

Practicing Prayer on Our Resurrection Walk

Session 2 – Framing Your Day in Prayer

In these weeks of Eastertide, ending on the Day of Pentecost, May 28, the bulletin covers will explore possibilities for prayer – not the common prayer we do together in the Sunday Eucharist, but private or personal prayer at home. This is not a systematic treatment of prayer, but a sort of buffet of possibilities to be sampled. Last week we explored the implications of the Prayer Book catechism definition of prayer as “our response to God, by thought and by deeds, with or without words.” We touched on what Scripture says about God’s Spirit always praying in us. We will come back to those thoughts, but today we turn to a simple starting point: framing your day in prayer.

A daily framework for prayer. Our lives are given order by daily habits: getting up, going to bed; eating meals, checking the news and on-line messages, going to work and to the store, brushing teeth. This framework of habit sustains our lives. Without establishing a framework or habit of daily prayer, any deeper connection with God that we seek tends to get lost. So enclosed in this bulletin is a handy little prayer booklet with prayers for the start of each day, the end of each day, and mealtimes. We suggest you take it home and try it out. Feedback welcome!

Morning prayer from Phillips Brooks. Phillips Brooks (1835-93) was the longtime rector of Trinity Church, Copley Square, in Boston, and Bishop of Massachusetts for a few short years before his death. It is not too much to say that he established the Episcopal Church as a major force in the life of Massachusetts. His prayer touches on almost any spiritual need that is likely to arise in our lives on a given day. As you pray it, see what phrase speaks to you and take that with you through the day.

To start the day, briefly offer thanks to God for the gift of another day; hold up before God the tasks of the day, asking God to be with you as you go forth. Conclude by praying the following prayer:

O God: Give me strength to live another day;
Let me not turn coward before its difficulties
 or prove recreant to its duties;
Let me not lose faith in other people;
Keep me sweet and sound of heart,
 in spite of ingratitude, treachery, or meanness;
Preserve me from minding little stings or giving them;
Help me to keep my heart clean,
 and to live so honestly and fearlessly
 that no outward failure can dishearten me
 or take away the joy of conscious integrity:
Open wide the eyes of my soul
 that I may see good in all things;
Grant me this day some new vision of thy truth;
Inspire me with the spirit of joy and gladness;
 and make me the cup of strength to suffering souls;

in the name of the strong deliverer,
our only Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

Evening prayers from an English vicar and the New Zealand Prayer Book. These two short prayers come from very different sources, but have a common purpose: helping us let go of the day that it past and settle our souls for rest in Christ. Choose either one of them and as you pray it, remember that the world rests ultimately in God's hands. You do not have to do it all!

To close the day, briefly call to mind the chief events of the day or the feelings you have had during the day; hold them up before God, giving thanks for all of them. The ones you don't feel thankful for may hold as special message for you, so don't ignore them! Conclude by praying one of the following prayers:

O Lord our God, in whose hands is the issue of all things,
and who requires from your stewards not success but faithfulness:
Give us such faith in you and in your sure purposes,
that we measure not our lives by what we have done or failed to do,
but by our obedience to your holy will:
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Lord, it is night.

The night is for stillness. Let us be still in the presence of God.

It is night after a long day.

What has been done has been done;

what has not been done has not been done; let it be.

The night is dark.

Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives rest in you.

The night is quiet.

Let the quietness of your peace enfold us, all dear to us, and all who have no peace.

The night heralds the dawn.

Let us look expectantly to a new day, new joys, new possibilities.

In your name we pray. *Amen.*

Thanksgiving at mealtime. In the Lord's Prayer, the only tangible thing we ask is to be given our "daily bread." Not win the lottery, just daily bread. Praying a grace at mealtime, especially when we sit down together as a family, reminds us that all life is a gift from God. You may want, in praying one of these meal prayers, to add thanks for something else that you have been given that day.

At mealtimes we receive in tangible form the "daily bread" we to ask for in the Lord's Prayer. Giving thanks reminds us that not only the food before us, but everything – life itself – is a gift from God. Giving thanks helps preserve the "giftedness" of life, resisting the temptation to suppose that it is our possession or what we merit or deserve.

Give us grateful hearts, our Father, for all your mercies, and make us mindful of the needs of others; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Bless, O Lord, your gifts to our use and us to your service; for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

Blessed are you, O Lord God, King of the Universe, for you give us food to sustain our lives and make our hearts glad; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

For these and all his mercies, God's holy Name be blessed and praised; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

(From the Book of Common Prayer)

God is great, God is good;
Let us thank him for our food.
By his hands we all are fed,
Give us Lord our daily bread. *Amen.*

(A child's mealtime blessing.)

Reminder: Perfection in prayer is not the point; just faithfulness in doing the best you can.