


A Sharing of the Special Morning Prayers of a Servant of Prayer

(WARNING! All prayers are under construction, other prayers may have to be used)

 Lord, now that I have finished my formal prayers and prayed for my family, through the intercession of St. Stephen, deacon and martyr, who saw the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God as he asked Jesus to receive his spirit and prayed for those stoning him to death as he called out: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them"; I, as your lowly servant of prayer, beseech you at the beginning of this day that you, who are our light and salvation, will grant that we who keep Stephen's memory as one of the first deacons and the first martyr of the early Church, may live and serve under his protection; and with reverence and confidence in your everlasting and redeeming love which surrounds and protects us, you will sustain us in faith and hope, and that all who live the mystery of your Holy Cross in our day will be shaped by it's saving sign in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit as we seek peace and find rest in its shade.

In peace and patience I now turn to you and lay before you my humble prayers, intentions, intercessions, petitions and thanksgivings, for he who hurries through life hurries to his grave; and I ask that you will hear and answer my mutterings and pleadings as you free me from my "morning demons" and yesterday's worries and grievances returning to poison this new day which, I pray, may truly be fresh and renewed as you open my eyes to see the enduring love God has for us and I trust in the treasure of your will and the saving help of your promise as I adore and bless you, walking with ever growing strength in the way you have prescribed for me as you remove my blindness, leading and guiding me in your ways along right paths, teaching me when to turn right and when to turn left, when to walk straight ahead, and when to hold fast, turning my feet from evil and sinful ways, seeking, as one who is lowly and most insignificant and your simple and devoted servant, to serve you constantly, faithfully and always and as our love for you makes you visible in our world as we discover you in the darkness that often surrounds us in our lives, and as I take refuge in you and devote the concluding years of my life to the ministry and service of prayer, that in your goodness and as the God of love and compassion you will spare my soul, having mercy upon me as you draw me deeper into the redeeming life of Christ our Savior.

Lord, I am not worthy to have you under my roof, but as I begin my prayers this morning my spirit within me keeps vigil for you I retire to the inner room deep within my heart where you dwell making it your home, a dwelling place I have made for you by my prayer and devotion to you, a holy chamber of peace, serenity and strength ready to receive you, and as I come into your presence I ask that you, who for us are God's human face, the visible sign of his presence and his freely given faithful and protective love, will, as you search my mind and heart, grant me the wisdom to live and seek the peace and solitude of prayer as I lift up my soul to you, centering and focusing myself on the crucifix as I bow my head and pray that you, who for our sake opened your arms on the cross and gave your life for our sins so that we might live a new life as you rescued us from our distress, will look with love upon us this morning, for you love is better than life, it is life itself, and intercede for our good and the good of all as you give us the grace to hear your voice and follow where you, as our Good Shepherd, lead, for we adore you and bless you because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

We thank you with all our hearts as you inspire us by your sacrifice and I reflect upon you being "lifted up" on the cross for our sins, for our sake you pleaded to God for us, died and were raised, just as the Israelites, who sinned by complaining against God and Moses, "lived" and were inspired and at peace when they focused on the bronze serpent that Moses mounted on the pole at your command after he had pleaded to you for them; and as I try to clear my mind of all extraneous thought that you will accept the homage of my lips and that you will make me humble of spirit and simple of heart as you and your holy angels guide me through this day according to your will and sow your word once more in our hearts, for you are with us and have the words of eternal life, giving us life and breath which are the beginning and the end and everything in between.

St. Benedict said that not just his monks, but everyone should begin their daily prayer with Psalm 95 so that they might be reminded to keep open the "ear of the heart."

Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord;

let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation.
Let us greet him with thanksgiving;
let us joyfully sing psalms to him.
For the Lord is a great God,
and a great king above all gods;
in his hands are the depths of the earth,
and the tops of the mountains are his.
His is the sea, for he has made it,
and the dry land, which his hands have formed.
Come, let us bow down in worship;
let us kneel before the Lord who made us.
For he is our God,
and we are the people he shepherds,
the flock he guides.
Oh, that today you would hear his voice:
"Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as in the day of Massah in the desert,
Where your fathers tempted me;
they tested me though they had seen my works.
Forty years I loathed that generation,
and I said: They are a people of erring heart,
and they know not my ways,
Therefore I swore in my anger;
they shall not enter into my rest."

That we may see this day as your gift, that we may always remember with all humility who we are and where we are going and where we have been and the garbage we have had to dump along the way, and that we may get rid of whatever we still carry that is dragging us down, lightening our load so that we may travel light, unburdened by useless baggage, material or spiritual, and may walk upright with our heads held high as we live this day for your glory and give it back to you in thanksgiving at day's end as we bless you for all the good you have enabled us to do, all the love you have enabled us to show, all the failures you have forgiven us, and for the peace and solitude we find in you as you shelter us, and with confidence we may live this day and face the approaching night when our day is over and evening comes and all the evils of our day, real and imagined, often crowd around us as we reflect upon our hopes and fears, our achievements and our failures, our good works and our sins, that we may place into your hands the burdens of this day and that we may rise again tomorrow renewed and refreshed to praise and serve you.

You are the God of wonder and praise who blazed upon the mountain top from which you gave the law of the covenant, you remember and keep your covenant for ever with every generation, the covenant you made with Abraham, the oath you swore to Isaac and confirmed to Jacob, I pray this morning that as we praise you, O God, from whom all blessings flow, that we may follow the wisdom of Solomon in laying our needs before you and asking for an understanding heart rather than for long life or riches, that you, who are with us always until the end of the age, will turn your heart toward us and have mercy on us, for as your prodigal children we have sinned against heaven and against you, guarding our going and our coming and make us mindful of the shortness and fragility of life, as your devoted people we are here today and gone tomorrow, we are but passing guests in this world which is a gateway to eternity, so that we may gain wisdom, understanding and right judgment in the time we have on this earth as we see your works in our daily lives and that we may live each day as if it is our last as we follow in your ways.

