

## INTRODUCTION

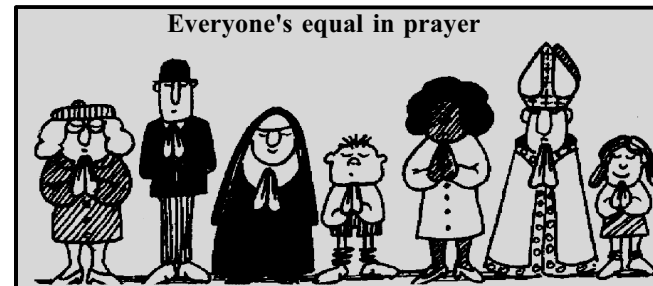
Not so long ago, I was invited to explore the topic - 'Prayer for Busy People.' I was reminded of the bronze sculpture on the bank of the river Wey in Guildford town, depicting Lewis Carroll's 'Alice' sitting on the grass with the famous rabbit in mid-flight down its burrow. There is little doubt that like the white rabbit we too seem to rush from one thing to another, constantly checking our pocket-watch, filo-fax or diary, fretting there is so much to do with so little time.

Michel Quoist wrote one of the best known prayers about our battle with time entitled 'Lord, I have time' it ends:

*Lord, I have time,  
I have plenty of time,  
All the time that you give me,  
The years of my life,  
The days of my years,  
The hours of my days,  
They are all mine.  
Mine to fill, quietly, calmly,  
But to fill completely, up to the brim,  
To offer them to you,  
that of their insipid water  
You may make a rich wine  
such as you made once  
in Cana of Galilee.  
I am not asking you tonight, Lord,  
for time to do this and then that,  
But your grace to do conscientiously,  
in the time that you give me,  
what you want me to do.*

The one thing the Lord really wants us to do - **is pray!**

I have learned that people often assume prayer is something we need to learn about before we do it.



This can result in our undervaluing the importance of our own particular style and way of praying. Prayer is simply *breaking the sound barrier*. In other words, not learning about it, but getting on and doing it.

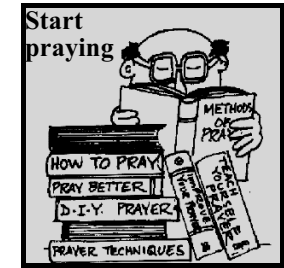
This little booklet may help you to 'start' with each page having specific things for you to pray for and about in our parish on each day of the month.

My first attempt at a book like this came at the end of a fruitful nine years of ministry in a former parish. Much of that fruitfulness, I am sure, came as a result of the prayers of the people and the community of nuns who lived there. I have revised the book to suit a new situation in the knowledge of the virtue and value of prayer for others. I intend to use it at morning prayer daily and I hope that you, like me, may find it useful.

Use it generously to water God's vineyard in Merrow and beyond.

*Alan Hodgson*

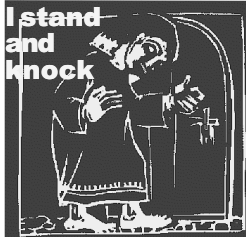
Merrow Rectory,  
Autumn '98



I am indebted to ToCh for the anthology of prayers 'Yours is the Glory' (1971) from which I gleaned the daily themes. Also to Redemptorist Publications for allowing me to reproduce images from 'Prayer School' by Mike (1993). 'Lord I have time' is taken from *Prayers of Life* first published by Sheed and Ward 1963,

# 1. THE BOOKS PURPOSE

Praying for someone or something seems to be an action that comes naturally whether it's an 'arrow prayer' of help or a longer prayer of intercession. Sometimes it is done publicly in church, when names given to us by friends or names from the intercession board are read out. At other times we might pray privately for someone. Time and again, I find that miracles of comfort and healing have been wrought, though usually not in the way they or I might have expected. Intercession, or praying for others, is difficult to explain except that in a strange way it works! It's also a 'ministry' that lives out the truth that Jesus stands at the door of our lives knocking to come in (Rev. 3:20). Jesus urges us:



*whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (Mat 6:6)*

When we pray we join in the continuing ministry of Jesus in Heaven: *'since he always lives to make intercession' (Heb. 7:25)*

Thus prayer for others is a high calling indeed!

## Intercession is also vital

Someone once said *"there are two kinds of pillar in the church: the pillars on whom we depend, and the caterpillars who just creep in and out!"* This can suggest that our worth depends on being 'useful' or that *'actions speak louder than prayers.'* This was how an elderly disabled woman felt until she discovered what her 'useful' gift was in her church:

*"To carry each member of the community by name before God in a prayer of intercession. When she had shared her discovery with others, she found her essential place in the community."*<sup>1</sup>

At the end of each verse of the hymn *"What a friend we have in Jesus"* there is the line - *"Take it to the Lord in prayer,"* and when we do, things begin to happen! Charles Elliott explains how:

## The power of a sluice

*I was flying over the Punjab. Great rivers wound, yellow-grey, across the limitless plain. Off these rivers and their tributaries had been cut irrigation channels; and off the irrigation channels, smaller and smaller ditches, until the whole plain was covered, like the blood supply in the human body. The last few yards of each were controlled by a sluice or a simple mound of earth in the ditch, and one man or one family controlled each sluice or mound. As long as he opened his sluice at the right time and used the fertilising power of the water of the great river, the plain would be lush, green and rich. But if he kept the sluice shut, the rice would wither, and the plain would die - and so ultimately would its people. **We have the power of the sluice.***<sup>2</sup>

