a good listener. (pause)
- By being kind and polite to others. (pause)
- By playing an active part in your community or family. (pause)

To conclude we pray together:

Lord,

Thank you for my many blessings.

Help me to be the person that you intended me to be.

Help me do what is right by my family and my friends.

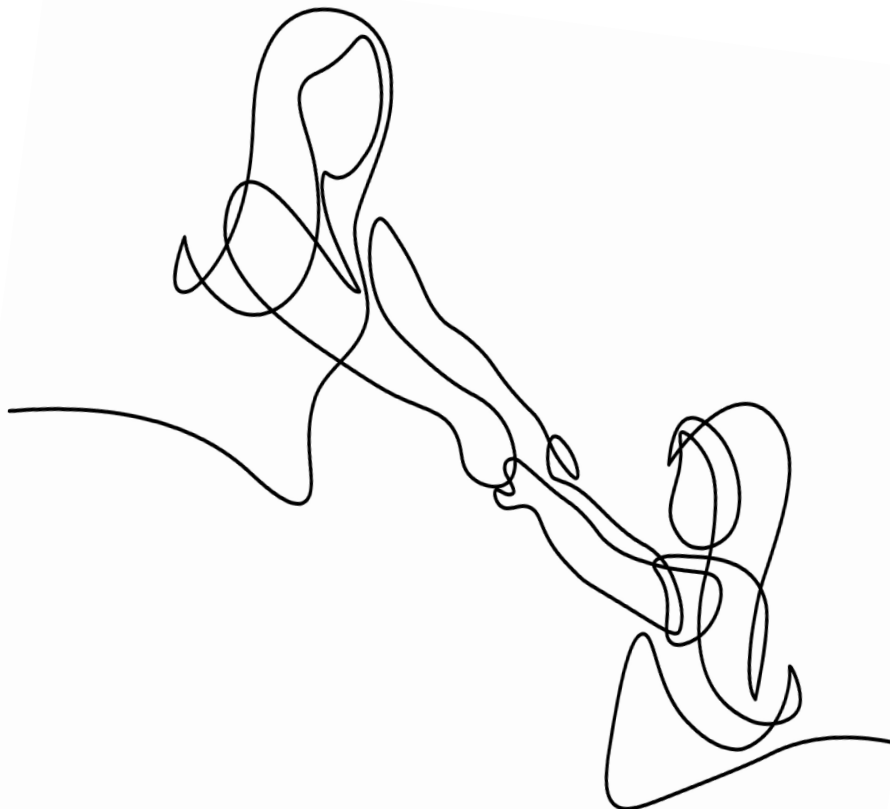
Help me to see the good in myself and others.

Help me do what is best for the greater good of those around me.

Help me to cope better when things don't necessarily go my way.

Help me to understand others better and to really listen to others.

In Jesus' name, Amen.



5. Created and Called to set the world on fire

“Be who God created you to be and you will set the world on fire” - St Catherine of Siena

God creates us out of love and calls us to be fully alive. Jesus reminds us in scripture that he came so that we may have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10). How do we respond to this? What are we called to be and to do?

Read the following poem and respond prayerfully to the reflection question below.

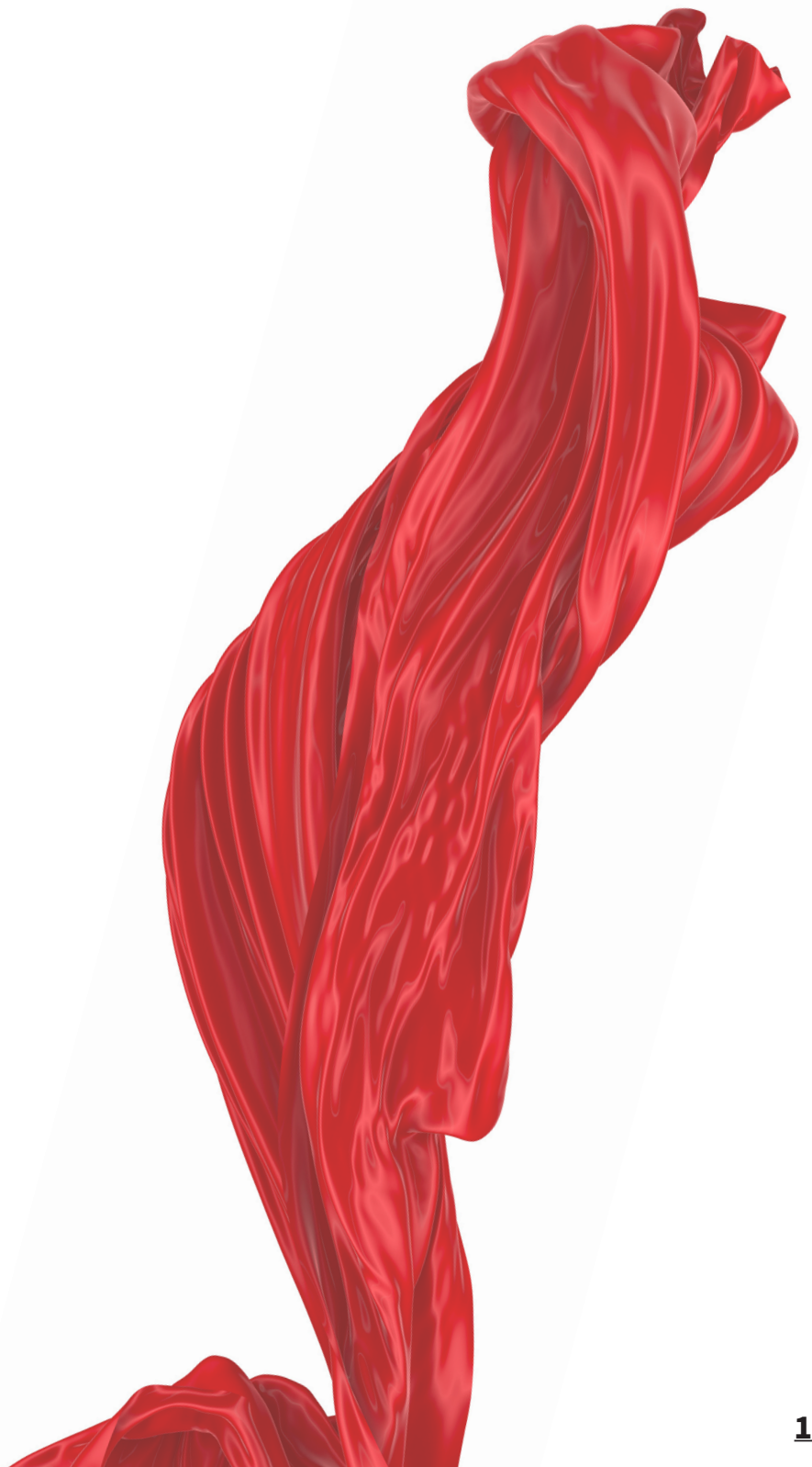
Earth, Your Dancing Place by May Swensom