That you will discipline, open and widen our hearts to love you always and in all things as you free and purify us, and as we receive your love may we mirror it to saint and sinner, friend and foe alike, for your love endures forever and requires that we refrain from everything that would harm another and choose to do whatever will serve the other person's true well-being; that I may keep your commandments and remain faithful to your guiding principles, and that in your love and care you will hear me as I thank you with all my soul for the many times you have heard and answered me, for the many good things you have done for me, for my family, my brothers and sisters in Christ, and all God's people; and for the many gifts, great and small, that we

continue to receive from you as we live in harmony, hope, peace and love with you and one another, for everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God, sharing your risen joy.

You are the Christ, the Son of God, the Bread of Life, the living bread come down from heaven, the Anointed One of our God, the God who spoke the word into the first darkness before the coming of the light, you are faithful and true, in you the Father pours out his love upon the earth, you are our shelter and refuge in every storm, you are our shield and defender, you rescue us from every evil and preserve us in time of trouble, you are our rock, our fortress, our savior, our redeemer, our deliverer, you guard us from our enemies and all that would harm us and are the giver of all good gifts, you are just in all your ways and loving in all your deeds, you are our portion and our lot, you have filled our cups, plates, bowls, our hands, and the folds of our garments to overflowing with the countless blessings of life and all that sustains life, but the debt of gratitude we owe for God's faithful love can be repaid only in a two-sided coin: turning to God in thanksgiving and doing for others what has been done for us; that you will teach us to reverence all that your word has brought into being and that we may in all circumstances give thanks and be filled with gratitude and praise, having a glad attitude and a joyful spirit.

That we may follow the examples of the healed Samaritan leper who returned to the Lord and gave thanks, of Naaman, the leader of the army of Aram who was healed of his leprosy and came to know the true God, and King Hezekiah, who tore his clothes, put on sack cloth, repented and trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel; for ingratitude is an illness more lethal than leprosy; we must bend our heads and bow down low to offer our prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord as we are healed, never waiting, for his kindness endures forever and our faith in him saves us; if the only prayer we say in our entire life is, "Thank You, God," that will suffice, but we must repeat this prayer over and over, it must become our mantra, for the Lord is always waiting and listening for our thanks for all his goodness to us as we seek pardon, healing, salvation and peace, calling upon him from deep within our hearts with all our spirit.

That we may be constant in our prayers, ever mindful of the need for prayer, praying in praise and thanksgiving with one heart and one voice in and with you without ceasing and rejoicing always as we trust in you and pray for and love each other and our neighbor as Christ, whose love reaches to heaven, has with his protective love loved us, for the supplication that is faithful, and humble, and devout shall certainly pierce the clouds and enter heaven as holiness develops and flourishes in prayer, that you will teach us the many ways we may offer you our sacrifice of praise and that you will deepen in all your people a desire to pray as we lift up our hearts and voices to you, that you will teach us the spirit of silence and prayer that gives us the grace to hear your word and live by it as we faithfully serve you, that while we pray alone you are with us and we are in communion with all who pray, that the spoken words of our mouths and our inner thoughts may win favor in your sight as our prayers rise before you like "holy smoke," and that you will make us faithful as you are faithful.

That we may never forget those who have no one to pray for them, those who do not or can not pray, those who do not believe, those who are afraid to approach you in prayer, and that you will look with mercy upon us when we are hindered by flawed senses of unworthiness, self-righteousness, and false guilt, by our own distorted thoughts and our selfish habits; and that you will renew in us a deep spirit of prayer as we turn our hearts to you, pouring out our troubles before you and telling you of our distress, that you will turn your ear to our cries as our prayers come into your presence, and that you will listen, O Lord, and come to the help and heed the pleading of those who want to pray but do not know the words of prayer, and we pray for those who, in their ignorance, unbelief, misbelief, and pure arrogance, try to keep others from praying, that they not succeed, and that those who, clad in deeds of darkness, seek the downfall, division, and sometimes even the death, of faithful Christians may have a conversion of heart as we rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, and persevere in prayer.

Lord, all Christians are called to the work of prayer, you have called your people to bow down, lift up their hands and pray always, for you are close to all who call upon you, but when we are unable to form the words of prayer, and when the world around us seems to fall apart or our memories become so weak that we cannot recite a single prayer without your help,

may our hearts, minds, and souls be open to you, to whom all prayers are known, for it is when we are weak and stumble and falter we most need your strength and support, when adversity of all kinds falls upon our heads; and may you put our petitions together to form the prayers which we cannot call to mind, blessing us in our weakness as we recognize our limitations.

That you will look kindly upon your suffering servants and listen to our moaning and our cries of supplication when our hearts are parched and hardened from lack of prayer as we humbly seek help from you where you are to be found, that we may call upon you when you are near, for you are our strength and salvation, you satisfy the thirsty soul and fill the hungry with good things as you give us the living water to quench our thirst for you and the daily bread we need to sustain us in faith and life, and Christ taught us, your children and his brothers and sisters, to ask for what we need, to seek, to knock and we will find, for in your love you delight in hearing and answering our prayers as you grant favors to those whom you love and attend to the sound of our cries whenever we call upon you, for Jesus himself said: "Amen, amen, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you."

That you will fill us with joy as you send the renewing fire of your Holy Spirit which is the breath and water of life, the Spirit of the Father and the Son who dwells within us so that we might live good and holy lives, into the souls of all who need your care and protection as you remember us in our distress and that you will strengthen and guard us from the Evil One and the temptations that confront us as we struggle with our inner demons, especially those that return to haunt us again-and-again, that the prophecy of Isaiah that our ears will be closed to you not be fulfilled, but that we open our ears to your voice in the midst of our daily lives and that we may hear and take to heart the words you speak to us, that you will keep our feet firmly on the path to everlasting life as you lead us in your ways, defending us against all that would weigh us down and slow our steps as we place our trust in and our reliance on your divine mercy and providence to guide us on your straight paths through this day's challenges as you walk with us, nourishing and strengthening us on our road through life, for you and your holy angels guard our way and watch our steps, protecting and shielding us always from the evil around us with your love and care, you have commanded your angels to keep us in all your ways, and that you will grant us the willingness to hear and to serve you in the work of living holy lives according to the Gospel through whatever means you make available.