## What should we expect?

When we pray for ourselves and others, we need to be realistic: *Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee; and dost promise, that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name thou wilt grant their requests: Fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants, **as may be most expedient for them...***<sup>3</sup>

I have seen this most clearly with people for whom healing and wholeness has not involved getting better. Healing isn't necessarily the same as curing! Indeed after praying for healing for those with terminal illness, God has wrought unexpected healing and wholeness in the lives of those for whom we have prayed. Perhaps this is why Jesus said what he did in Matthew's gospel:

*"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." (Mat 5:4)*

## We need a place to pray

In my preparation for ordination to the priesthood, I was greatly influenced by the late Archbishop Michael Ramsey in his little book *The Christian Priest Today* in which he likened the ministry of the priest to that of Aaron. Aaron, you may remember, prayed before the Lord wearing a sacred breastplate bearing twelve jewels, each representing the tribes of Israel. In other words, he prayed *with the people on his heart.* This makes particular sense for me when I celebrate the Eucharist. Another priest explained how he too found praying as a priest at the altar of God important;

*'I don't know who they are but I specifically offer the Holy Sacrament for all these people in the belief that they are, as it were, lifted up one-thousandth of an inch from being bogged down in the earthiness of things. I believe that we all in our prayers and adoration can lift the world and all its people towards God so that his power can heal and love them all'*<sup>4</sup>

## Your place will be different

Such a ministry of lifting people one-thousandth of an inch into God's presence belongs to all of us but your place of prayer will undoubtedly be different to mine.

For instance one place is at the altar; another is when I am running - literally *'beating the bounds.'* I like to think I am encircling the area I have run with a circle of prayer.

## Make space for prayer



If someone is particularly on my heart I will sometimes *'run a hill'* for them, or perhaps a mile! Your place of prayer for others may be in a favourite armchair, in the garden, walking the dog or even in the potting shed. The important thing is to find a place where you feel inclined to think about others, and pray for them there.

## An act of faith

*He also said, "The Kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head."* (Mark 4:26-28)

Ask anyone who has been prayed for whether in hospital, sick bed, or simply at home in the midst of everyday life, and they will testify to the strength, uplift and nourishment they have received.

Intercession is an act of faith in something we cannot see or explain. Like the germination of the buried seed it has the quality of miracle about it, yet it is something which has the power of the sluice to water and feed the undernourished places of our world and its people, if we make the time to do it.

Therefore, whatever else we may feel we might be doing as Christians,

## Let us pray

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Biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

1 p 28 *Community and Growth* by Jean Vanier. DLT 1979

2 p 20 *Praying the Kingdom* by Charles Elliott. DLT 1985

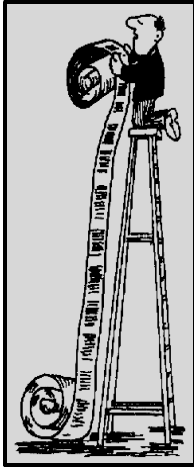
3. A Prayer of St. John Chrysostom - from the Book of Common Prayer.

4 p 77 *Tree of Glory* by Gonville French-Beytagh. DLT 1988

## PRAYING A PAGE-A-DAY

### Prayers don't need to be long!

Most of us are like Jesus' disciples, unsure how, where and when to pray (Lk. 11:1). The important thing is to set a sensible amount of time. After all, Jesus taught his disciples the Lord's Prayer which is hardly long (though infinitely deep!)



### Prayer is simple

Maybe only focus on something that may grab your attention, for instance a road and a particular family you know.

### Each page is headed with a day

Particular days will have a certain significance for us, try to put such detail on the blank side of the page.

#### 1. The first heading is a Topic:

You might use this to encompass your own interests if they're related to it.

#### 2. Secondly a piece of Scripture:

To root our prayer in the scriptures is vital. Each text is an attempt to make the topic relevant within God's overall plan of salvation revealed in the Bible.

#### 3. Next, a Picture for the topic:

We can so often make prayer complicated the pictures may help you to pray in your way, not someone else's!



#### 4. Then, The Work of the Church

There are numerous church activities,

some we may not be aware of, but all build up God's kingdom, not all of them link specifically with the topic.

#### 5. Around and about the parish

We must always be aware of the danger of only being concerned with 'churchy' things, for everything is God's concern and so ours too!

#### 6. Next, pray for our neighbours in the many roads of our parish

This reminds us of the question to Jesus "who is my neighbour?" Knowing our neighbourhood is a Gospel imperative.

#### 7. Our life at St. John's

There are many issues for us to pray about, I'm sure you can think of many more which may link with the daily topic, I suggest some as I see them.

#### 8. An empty column for Personal Intercessions and Prayers

You might first go through the book and mark in anniversaries and names for which particular days are significant. Others will come to mind as you pray.

#### 9. Then, a daily theme

Each day is an opportunity to reflect on our faith in the light of major Christian themes, for instance Friday should encourage us to naturally consider The Cross of Jesus.

#### 10. Finally, a Prayer for a Personal Spiritual Fruit or Gift

Paul urges us to

*Put on the Lord Jesus (Rom. 13: 14)*

'Putting on' a spiritual gift will, through God's grace, enable us to grow and mature in discipleship. This daily prayer answers Paul's plea to:

*Strive for the greater gifts (1 Cor. 12:31).*

Unless we pray for growth, we will remain like the man in the cartoon - frozen in prayer!