Beneath heaven's vault
remember always walking
through halls of cloud
down aisles of sunlight
or through high hedges
of the green rain
walk in the world
highheeled with swirl of cape
hand at the swordhilt
of your pride
Keep a tall throat
Remain aghast at life

Enter each day
as upon a stage
lighted and waiting
for your step
Crave upward as flame
have keenness in the nostril
Give your eyes
to agony or rapture

Train your hands
as birds to be
brooding or nimble
Move your body
as the horses
sweeping on slender hooves
over crag and prairie
with fleeing manes
and aloofness of their limbs

Take earth for your own large room
and the floor of the earth
carpeted with sunlight
and hung round with silver wind
for your dancing place



For Reflection

In what ways do you immerse yourself in God's creation and appreciate its beauty?

Closing Prayer

Loving Creator,
We thank you for your creation - abundance that sustains us, it's boundless beauty that inspires us,
and the countless opportunities it offers us. Fill us with the grace to encounter, nurture and protect all
creation, each and every day.

Mary Our Good Mother... pray for us
St Marcellin Champagnat... pray for us
St Mary of the Cross Mackillop... pray for us
And may we always remember... to pray for one another.



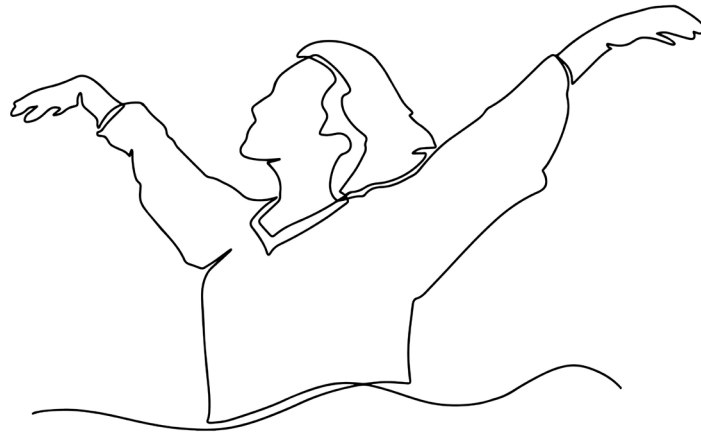
A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a vast field of purple crocuses. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some showing bright yellow centers. The overall tone is soft and dreamy, with a shallow depth of field that keeps the foreground flowers sharp while the background fades into a gentle blur.

*Staff Prayer &
Reflections*

1. Created and Called for Inner Peace

Henri Nouwen, the well-known Dutch theologian and spiritual writer, reflects upon creating inner peace to help us rise to the challenges of our daily lives...

While I was traveling through the United States and lecturing about Central America, I became aware that while I was exhausting myself to prevent war, the chances of war were increasing. This has helped me to realise that sometimes the powers of evil seduce us to work for peace in such a way that we come close to losing our soul.



Mildred Norman helped me see how important inner peace is. It is that sense of God's presence in our lives that allows us to trust in the power of God's peace even when we do little. Living with the handicapped also opened my eyes to the peace that does not belong to this world but can be found here already.

Be sure to make this inner peace your utmost priority. . . . When we radiate the peace of Christ, we are peacemakers, and then our peace action can witness to this inner peace. But without that inner peace our actions easily become instruments of the powers of war and destruction.

Jesus' words "Pray unceasingly for the strength to survive all that is going to happen and to stand with confidence before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36) are of crucial importance for us in these days. Prayer should be our first concern. Without prayer even our "good busyness" will lead us to our destruction.