That you will grant us the care of your angels who serve in your presence, that through the power of Michael, leader of the heavenly armies in war against evil you will protect your people, that through the word of Gabriel, message-bearer of the Gospel you will save your people, and through the intervention of Raphael, companion and healer you will comfort your people.

You the bread of life broken on the cross, you are the Word of life and our guide and guard along life's paths, you are the Lord of love, hope, and joy, you created us in your own image and redeemed us in your love, we are the work of your hands, you are the gardener and we the soil, an expression of your creative love, goodness and compassion, you are the God who made us and we are the people who belong to your pasture, the flock you lead; you have called us as Levi was called, to a change of heart and a conversion of life just as the people of Nineveh were called by Jonah; today I pray that as our Good Shepherd you will lead us, your sheep, in right paths for your name's sake showing us the way we should take and what we should do, that you will have mercy on all who have strayed from the covenant they embraced in baptism and bring them into deeper communion with you who are the God of our salvation.

That you will bless my family, friends, neighbors, acquaintances, all the parishioners at St. John's and fellow pilgrims on our quest for holiness with whatever you know we need, and please bless my enemies, too, and that they may not be my enemies any more, that we may forgive and care for each other just as in your mercy you forgave Peter for his betrayal; that rejoicing in the Lord may be our common strength, that as we travel the road of life we may leave a trail of light and that our lives may be full of your love, that your face will shine upon us and that as we work to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace you will grant us the wisdom to know and serve you in the way you have laid out for us, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one body and one Spirit, one Church, one flock with one Shepherd, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all, as we

accept your call to become good and faithful disciples, walking in your ways and following your paths as sons and daughters of the Living God.

Lord, as you dwell in our hearts through faith may charity be the root and foundation of our lives, I pray that we may recognize that the poor are all those who stand in need of our love, our time, our interest and our concern, that human need of ever kind cries out to God for our help, and that the wealth that we have to share with them is not necessarily our money, but it is whatever good you have done for us and given us; and that we share our time, talent, and treasure because we have a need to share deep within us, which is one of your many gifts to us, and not because of the actual need of others, for we do not have to wait until we are wealthy to give and by giving alms we rediscover what our hearts were made for, that whatever "wealth" we have, the "treasures of life" you have given us which are to be shared and not hidden away, may be used to care for the "poorest" among us, for the Lord said it is more blessed to give than to receive, and the gifts that you have given to us are gifts for us to give.

That we may not harden our hearts nor close our eyes and our hands to those in need, but may follow the example of the poor widow who gave two small coins to the temple from her want, for it is better in our benevolence for us to give two coins from our "want" than one; and just as the smallest seeds of the earth may grow to become great trees, and if enough ant hills are piled up they may become a mountain, so may our small offerings of time, talent and treasure given from our "poverty" grow as they are combined with all the other small offerings becoming true riches; and it does no good for us to hoard our bounty, to store up treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal, for as it says in the Book of Proverbs, "Wealth is useless on the day of wrath, but virtue saves from death," never forgetting that wise men and fools both perish and leave their wealth to others, but it says further in Proverbs, "If you have compassion and hear the cry of the poor, the Lord will repay you for your good deeds."

Lord, we lift up our grateful hearts to you and pray that you will open our eyes to see the beauty of the world that surrounds us, to see as you see, our hearts to know the wonders of all whose lives we touch, our lips to sing your praise; that we may be good stewards of your gifts of time, talent and treasure, giving freely of what we have been so richly given as we share with others what you have given to us in your goodness, that each one of us may be bread, broken, and given, wine poured and shared; that you will inspire us to turn away from evil as we place our trust in you and do good in simple, everyday ways, and that where we walk this day we may bring light and love, and that we may know your presence in all that we do as you fill us with love and mercy toward one another and raise us to new life in the Spirit as the fire of divine charity burns in our hearts, our prayer and our acts of grace and labors of love.

Lord, you came to serve and not to be served, I pray that you and St. Martha, who served others as well, receiving the Lord as a guest in Bethany and looking after him with devoted attention, and St. Mary, who chose the better part, may pray and intercede for all the volunteers of the world, the modern day "apostles, disciples, and saints" who have said "yes" and use their gifts of time and talent to serve others, their churches and their communities out of the goodness of their hearts as they serve the Lord with gladness and give of their treasures, that they not worry or fret about their lack of recognition, that you will never forget them and make a note of all their good deeds in the Book of Life as they humbly and quietly serve, for you love a cheerful giver, repaying the giver's generosity sevenfold, and that your light may shine on the paths they are to walk on today as you bless and keep them as with generous hearts they follow your example by serving with joy.

Father of the orphan, defender of the widow, teacher of justice and love, I pray that you will bless and assist all who through their generous hearts and dedication to you see your broken body present in their brothers and sisters in Christ as they give bread to the hungry, hope and protection to the stranger, uphold the widow and the orphan, and aid and care to those who are down-trodden and in need as they make their gifts of time, talent and treasure, which through your generous heart you have given them to share with others, those who follow in your footsteps such as Mary Jo Copeland as she through her spiritual gifts administers Mary's Place, and your disciples who with charity as the root and foundation of their lives, and through the grace and love of God, have given birth to these blessed organizations, who provide for those in want out of their own resources and seek out support

and help from others for those in need, and on a daily basis care for those less fortunate than themselves and see that the poor, the lonely, and the abandoned shall see Christ in those around them, eat and have their fill, have a hot shower, have their aching and sore feet washed, have a warm, safe place to sleep, and find their personal dignity and a friend and peace of heart and soul in them; and we pray that those who love and care for the poor without reward, may be truly granted St. Martin's reward, for the Lord said, I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me.

