

◆ Prayer for a community at the beginning of the week

God our Father,
at the beginning of another week,
help us to remember why we are here
and not to be tempted away from our mission
by what is expedient.

Help us to remember especially our mission to those
who are vulnerable and marginal,
those who most need our help.

As we look ahead to another week,
we pray for the intentions of the community –
for the grace to meet the particular challenges we face,
for the generosity to remember the needs of others,
to “make room” for each other.

Let us never become so busy that we overlook
the human need in front of us;
that we look after the brother or sister in our midst
who is struggling, who needs to be “carried” for a while.

Help us to be wise
in our use of authority,
to be civil and respectful in all our encounters.
And when disagreements arise
may we use patient dialogue, empathy and imagination
to resolve our differences.



We commend our work to you –
keep us humble, keep us mindful,
that any good that comes of what we do
is your work in the world, not ours.
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.
We are the workers, not the master builder.

St [patron], pray for us.
Our Lady of Perpetual Help, pray for us.

We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord,
Amen.

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Colossians 3:12-13

A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us.

St John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*
("At the Beginning of the New Millennium")¹²

◆ When love chooses you

Born into a simple family, a carpenter's apprentice.

Born to an illiterate teenage mother with no A*s.

Born to refugees with no known address.

Born into a trough the animals ate out of,
in a room to house animals with bovine TB.

Born under military rule,
violently imposed by a narcissist who murdered babies.

Growing up in a sink estate, a forgotten corner.

It could have been a Chelsea, or a Cheshire,
Sandbanks or Surrey, but it wasn't.

God chose a troubled first-century Palestine.

Foretold by prophets, who spoke of a face spat at, of his clothes
becoming a prize in a game played by the bullies who murdered him.

Foretold by a man who lived on honey, who ate insects and who
shouted at the crowds.

Foretold by his cousin, who was beheaded with a machete, whose
head would be paraded around like something off a perverse
YouTube video.

Foretold by his Father, who poured love upon him from the skies.

Feared by evil, tempted by wealth, power and glory, isolated and
alone in the desert.

He could have had a media campaign, celebrity endorsements and
corporate sponsorship.

But he didn't.

God chose a man who wore camel skins to prepare his campaign.

He picked fishermen, prone to anger and unreliability,
tax collectors, the most unpopular of men,
James and John, who harboured career ambitions.



He chose a doubter, who couldn't trust what Jesus said until he could see it for himself.

A political activist, who would go behind his back, betray him and then run away.

He chose friends who argued amongst themselves, vied for attention, fell asleep when he most needed them, and who denied him as he bled to death.

He could have gone after people of influence: doctors, professors, theologians, lawyers and entrepreneurs. But he didn't.

God chose those who were unqualified and unprepared.

He set about healing those who were reviled and despised.

After he met them,

paralysed people walked away from people's indignation, lepers returned to their families.

He freed those possessed by voices of self-loathing.

Those who were blind and deaf, the withered and broken, he restored anyone who was cast out.

Even death's sting retreated from him. He could have stayed with the teachers and elders he impressed in the temple as a little boy. But he didn't.

He chose the broken people, those who were dirty or lonely, and he proved to them that no one was beyond the love of his Father.

He taught with authority because he lived perfectly what he said.

When hunger threatened them, he transformed the little they gave him.

When fear of drowning threatened to destroy them, he calmed their storm.

When their religion became proper but loveless, he dared to challenge it.

He told them parables which held up a mirror to their souls and when they looked in it they made plans to kill him.

He could have ridden into Jerusalem on a stallion.
He could have chosen an Aston Martin or Porsche.
But he didn't.

He chose a donkey.

Betrayed by a friend, denied by his disciples,
abandoned in Gethsemane,
accused by false witnesses,
tried by corrupt lawyers,
sentenced by a coward,
jeered at by the crowds,
pitied by the daughters of Rachel,
tortured to death by a brutal army,
He could have raised an army from the stones.
He could have chosen the way of the sword.
But he didn't.

He chose silence to reply to his accuser, and he chose the cup his Father gave him to drink.

He transformed the world for ever with one word: "Mary," he said, and she knew in that moment that the world would never be the same.
He walked with those who were depressed on the road and their hearts burst into flames of joy.
He appeared to Thomas and gave him the evidence his logic longed for.
There will be an end to tears of sorrow.
Death is no longer the end.
Now there would always be hope for the world.
He could have returned angry with the world, to seek revenge for all the wrong they did to him.
But he didn't.

He chose forgiveness, showed us his hands and his side and then he offered us his peace.



Who will be his disciples now?

God can choose those who are successful, powerful and popular. But supposing none of that really impresses God at all. Supposing everything they ever achieved was his gift anyway. Suppose that today, God is choosing you. Suppose that who Jesus lived for, who he stood for, who he died for, and who he rose again for, is you. Suppose his loving Father is your loving Father, and suppose he loves you, just as you are, so that you would never have to prove yourself. To anyone. Ever again. Young women and men of the Church, today love chooses you.

In the words of Pope Francis, I invite you all, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

Lord, it is not enough to know about you, come into my life. Choose me.

Amen.

I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since “no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord”.

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*²⁷

Personal reflection

- What is the difference between knowing about Jesus and meeting him?
- How do you respond to an invitation to meet Jesus?

◆ Who am I?

After a disturbing dream

My child,
You are not your dreams.
You are not your moods.
You are not your thoughts.

You are not your “likes”.
You are not your followers.
You are not your friends.

You are not what others see,
or say,
or think.

You are not your grades.
You are not your personal best.
You are not your salary.

You are not your data.
You are not your body measurements.
You are not your looks.

You are so much more.
Your deepest you
is beauty beyond comprehension.

You are a temple
where I am pleased to dwell.
If you open
the door.



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.

Psalm 139:1-4

My deepest me is God.

St Catherine of Genoa

Thus it is that the holy synod proclaims the noble calling of
humanity and the existence within it of a divine seed.

Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*
(Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)³⁵

How wonderful is the certainty that each human life is not adrift
in the midst of hopeless chaos, in a world ruled by pure chance
or endlessly recurring cycles! The Creator can say to each one
of us: “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you”... We were
conceived in the heart of God, and for this reason “each of us is
the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is
loved, each of us is necessary”.

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* (On Care for Our Common Home)³⁶

◆ Can I change?

A prayer for Lent

Lord, in this holy season,
give me the grace to change, to believe I can be changed,
to take small steps towards my true self –
from selfishness to service,
from judgement to mercy,
from anxiety to faith.

In this holy season,
help me to give time to prayer
as you did so often: before a major decision,
at the end of a long day of coming and going,
in the time of trial.
Help me to spend time with you every day,
to set aside my relentless thoughts,
and abide in you
in silence and trust.

In this holy season,
help me to fast from what is holding me back
from becoming my true self: my addictions
to the pleasures of the body,
to the mental habits which dull my attention,
to the habits of a lifestyle
which could never be shared with everyone on the planet.
Help me to choose my fasting wisely,
and to persevere, with your grace.

In this holy season,
help me to give alms to my neighbours in need,
and not just my spare change,
but to better understand their needs,
the pain, hidden in plain sight,
to give of my time and imagination
to help those who are vulnerable,
to build the kingdom in my community.

And in this holy season, Lord,
help me not to despair when I fall at the first hurdle,
but to remember your generosity to the labourers
who came along at the end,
as much as to those who were there
from the beginning.

As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.
When shall I come and behold
the face of God?

Psalm 42:1-2

The interior penance of the Christian can be expressed in many and various ways. Scripture and the Fathers insist above all on three forms, fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, which express conversion in relation to oneself, to God, and to others.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1434