Source: Henri Nouwen

Let us spend a few moments in silence.

Marist Litany

Mary Our Good Mother... pray for us

St Marcellin Champagnat... pray for us

St Mary of the Cross Mackillop... pray for us

And may we always remember... to pray for one another.

2. Created and Called for Peace

For Peace

As the fever of day calms towards twilight
may all that is strained in us come to ease.

We pray for all who suffered violence today,
may an unexpected serenity surprise them.

For those who risk their lives each day for peace,
may their hearts glimpse providence at the heart of history.

That those who make riches from violence and war
might hear in their dreams the cries of the lost.



That we might see through our fear of each other
a new vision to heal our fatal attraction to aggression.

That those who enjoy the privilege of peace
might not forget their tormented brothers and sisters.

That the wolf might lie down with the lamb,
that our swords be beaten into ploughshares
And no hurt or harm be done
anywhere along the holy mountain.

John D'Donohue
From the book, Benedictus

3. Created and Called for Service to Others – Visio Divina

Leader:

Let your eyes gaze upon the whole image.
(pause)

Look at the hands of Peter (it seems as if one is pushing Jesus away 'you will never wash my feet' and the other pulling him to him 'wash all of me').
(pause)

Can you recognise your own inner draw and resistance to Jesus' love?
(pause)

The blue field under the wash bowl represents the "living water" of salvation.
(pause)

Jesus' face cannot be seen except in the reflection in the water of the wash bowl.
(pause)

Peter protests, yet he clings to Jesus.
(pause)

Jesus' feet are battered and bruised.
(pause)

The bread and wine await on the table.
(pause)

How does service to others provide "living water" to you?
(pause)

As you see Jesus' face reflected in the dirty water, what is God calling you to be?
(pause)

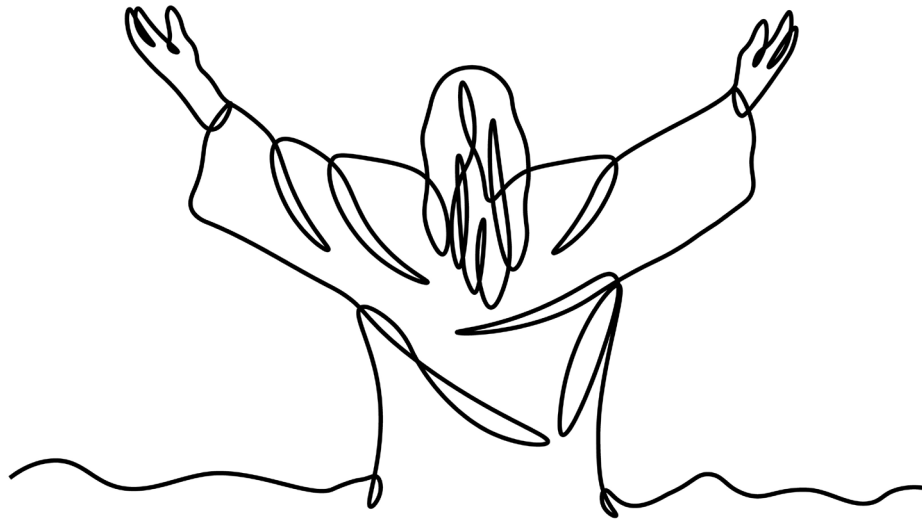
We offer these thoughts to God.

Amen.



*"The Washing of Feet" by German Artist Sieger Koder
Jesus washes Peter's feet. (John 13.1-17)*

4. Created and Called to Oneness with God



Mystics do not merely believe in the existence of God or the divine, they claim to have experienced the presence of God in their lives and in the world. This is a feature of our Marist spirituality handed down from Saint Marcellin.

When the mysterious presence of God fills their consciousness in ways that are impossible to describe, their lives are transformed. They become happy, joyful, confident, humble, loving, free, and secure. The hunger for spirituality is a hunger for precisely that.

One of the features of the mystical experience of union with God is that it always includes an experience of oneness with all human beings and with the whole universe.

The classical example of this was the experience of Francis of Assisi. Nobody taught Francis to love the birds and flowers, the rocks and the rainforest's, the sun, and the moon, and to treat them all as his brothers and sisters.

His gentleness and tenderness toward all creatures, including human beings, and especially the poor, flowed quite simply and naturally from his experience of oneness with God. He experienced himself as intimately one with of God's creatures.

For Reflection

How can I experience the presence of God in my life today?

5. Created and Called into Simplicity

It is always good to hear some rules to guide us in this busy life we all lead. Here is a reflection from Robert Fulghum, author and philosopher. He says...

ALL I REALLY NEED TO KNOW about how to live and what to do and how to be I learned in kindergarten.

These are the things I learned:

Share everything.

Play fair.

Don't hit people.

Put things back where you found them.

Clean up your own mess.

Don't take things that aren't yours.

Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody.

Wash your hands before you eat.

Flush.

Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you. Live a balanced life—learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some.

Take a nap every afternoon.

When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together.

Wonder. Remember the little seed in the Styrofoam cup: The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that.