For all charities, their executives and their workers, especially Catholic charities and other Christian organizations, that they not get so involved in their own existence, their titles, their salaries, their rules, and raising money that they lose track of their purpose, that they not be so intent on following their rules to the letter, but on helping others when and where they need to be helped, because rules may be bent when necessary, that they may be guided by the same light that guided the Good Samaritan and the widow of Zarephath, that God may help them choose the better part and that they may never allow their work to make them lose sight of the love and compassion which are the guiding stars for all charity, and that they may give the strength and generous hearts to be good stewards of the gifts given by others as they humbly and faithfully serve those to whom they have been called to serve, for it is in serving others that we serve you..

For the salvation of all mankind and for the Church, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, standing firm upon the rock of Peter, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone, which is a living sacrament of salvation for all peoples who make up the Body of Christ and is founded on your living Word, which as both gift and demand is living and effective, sharper than a two-edged sword penetrating even between soul and spirit; for the Pope and bishops to whom you have continued to entrust the apostolic task; that as the people of God you will make us a fit dwelling place for your love as we honor you by being obedient to the laws of the Church, bearing fruit that will last, and keeping your commandments as you gather us around the table of the cross and that we may better understand the roots of our faith.

That you will continue to renew the Church to seek the peace of the kingdom for all people, for peace soothes the heart and soul and the anxieties of the world, and that as you make your Church a vibrant sign of Christ's presence you will sustain it and keep it faithful to the demands of its daily journey of faith, for you promised to be with your Church in every age, that the Church, to which you gave the keys of the kingdom, and all Church leaders may be faithful mirrors of your love in the world; and that through the grace of God you will watch over and help it to weather all storms, challenges, persecutions, struggles and sufferings that come from outside the church and sadly, from inside as well, that those who are divided may grow in mutual understanding and reconciliation for we are all one in Christ Jesus; and that we may have faith that you will still the tempest without and the tempest within as we rejoice and rest in your calm and peace.

For the holiness of all Church leaders, and that we may honor and respect and that you will strengthen and protect those who in your wisdom and in their goodness and faithfulness have been chosen for the task of shepherding the Church, which reflects your love to the world, and guarding and being faithful stewards of the Church's manifold gifts and blessings, especially our Holy Father, Pope Benedict; our Bishops, especially Bishop Zipfel, our bishop-to-be, and Bishop Kinney, Bishop Hacker and all our bishops of the past; our pastors, especially Father David; our deacons; and all who assist in the work of pastoral ministry; that you will help them fulfill their pastoral role of caring for and watching over your Holy Church and God's holy people.

Lord, you are the bread of life broken for our redemption and the cup of our salvation, you give bread to the hungry of body and the hungry of heart, we worship you with all humility as the source of all life and you love all that lives, for in your hands are the souls of every living thing and the life breath of mankind, we pray that as we seek true life in you that you will protect those threatened by abortion and euthanasia and save them, that you will save those who have had abortions, that you will give light to those whose minds are closed to the truth and that those who promote and perform abortions may become aware of the life that exists from the very beginning and have a change of heart and mind as they realize that a real life with a real soul, to be loved, valued and saved, exists at conception, that abortion

is the killing of a child who is a real human being and that there may be an end to abortions and every practice that promotes the culture of death, and that a culture of life may prevail which will, we pray, transform every human heart as they recognize the sacred nature of life.

We pray in a special way for the souls of the Holy Innocents, all the miscarried babies along with all the mothers who suffer from melancholy after birth or miscarriage, the aborted babies and all the babies that are still-born or die during birth, those who are delivered "imperfect" and live but a short life and those who live on in the care and love of their parents; for the poor babies that are discarded after birth around the world, those who die soon after birth, and we ask for their special prayers and intercession for all of us still in this life, as the babies rest in that far greater place, a place of love, warmth, beauty and comfort where God, the Father, holds them in his arms, surrounding and protecting them, and is with them for ever; and Lord, we pray for all who grieve the loss of a child during pregnancy or birthing.

We pray you will grant life to all, for as the source of all life you have called into being life of every kind, that you will awaken us to the fullness of life and fill us with a desire to cherish life and reverence all that lives from the moment of conception till we depart this life in death as we breathe our last breath and our heart beats its last beat, that there may be an end to euthanasia, the suicide mercy-killing right-to-die physician assisted death that denies and rejects God's holy presence while also rejecting the sacredness, importance and value of human life, both young and old; and that we may always, always, choose life.

That you will have mercy on those who fall under the burden of life and their grieving families and friends, and that you will grant hope and courage and stay the hand of those who are tempted to take their own lives, those who harbor thoughts of suicide, and that you will forgive those who have taken their own lives in crushing struggles with selfishness, anger, self-pity, depression and those who have just given up and think that life is not worth living; and that you will help and bless those who work in suicide prevention and those who help heal the survivors of suicide.

For those who are in prison and those on parole or probation, that they may learn the way to true freedom and peace as the Lord rescues them from their distress, for ex-prisoners and for their families, who often ask themselves what they could have done differently or where they had gone wrong, as they are given a second chance at life, that they may succeed as they accept what is done and past and move on with their lives, for what is written is written, and what is done is done, it is what it is; that those released may recover from their time in prison, a time that is impossible to forget, their post-traumatic experiences and from whatever was the cause of their incarceration, and that as they thank the Lord for his goodness and forgiveness they may have the grace to follow St. Dismas' humble example in repenting and believing in the Gospel and walking the straight path, and that they may enter paradise with the thief to live for ever with our Lord.

But there were three crosses on Calvary, one for Jesus, one for Dismas, the "good thief," and one for Gestas, the so-called "bad thief" who by tradition was damned to hell for eternity; we must never forget that we are all "bad thieves" who are part of sinful mankind, thieves of the glory and honor due to God, and as such are condemned to the cross with Jesus; and we know that Jesus came into the world to save sinners and persisted in calling them to salvation and even on the cross he continued to beg forgiveness for those who crucified him as he pleaded, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" so we pray that Christ, the Crucified One, did forgive Gestas along with all of sinful mankind before he commended his spirit into the Father's hands; and with Jesus' gift of life in dying and rising for all he defeated death itself and in his mercy opened up the gates to the promised heavenly Jerusalem, the paradise restored, to all who put their faith in him, the gates that now stand open to us bringing the reward of eternal life to light through his resurrection and life; and with his great forgiveness in mind, for Jesus himself said "that no sin is too great to be forgiven," let us pray for all the "good" and "bad" thieves of the world, that we may forgive them as Christ forgives us, and that in the end, through faith, hope, and charity, they may all be in paradise with the Lord for ever, for with God all things are possible, and if we do what is right and just, seeking out the Lord and his forgiveness, none of the sins we have committed shall be held against us, for God is our just judge who judges all peoples with fairness, that everyone who is suffering the pain of the cross in our day, believes in him, and repents, will receive

remission of their sins through his name, for we are reminded again and again that the misery of sin is not what God wants for his beloved children, who are children of the light and children of the day.

For those studying and preparing to join the Church and take on a full Christian life, for those who seek the Lord lack no blessing and that you will teach all catechumens and candidates for baptism the wisdom of your word as they hear and embrace it, bearing fruit through perseverance, and that they may be freed from the law of sin and death becoming willing slaves of the law of life and love given in Jesus Christ, those who have sinned in the Lord's sight and disobeyed him by neither heeding his voice nor following the precepts which he has set before us, that they may open their hearts to receive the life you offer and like the disciples at Emmaus they may recognize your presence in the breaking of the bread, for as Christians we are blessed to be able to receive Jesus in the sacrament of the Eucharist; for all who do not believe in God, for those who believe wrongly or are divided by ignorance, prejudice, or differing beliefs even though Jesus calls us to all be one.

For those who have fallen away from your love in time of temptation, choked by the anxieties and riches and pleasures of life, and stopped practicing their faith, abandoned the sacraments, and wander and have left your paths as you search for the last, the least, and the lost, that they may find their way through the ever open gate back into the Good Shepherd's fold as, with your crook and your staff you shepherd them, gathering your stray and stumbling sheep into the safe pasture, the meadow you have prepared for them, feeding your flock, gathering the lambs in your arms, leading the ewes with care, and grabbing the rams by the horns and wrestling them onto right paths as you strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the injured, bring back the strayed and seek out the lost through thicket and thorn, carrying to safety the sheep caught in the brambles of their own sins, lost on the barren mountaintops where they have gone to worship other gods and in the dark valleys where they have wandered, from every place that is cloudy and dark.

For those who have been deceived by passing beauty and false promises or tempted by greener pastures which flourish today, but are dead and gone tomorrow, and those who wander from their true home to seek errant pleasures and the uncertain sands of passing fancies that leave them lonely and hungry of heart; that you will grant them the grace to profess and persevere in the true faith by acknowledging and adoring the most holy and undivided Trinity as you lead them along the path of life to salvation and peace, for those who sink their roots into the stream of your grace bear life-giving fruit in prayer and in deeds of kindness, justice, and mercy for all, as they are brought together into the glory of the kingdom where goodness and kindness follow them all the days of their lives, that they may discover the freedom of the Gospel and that you will give them the knowledge to know and receive the mercy that flows from the cross as your light shines upon us and you set us free through your life, death and resurrection.

That you will bring near those who dwell far from you and are trapped in lives of sin, those who grow weary along the daily road of life, those who lose their taste for the bread of life and the cup of salvation, those who do not follow the main path, but walk in darkness down rutted and dead-end roads, taking many detours along the way, those who are lost and those with no faith who fear the approaching shadow and bleakness of death, the only thing they can foresee in the anguish of those who do not believe in Christ and chase uselessly after length of days because they see no hope of life beyond the grave and the gifts of hope and light in a life to come, for the message of the cross is foolishness to those who do not believe and are perishing, but to those who do believe and are being saved it is the blessed and holy power of a caring, loving and forgiving God, for at the foot of the cross where your Sorrowful Mother and the others keep vigil, the repentant sinner finds comfort and forgiveness, the troubled soul finds courage, but while in your divine mercy you forgive wickedness and crime and sin and deliver us from the power of darkness, you do not declare the guilty guiltless, they must still make amends and recompense for their sins; that you will guide those who walk in the darkness of unbelief and lead them into the light of your love so that those who dwell in darkness may see a great light, the divine beacon that will guide them to its source, God himself who awaits us in his heavenly home as we seek to follow the Lord Jesus from the darkness of sin toward the light of eternal life as his angels guard us on the way and

where he has a place prepared for each of us, for happy are those who walk in the light of your face and see themselves as they are and as they are intended to be.

For all who suffer at the hands of others, the weak, the unpopular and unloved who are bullied, baited and teased, picked on or abused, tormented without and beyond reason, those who must face the decision each day whether to believe what their oppressors say about them or not, those who do like the way they are, as in their anxiety they often doubt themselves, for it is easy to grow downcast and afraid; that they not fear the malice of those who surround them and that you will shelter the weak and unloved who suffer the hatred, taunts and scorn of others as they try to gently and peacefully live out their lives and innocently stumble along in your ways, many times feeling abandoned and unloved in their distress, often unknowingly or naively doing “things” that do not endear them to others and cause problems; that you will give them endurance and encouragement as you and your holy angels watch over and protect them when the journey seems long and they grow weary.

That they not be disheartened by their treatment by others, for when they have been wronged by their “friends” they drop tears before God as their ordeal unwinds like an endless ball of twine tugging at their heartstrings, never forgetting that those who harm them unjustly are far from your law, but you, O Lord, are close; that they may be touched by your saving and redeeming hand in even the most desperate of circumstances, that they not be afraid because you are their helper, and that they may have the strength to survive and move on with their lives, trying to forgive those who trespass against them and those who treat them harshly and unjustly, those who lack status and making other people afraid makes them feel more important, that those who are bullies may become aware of their sins and repent and make amends; that those who have been bullied and abused not respond in kind, being your faithful disciples as you deliver them from evil and bring them peace, solace, justice and the warmth of your love, and that we may follow your example in encouraging one another and building one another up.