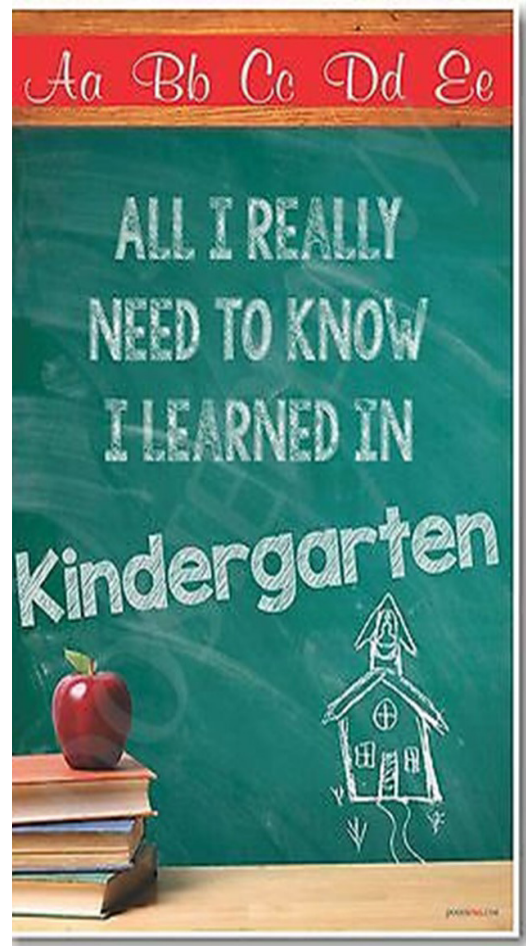
Goldfish and white mice and even the little seed in the Styrofoam cup—they all die. So do we.

And then remember the Dick-and-Jane books and the first word you learned—the biggest word of all—LOOK.

Everything you need to know is in there somewhere. The Golden Rule and love and basic sanitation. Ecology and politics and equality and sane living. [Surely this is how God called us to be...]

Think what a better world it would be if we all—the whole world—had cookies and milk about three o'clock every afternoon and then lay down with our blankies for a nap.

Or if all governments had as a basic policy to always put things back where they found them and to clean up their own mess.



And it is still true, no matter how old you are—when you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together.

(From All I Really Need To Know I Learned In Kindergarten: Uncommon Thoughts on Common Things by Robert Fulghum)