For the “Catholics,” especially our “Catholic” politicians, who only want to pick and choose what and when to believe, and the young as they look for a place other than the church for their weddings, sometimes forgetting that marriage is a holy sacrament instituted by God, those who seem more concerned about how their wedding “looks,” rather than on what it is; all who have fallen away and selfishly disobey or ignore the truth and find the Church, the Pope, our bishops, and our ministers remiss and tedious when they do not agree with their “theology of the moment” and seem perfectly happy to call themselves Catholic while in reality they are anything but; although we may be upset with them continuing to call themselves Catholic, even if in their minds they may still think of themselves as Catholic, for that is their heritage, where their roots are planted; that we may swallow our judgment and pride, hold our tongues, and not argue or be upset with those who believe as they want to believe for they have free will, which is a gift from God who makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust, on the faithful and the unfaithful, for the Lord love them all alike; we may choose life and death, good and evil, right and wrong, to follow the tenants of the Church or what we elect to believe, for whatever we choose will be given to us, the choice before us is clear, let us pray for the grace to choose wisely, faithfully, and well all the days of our life; but with free will comes consequences, we must claim responsibility for the choices that are truly ours and we are responsible for those consequences.

May we shed a tear for those who make the wrong choices, for there but by the grace of God go we, and through our prayers and example help to lead and invite them back into the flock as they are gently guided in the way of truth and light where the Lord waits to forgive and welcome them back home with open arms as he feeds the hungry of spirit with the bread of his loving forgiveness; that all things may be restored as they follow the example of Jesus by taking up the cry of repentance from John the Baptist in turning their hearts back to you as the Church renews the offer of the healing word and sacrament, and that those who have forgotten the joy of the sacraments may rediscover the wonder of life in you and we pray that they may be firm in their faith and truly be Catholic again, worshiping God in spirit and in truth, and that we may be as welcoming and forgiving as the Lord, loving them as he loves us, for he is merciful and compassionate as he wipes away their tears of repentance and cleanses, heals, and restores them, not turning his face away from those who return to him, rejoicing because he has found

his lost sheep; for the Lord said, those who turned away and were not his people, but have returned, with great tenderness he will call “his people,” and those who were not beloved he will call “beloved;” now we must celebrate and rejoice, because our bothers and sisters who were dead have come to life again, those who were lost have been found. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Our salvation began when the archangel spoke the name of Mary, we pray that we may deepen our devotion to the Mother of God and that you will help us to depend on her love, for Our Lady knows our hearts, can hear our prayers and can help us with her motherly kindness, in heaven and on earth she points the way not to her own glory but to the glory of her son, our Lord, with which she has been robed and which she seeks to reflect, it is said that if we separate you from your mother in our piety, we divide you, the Christ, for where the Mother is left out, the Son is no longer understood; that you will hear the plea of Mary, the Mediatrix of all Graces who is clothed with the beauty of your risen glory, the Mother of Compassion, as she, through her constant prayer, leads us on the way and that you will empty us of all that is self-centered as we center our lives on you as you strengthen us by the power of the Spirit to live the Gospel faith for which the martyrs surrendered their lives into your hands, for you have made the blood of the martyrs, which has watered the earth, the seed of Christians as they show us the glory of the cross.

That you will hear and grant our prayer and that Thy will may be done as we keep till death the faith which we profess, giving ear, listening humbly, and following the example of Mary, who received the Word of God in humility and love, by keeping, reflecting on, and living the words we pray when we are gathered for worship, that through your grace we may be made holy through the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus, that you will bring us into the unity for which Christ lived and prayed and was crucified; and that we may love God with our whole heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbor as ourselves as we commend our spirits to your blessed redemption, following the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary as we honor her, echoing her song of thanksgiving and praise.

You are our God and we are your people, you are our Healer and our Good, you so loved the world that you gave your only begotten Son, God-with-us, the Word made flesh, for our salvation, that whoever believes in him may have everlasting life; with trust we pray that as the Father of mercies we may honor you as Lord in our hearts and homes and that you will make us your true disciples in our daily lives, loving one another, catching us when we stumble, picking us up when we fall, especially those of us who have stumbled and fallen under the burdens of life or as a result of our own unfaithfulness and disregard for your teachings, for we are sinners, leading us in your ways, keeping our eyes always aimed toward heaven and holding us by the hand as you guide us, giving us the persistence to go on when we grow weary on the journey, granting us the courage of faith, the joy of love, the determination of hope and the willingness to hear and serve the Gospel in both word and deed, that we may see you in the face of every person we meet and that you will give us the strength to kindly bear one another’s burdens, for your merciful followers produce good out of the store of compassion in their hearts, always helping and supporting their brothers and sisters in Christ.

That, as we look to God we not be saddened by our faults, but may give thanks for the gifts of sorrow, guilt, regret and remorse and that we may accept, no matter how difficult, our hope and our fears, our good deeds and our sins, our achievements and our failures, that you will forgive us the harm we have done, for you remember our sins in detail, and teach us to weep when we have caused weeping, to mourn where we have caused mourning, and to lift up what we have brought low, for in faith and trust we turn to you for healing as we rest in the stronghold of your unfailing love and that you will grant us the courage, grace and determination to live the beatitudes in our daily lives, for our reward will be great in heaven if we but follow your teachings.

That you will hear us in our need when we become weak and tired from our struggles in this life which threaten to overwhelm us and we lean on you for support, those who live in a world apart, that when we sinners stumble and fall you will pick us up, hold us in your arms and carry us safely through the dangerous and frightening passages of life as you cool our weary souls with the living waters of your Holy Spirit and inflame our hearts with the wisdom and power of the Cross, giving us new strength so that we may walk on our own as you send forth your Spirit to renew the face of the

earth and that through the fruit of the Spirit you will grant us the grace to live as one in heart, mind and soul, loving you always.

That I may take your yoke upon me, setting myself free from the chains of my own making, the chains that I have forged a link at a time by my many sins, for this is the paradox of the Gospel and the Cross, learning from you, being kind to others, compassionate, forgiving from our heart others for all things, as God, who is slow to anger, rich in mercy and kindness, and forgiving in all ways, has forgiven me, even with all my faults, especially for the small annoyances and "things" that trouble me and that I struggle with every day and the sins I have committed, often when I have failed to follow in your ways and keep your word, that I not be so ashamed of my sins that I turn away from your mercy as you lead me back to right paths when I stray, that I may not, in my great guilt, refuse to forgive others even I have trouble forgiving myself, and that I may also have the grace to forgive myself as you have forgiven me and live in your love according to your plan of salvation, although it is often hard to know your plan for us and we may have to walk in darkness at times before you are able to draw us onto the true path; that you will keep us faithful when the dark clouds of sin obscure your guiding light and we sometimes stumble on our way as you are hidden from us and we cannot "see," and in moments of discouragement and despair we may remember the hope that lights our way through the stormy byways of life to a goal far more wonderful than we can imagine where we may dwell with God and all your angels and saints for ever as you surround us and fill us with your redeeming grace and love, for your yoke is easy and your burden light, you came not to condemn the world but to save it.

That you will grant every blessing to those with whom I do not live in peace, especially those who have hurt or harmed me, those who dislike me, those who look down on me or those who refuse to speak to me, those who falsely accuse me or unfairly judge me, that you will release me from my fear of bringing down upon myself the judgment of others, for the judgment and poor opinion of others is hard to bear; for the times I have been hurt by those I love or when I have been neglected or ignored by those whom I thought should have helped me in my distress and in times of need, and for the things that in the past have hurt or troubled my heart and soul and for the hurts I have knowingly or unknowingly caused to others, for the times I have hurt those I love and treated them unjustly and in anger; that, as we are urged, I may forgive not just seven times, but seventy times seven, even forgiving those who offend me times without number, forgiving them as you forgive me; and that I may be able to forget the hurts that have been done to me, not becoming bitter, that I may follow the example of Jeremiah praying that you will turn your wrath from them, for it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, taking no revenge and cherishing no grudge nor storing up old wrongs and grievances, that I may not return evil for evil, or insult for insult, no quid pro quo, but on the contrary may pray for their good and return a blessing, and that I may be forgiven for the hurts I have knowingly or unknowingly caused to others and my failure to love as you have loved me; that you will make me capable of the love you ask of me, so that, no matter how difficult, I may not exclude from my love those I do not like and those who have hurt me even though some people are just hard to love, we know how hard it is to love those who have offended us, but Christ calls us to love them anyway and always; that you will give peace to those who have destroyed my peace and that even my enemies may be at peace with me and I with them and with myself.

Lord, your mercy is so wide that no sin is too great or too small for your concern and forgiveness, we pray that what we cannot forgive we may accept, and that you will forgive what we cannot forgive, heal what we dare not face, grant us the humility that seeks your face when we take refuge in false pride which sets subtle snares and is the reservoir of sin, for scores are blinded by pride which is the downfall of many, that when we take refuge in false pride, the pride of spirit, you will free us to do for one another the tasks of love as you have done them for us, and that in the midst of worry and distress you will send us peace of heart and mind as we forgive ourselves, ridding us of any words and deeds of impatience, anger and resentment, and that when we are afraid to admit our sins and seek forgiveness we may have the courage and grace to weep for our sins and to turn to you in hope and trust for healing, for it is by your wounds that we are healed, that in your love, compassion and infinite mercy, you will forgive and lift from us the burden of our guilt, bestowing on us the grace to acknowledge and weep for our

sins and mistakes, no matter how severe, accepting the blame and responsibility for what we have done or failed to do, granting us absolution and gently removing the shadow from our souls and wiping the tears from our eyes as we rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us, for the humble sorrow and genuine repentance we have shown shall have its reward of mercy and pardon, and your favor rests upon each of us who are loved and special in your sight, you who are our Lord and our God.

Lord, we pray that we, who have been shortened in stature by our many sins, may follow the example of Zacchaeus in "climbing a sycamore tree" so that we may "see" and be nearer to you, that as we sinners sit and share with you we may know that you are the living God, the One who came to save us, the Lord and lover of our souls, the One who comes to be present to us, even identifying with the poor and the sinners as you assemble the outcasts; and as we walk in your shadow may we abandon our wickedness and believe in you, for you came to seek and save what was lost and you love the repentant heart as you grant us your forgiveness if we acknowledge our sins, for you are faithful and just and will forgive and cleanse us from every wrongdoing as you bless and keep us.

Lord, you are our Father in heaven, you are our light and our life, you are faithful and true, may you give me wisdom, which is a difficult virtue, for she is close to those who seek her, and the one who is in earnest finds her, and make my heart wise so that I may have compassion and see the goodness in each of my brothers and sisters in Christ which makes life easier, rather than their faults and not pass judgment on them, for as we judge, so shall we be judged, that you will teach us to love those we are tempted to judge and those we have judged because Christ commands us to do what seems impossible, to stop judging, stop condemning, to love and forgive; so if Jesus demands this, then it must be because it is possible for us; and that God in his goodness and righteousness and truth may watch over and bless them always, that I may rejoice when things go well for them and weep when things do not, realizing how helpless I am in either case, that you will grant us the hope to trust in your love and generosity rather than in what we think we need or deserve and that you will have mercy and forgive our lack of trust as you bless and care for our loved ones in this life and in heaven forever.

Our treasure is God's love and strength, we pray that he will inspire and strengthen us to walk the way of the cross that leads us to our heavenly home where we may store up riches there by the good we do and the choices we make in this life, for whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully, and where we may praise you in the company of the angels and saints for ever, for where our treasure is, there also will our hearts be, and that whatever we do, in word or in deed, we may do in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks, to God the Father through him, for whoever comes to him will never hunger, and whoever believes in him will never thirst.