Let us pause for some silent reflection

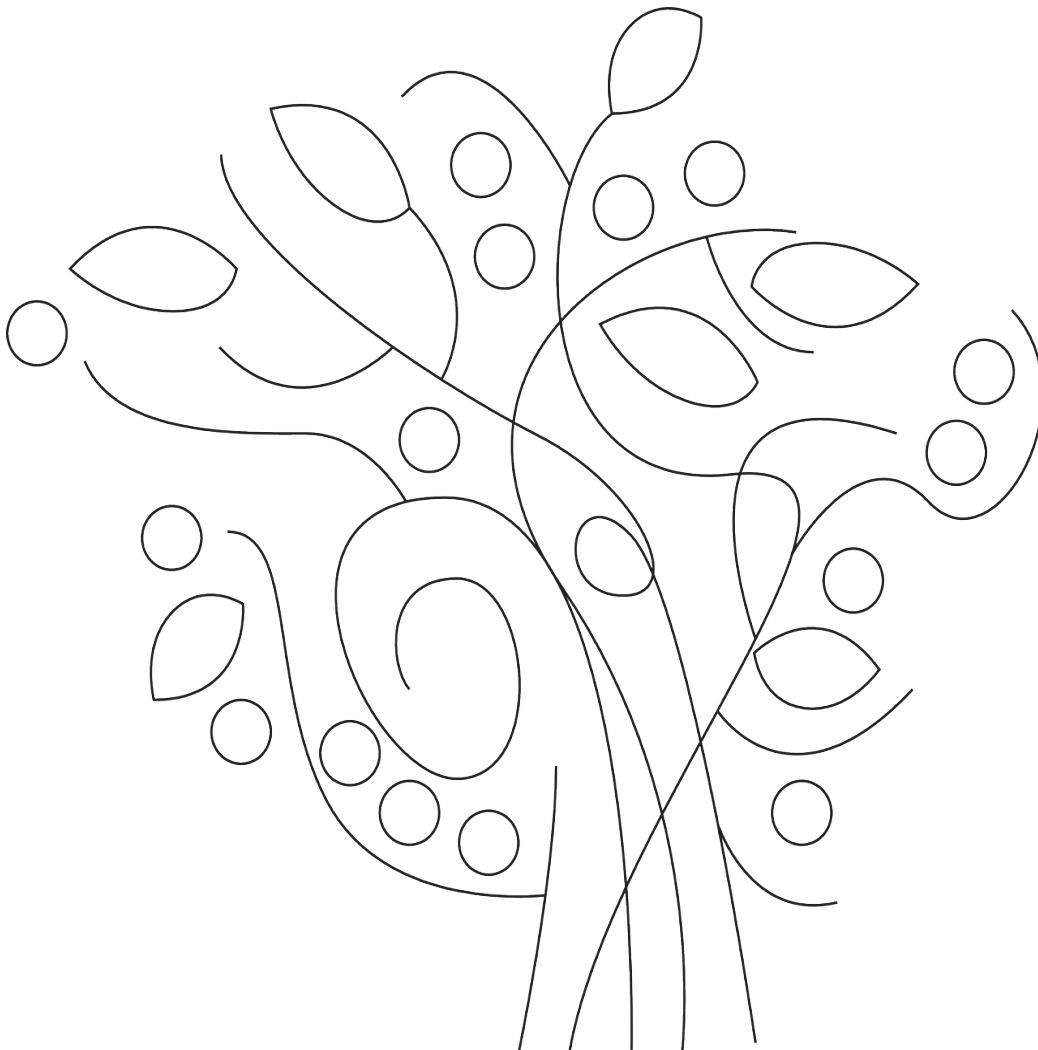
Marist Litany

Mary Our Good Mother... pray for us

St Marcellin Champagnat... pray for us

St Mary of the Cross MacKillop... pray for us

And may we always remember... to pray for one another.



6. Created and Called to a revolution of love and tenderness

What are we created for and what are we called to be?

In *Amoris Laetitia*, his Apostolic Exhortation on Love and the Family, Pope Francis points directly to Jesus as a starting point in addressing this question.

Christ proposed as the distinctive sign of his disciples the law of love and the gift of self for others ... Love also bears fruit in mercy and forgiveness.

Against this backdrop of love another virtue stands out, one often overlooked in our world of frenetic and superficial relationships. It is tenderness.

Amoris Laetitia #27/28

Love, service, mercy, forgiveness and tenderness – to live these for others is our calling as followers of Christ.

What does that look like?

If we look to the *Parable of the Prodigal Son* (*Luke 15:11-32*), we may begin to see the answer to this question....

But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him (v20)

Spend a few moments with the following image.

How do you see love and tenderness expressed in this image of father and son?

Spend a few moments in silent reflection then share your response with a neighbour.



The Prodigal Son by Gislaine Howard

Marist Litany

Mary Our Good Mother... pray for us
St Marcellin Champagnat... pray for us
St Mary of the Cross Mackillop... pray for us
And may we always remember... to pray for one another.

7. Created and Called – Chosen by God!

Leader: I invite you to centre yourselves and listen to a story about a special invitation:

I don't think that any of us ever imagine that God could make a significant difference in this world through us – through others yes, but not us. And yet God has been known to do the most remarkable things through the most unremarkable people. If you or I were Jesus and we had to choose just twelve disciples to be the start of this new thing – the Church – how would we have gone through the job selection process?

Would we advertise in newspapers and online? Wanted: 12 apostles to proclaim the Kingdom of God, and to be beaten and killed for their faith? Would we hire a head-hunter, trawl through the CVs and produce a shortlist for interviews? Would we put them through aptitude tests? What did Jesus do? Well, he spent the whole night in prayer...

Reader: *Then Jesus went up the hill and invited those he wanted to go with him. So, they joined him there. And he chose twelve of them and called them apostles. He wanted these twelve to be with him and he wanted to send them to other places to tell people God's message. (Mark 3:13-15)*

Leader: Jesus had big plans for these twelve. They would become the founders of this thing called 'church' which, over the coming (at least) 2000 plus years, would transform billions of lives. Yes, big plans. So, he chose...not the top graduates from the best theological seminaries... no, He chose, relatively simple people like fishermen, social outcasts and despised tax collectors. He called ordinary people, just like you and me. He called those he wanted, and they came.

What an invitation! When God calls you, it means he has chosen you and wants you. Go.

Mary Our Good Mother... pray for us
St Marcellin Champagnat... pray for us
St Mary of the Cross MacKillop... pray for us
And may we always remember... to pray for one another.



8. Finding God Within Us and in Creation

People must be receptive to the signals by which God without a name could come close, for God never seems to self-proclaim Godself as God . . . God's self-disclosures are in the small signs that conceal and reveal the Divine mystery. However, no attention is paid to them, no question is asked about what all this could mean. The result is human loneliness and estrangement from reality.

“Becoming New: Finding God Within Us and in Creation”.

Anselm Grun and Leonardo Boff (2019) p136-138

Reader: A man whispered:
God, speak to me.
And a meadowlark began to sing.
However, the man did not hear.
Again he asked God, speak to me.
And thunder rumbled through the sky.
However, the man did not hear.
Again he demanded
God, reveal yourself!
And a great moon shone brightly in the dark sky.
However, the man did not see it.
And nervously he began to shout:
God, show me a miracle.
And a child was born.
However, the man did not bend over the cradle so that he could
marvel at the miracle of life.
Desperate, he cried out again:
Touch me, God, and let me sense that You exist.
And a butterfly landed softly in his shadow.
However, the man angrily brushed it aside with his hand.
Disappointed and in tears he continued on his journey.
Aimlessly he roamed around.
Without further questioning.
Alone and filled with anxiety.

For Reflection

Read the poem for a second time, focus on a word or a phrase that resonates with you. Use this word or line to uncover where or how God is being revealed to you today.





Marist Themed Prayers

God in the Everyday

Lord Jesus, you call us to discover God's love in the ordinary events of life.

You have promised us your Spirit in our lives.

It is this same Spirit that urges us to be prophets of mercy and of being brothers and sisters to all.

Give us your grace that we may respond to your call as Marcellin Champagnat did, with courage and audacity.

Conscious that our work is in the hands of Mary, our Good Mother, may we build homes of light which care for life and generate new life.

Amen

God's Invitation

Loving God your call is unique to each of us, a mystery that surprises us and invites us with equal dignity to live Champagnat's charism alongside our brothers and sisters.

As we deepen our unique call to be disciples of Jesus like Mary, keep us mindful of the Spirit's energy within our hearts and in our day-to-day events.

Guide us, be with us and lead us with Mary, on the path of true discipleship. In Christ our brother we ask this.

Amen.

Living in Faith

Lord Jesus, like Mary at Cana, we feel challenged by the needs of the world around us. You call us to be aware of the signs of the times, to face current challenges, without falling into the temptation of "answering questions that no one is asking anymore".

You call us to be a prophetic reminder of the common dignity and fundamental equality of the entire People of God.

You call us to move away from a culture shaped by "ego-s" and to adopt a culture shaped by "eco-s" (ecology, ecosystems, an economy of solidarity, ...).

You call us to be agents of change, bridge-builders, messengers of peace, transforming the lives of young people through an education which integrates awakening faith and living by Gospel values.

Amen.

Open our Eyes Lord

Lord Jesus, we search for you, like Mary, in the caravans of life, in the tumult of our cities, and in the masses of displaced people who are seeking a better future for their children.

You call us to open the eyes of our heart and hear the cries of children and young people, especially the voiceless and homeless.

You encourage us to be creative in giving resolute responses to their needs and to empower those who have no voice.

You challenge us to be present in more significant ways among the children and young people on the margins of the world.

May we have the courage and audacity of Marcellin to respond as Mary would have us respond as we seek to journey with children and young people living on the margins of life.

Amen.

Called by the Spirit

Lord Jesus, we search for you, May God's Holy Spirit bless all at this school.

(Invite everyone to face the North)

May the Spirit of the North, the spirit of the Pacific, surround us with love.

As the sun gives warmth to the earth, may the Holy Spirit encourage us to share God's love with one another.

(Invite everyone to face the South)

May the Spirit of the South, the spirit of the Antarctic, give us courage.

As we brace for cold winds, may the Holy Spirit give us strength to face the challenges which we will encounter.

(Invite everyone to face the East)

May the Spirit of the East, the spirit of sunrise, give us wisdom and understanding, may we never be afraid to start afresh.

(Invite everyone to face the West)

May the Spirit of the West, the spirit of sunset, give us knowledge and good judgement, may your Word guide the path which we walk.

May the Holy Spirit of God who is present in this school, and in each of us, surround us with love and peace.

Amen.

Everyday Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father,
who art 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 trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace.
The Lord is with you.
Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb,
Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death.

Amen.

Prayer of St Francis

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.

Oh God, grant that I may not try to be comforted but to
comfort, not try to be understood as to understand,
not try to be loved as to love.

Because it is in giving that we receive, it is in forgiving that
we are forgiven, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal
life.

Amen.



Salve Regina (Hail Holy Queen)

Hail Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, hail our life our sweetness and our hope.

To you do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to you do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.

Turn then, most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy toward us and after this our exile show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus.

O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!

Morning Offering

God of us all, at the beginning of our day we acknowledge your creation and care of the world in love. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, we acknowledge our dependence on you for many daily blessings.

We offer all that we do this day in union with Mary our Good Mother, and we pray to be effective witnesses to your goodness, as we seek to reveal to those we serve, the reign of God in our world.

Amen.

Signed by the Spirit

God, creator and lover of the world, we offer to you our lives, our words and deeds, our hopes and fears, and our love for each other.

Accept us as we are and make us what we shall be.

Mary, you image for us the perfection of the Church.

You shine forth on earth, until the day of the Almighty One shall come, as a sign of sure hope and solace for the pilgrim people of God and for all your Marist sons and daughters.

By the power of the Spirit, enable us to be a sign of your presence in the world, so that through us others may come to consider the call to service.

Amen.

Silence

When you pray, be like the mountain in stillness, in silence, thoughts rooted in eternity.

Do nothing; just sit, just be, and you will harvest the fruit of your prayer.

When you pray, be like the flower reaching up to the sun, straight stemmed like a column.

Be open, ready to accept all things without fear and you will not lack light on your way.

When you pray, be like the ocean with stillness in its depths, the waves ebbing and flowing.

Have calm in your heart, and distractions will flee of their own accord.

When you pray, remember the breath that made us living beings: from God it comes; to God it returns.

Blend the Word and prayer with the flow of life and nothing will come between you and the Giver of Life.

When you pray, be like the bird, endlessly singing before the Creator, its song rising like incense.

Pray like the turtledove and you will never lose heart.

(St Seraphim of Sarov, Russian Orthodox saint, d. 1833)

Sent on Mission

We thank you, God, for all your gifts.

Give us faith and conviction to meet the challenges of our world.

Inner peace in the face of misunderstanding and difficulty, and courage to accept all that is painful in our lives, so that we might bring love and compassion to those with whom we live and work.

Mary, mother and model, from the beginning we were given your name and taught to live your spirit.

Ordinary Resource and Good Mother, you inspire our ways of being and acting.

Be for us as you were for Champagnat –guiding, caring, ever-present mother.

We pray in thanksgiving for all who continue to follow Champagnat in his commitment to education and the poor.

We ask this in the name of Jesus who came to give us the fullness of life.

Further Scripture Reference

From New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition (NRSVC) or New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) as indicated

Humbly with God

Micah 6:8 (NRSVC)

God has told you, O mortal, 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?

Mary Visits Elizabeth

Luke 1:39-56 (NRSCV)

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy.

And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

Mary's Song of Praise

And Mary said,
"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

Marks of the True Christian

Romans 12:9-18 (NJB)

Let love be without any pretence. Avoid what is evil; stick to what is good. In brotherly (and sisterly) love let your feelings of deep affection for one another come to expression and regard others as more important than yourself.

In the service of the Lord, work not half heartedly but with conscientiousness and an eager spirit. Be joyful in hope, persevere in hardship; keep praying regularly; share with any of God's holy people who are in need; look for opportunities to be hospitable.

The Inescapable Love of God

Psalms 139:1-6, 13-14 (NRSVC)

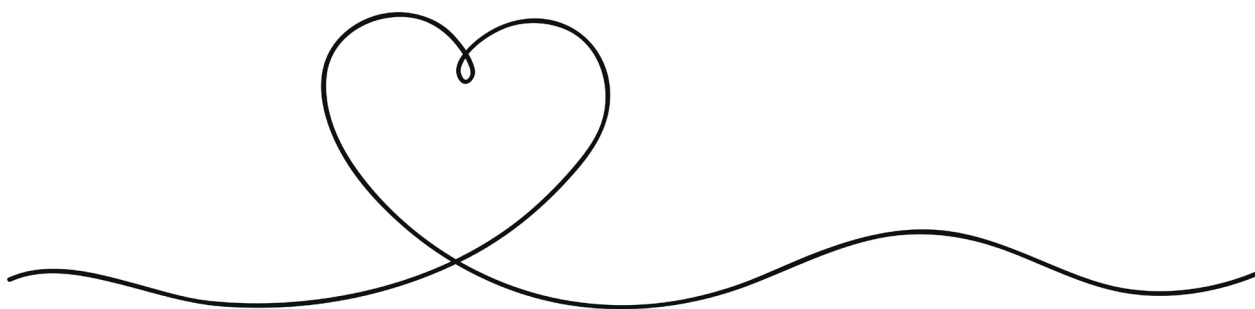
O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.

You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.

You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.



The Gift of Love

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (NJB)

Though I command languages both human and angelic, if I speak without love, I am no more than a gong booming or a cymbal clashing.

And though I have the power of prophecy, to penetrate all mysteries and knowledge, and though I have all the faith necessary to move mountains - if I am without love, I am nothing.

Though I should give away to the poor all that I possess, and even give up my body to be burned if I am without love, it will do me no good whatever.

Love is always patient and kind; love is never jealous; love is not boastful or conceited, it is never rude and never seeks its own advantage, it does not take offence or store up grievances.

Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but finds its joy in the truth. It is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes.

Love never comes to an end.

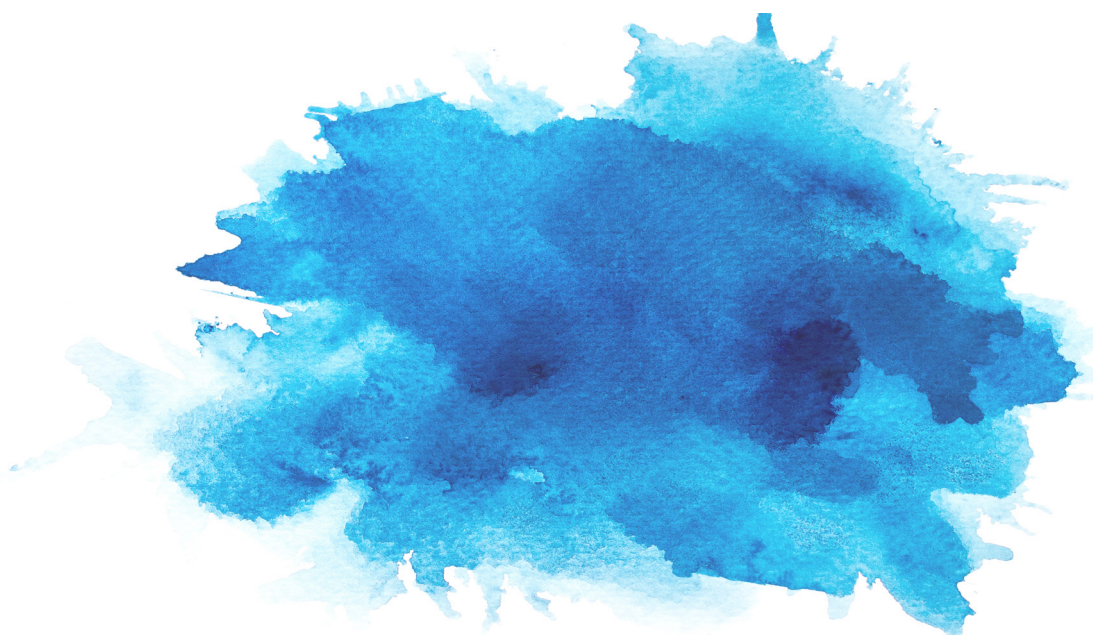
But if there are prophecies, they will be done away with; if tongues, they will fall silent; and if knowledge, it will be done away with.

For we know only imperfectly, and we prophesy imperfectly; but once perfection comes, all imperfect things will be done away with.

When I was a child, I used to talk like a child, and see things as a child does, and think like a child; but now that I have become an adult, I have finished with all childish ways.

Now we see only reflections in a mirror, mere riddles, but then we shall be seeing face to face. Now I can know only imperfectly; but then I shall know just as fully as I am myself known.

As it is, these remain: faith, hope and love, the three of them; and the greatest of them is love.



Jesus Calls the First Disciples

Luke 5: 1-11 (NJB)

Now it happened that he was standing one day by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the crowd pressing round him listening to the word of God, when he caught sight of two boats at the water's edge.

The fishermen had got out of them and were washing their nets.

He got into one of the boats, it was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the shore.

Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

When he had finished speaking he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water and pay out your nets for a catch.'

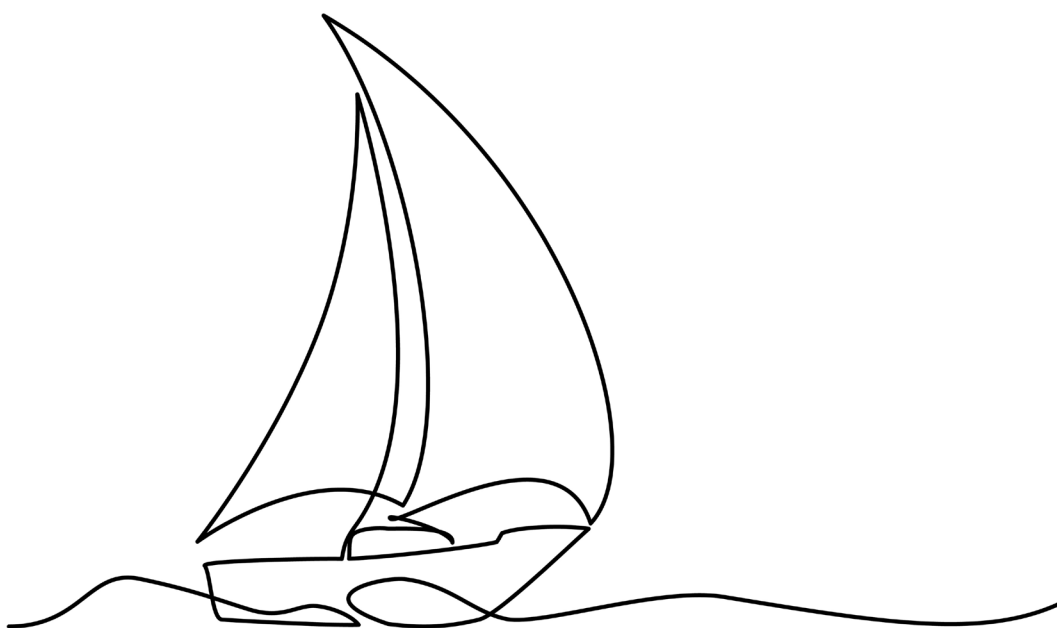
Simon replied, 'Master, we worked hard all night long and caught nothing, but if you say so, I will pay out the nets.'

And when they had done this they netted such a huge number of fish that their nets began to tear, so they signalled to their companions in the other boat to come and help them; when these came, they filled both boats to sinking point.

When Simon Peter saw this he fell at the knees of Jesus saying, 'Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man.' For he and all his companions were completely awestruck at the catch they had made; so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners.

But Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on it is people you will be catching.'

Then, bringing their boats back to land they left everything and followed him.



The Beatitudes

Matthew 5:1-12 (NJB)

Seeing the crowds, he went onto the mountain. And when he was seated his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

How blessed are the poor in spirit: the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

Blessed are the gentle: they shall have the earth as inheritance.

Blessed are those who mourn: they shall be comforted.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for uprightness: they shall have their fill.

Blessed are the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them.

Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: they shall be recognised as children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of uprightness: the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

Blessed are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.

A Tender Heart

1 Peter 3: 8-9 (NRSVC)

Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing.

Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

John 13:1-17 (NJB)

Before the festival of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father, having loved those who were his in the world, loved them to the end.

They were at supper, and the devil had already put it into the mind of Judas Iscariot son of Simon, to betray him.

Jesus knew that the Father had put everything into his hands, and that he had come from God and was returning to God, and he got up from table, removed his outer garments and, taking a towel, wrapped it round his waist; he then poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel he was wearing.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered, 'At the moment you do not know what I am doing, but later you will understand.'

'Never!' said Peter. 'You shall never wash my feet.'

Jesus replied, 'If I do not wash you, you can have no share with me.'

Simon Peter said, 'Well then, Lord, not only my feet, but my hands and my head as well!'

Jesus said, 'No one who has had a bath needs washing, such a person is clean all over.

You too are clean, though not all of you are.'

He knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said, 'though not all of you are'.

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments again he went back to the table.

'Do you understand', he said, 'what I have done to you?'

You call me Master and Lord, and rightly; so I am.

If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you must wash each other's feet. I've given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you. 'In all truth I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, no messenger is greater than the one who sent him. 'Now that you know this, blessed are you if you behave accordingly'