That all the world may be delivered from evil and protected from all harm as we pray with compassion of heart for those who are devastated by wars, civil strife, disasters, famine, and sicknesses around the world, that you will save and protect all who are deprived of life's necessities and whose lives are threatened by poverty, hunger, disease, violence, neglect, hatred, cruelty, and abuse, that you will grant your love and care to those who live in terror or want, the poor, the sick, the grieving, the lonely, the homeless, the unemployed, and that you will draw close to them, lift them up, and bless and give your reward to those who assist them in their need providing relief to stricken peoples, for you are a refuge to the poor and needy in their distress.

Lord, may you watch over each one of us in our trials and troubles and hear and take to heart our prayers and petitions for the victims of our flood. May you preserve every person from harm, strengthen and console them in mind and spirit in this trial, and take pity on your servants as you restore to right order all that has been disrupted as you help them to take courage, not fear, recover, rebuild, and go on with life as they trust in you and stay close to you and your saving love.

You care for us in every situation, every circumstance, every moment, guarding us as the apple of your eye and giving help and protection to both man and beast as they seek out and find refuge under the shelter of your wings, and that you will give us courage when things go wrong and grant strength through faith to the hopeless, the frightened, the needy and the oppressed, and for those who face the hardships of life without the benefit of faith, that they may become aware of your presence and that through

the eternal Trinity you will awaken their minds and souls and give hope to their hearts, that all who search for you may find you, and that you will bless those whose faith carries them through so that at last we may all reach heaven and rejoice there together with you for eternity.

For those who go to bed hungry, those who have no place to lay their head, those who are trapped in homelessness, hopelessness, depression, mental and emotional illness, autism, dyslexia, and other developmental disabilities, addiction, chronic sickness, diabetes and overcome the terrifying and ongoing trials of life and those who love and care for them; for the broken-hearted and those who have been abandoned by their families, those who are alone and have no hope or refuge but you, those who are not loved by anyone, those who cannot love others, for those who have never known what it's like to love and be loved in return, for those born without the capacity to love or experience other human emotions, that they may persevere in their difficulties, that you will grant peace of heart and mind to all who are troubled and afraid as you clothe them with your love and grant them companionship in their loneliness, that you will free from distress all those who are hurting and in your goodness be close to them in their trials as you admit them into the shelter of your tent where they may dwell with you forever on your Holy Mountain, where you go by yourself to pray, and stand in your holy place in the shadow of your love where your glory abides for all ages.

Lord, I pray that the Holy Spirit will gift me with wisdom, courage, resolve, understanding, and fortitude as he guides and helps me in all things, especially when I must deal with those who are self-centered and lack respect for others, and maybe for themselves as well, those who are arrogant and haughty of heart, thinking themselves to have a god-like mind, are consumed with ego and vanity problems, those who are trying to pursue personal gain, often at the expense of others, those who conceal their hearts in falsehood and betray others' trust; that I may step cautiously, being tolerant, patient, slow to anger, forgiving, and try not to be in conflict or respond in kind.

It says in Proverbs that the Lord is stern in dealing with the arrogant, but to the humble he shows kindness and humbles the wicked to dust; we pray that those who lack humility may become aware of their problems, their mortal frailty and failings, the effect they have on others, and for their apparent disregard of human decency; that they may recognize that we all blunder every so often, or lose our way, that they may find their way and think of others as superior to themselves, looking to others' interest rather than their own as they let go of their egos and are decreased to naught so that Christ and others may increase, doing nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory for humility consists in both acknowledging our real nothingness and acknowledging God's infinite greatness; the way of humility is a good way, it seeks for truth, it wins charity, it shares the fruits of wisdom and is the knowledge of truth, the Lord said "whoever exalts himself will be humbled," the Lord gives his grace so that, if we follow his ways, we may live with true Christian humility and compassion, which are witnesses to the Holy Spirit within us, for the gifts of humility and compassion are what makes a person truly human, for if we do not mirror these gifts of Christ we cannot be his true disciples, that they may gain right judgment, which puts all of life in proper order, and that they may have peace and tranquility with themselves and those around them, for if they are not at peace with themselves, they cannot be at peace with others; and I pray that I not be like the Pharisee in the temple who prayed, "I thank you, God, that I am not like that (egotistical person there)," but that I may, through your favor, be like the tax collector who prayed, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner;" and that you will forgive us the pride that refuses forgiveness and make us meek and humble like you as you show us the joy of true humility.

That I may be forgiven for my dislike and my judgment of those who lack humility, for faith increases in those who are truly humble, and intense faith as small as a mustard seed makes miracles happen, that I may remove the blindfold from my own eyes before I worry about the splinter in my brother's eye and that I may try not to be infected by that same splinter, and that they may be directed in the practice of virtue by the Lord's example of gentleness and humility and by our own Christian example, for we must remain humble before God and be responsive to his gifts, and that we may live quietly with each other in the peace and love of Christ for the Lord guides the humble in right paths, for truly humble people are centers of peace because they fear neither their own failure nor others' success; and blessed

are those who love their enemies, do good to those who hate them, and pray for those who mistreat them, for we must do to others as we would have them do to us, "we should be of one mind, sympathetic, loving toward one another, compassionate, humble," then our reward will be great in heaven and we will be known as children of the Most High, made in his image.

Lord, I pray for the conversion of the world, for the conversion of those who do not believe in God, for God does believe in them and wills their salvation and conversion as we pray that they may put their trust in his power and might, for the conversion of those who are not Christian, for the conversion of those who are not Catholic, for the conversion of those who hate goodness and good people, and for the conversion of those who believe that God should be more like them as they judge the universe and all that is in it, rather than that they should be more like God, loving, supporting, and humbly serving their brothers and sisters, being converted to what is true, honorable, just, pure, and gracious; I pray that we may understand that it is God, not us, who knows what is best for everyone, for no slave is greater than his master, that you will have mercy on us who so easily forget that we are not gods but God's creatures and beloved children, remembering that we become like God not by our own power but by the power of God, for in the incarnation of the Word, God humbled himself to share in our humanity, and by so doing enabled us to have a share in his divinity, the mystery of the greatness of God is seen precisely in the fact that he can be small; and that we may also understand that God is with us always in the form of Christ, for in the words of the old hymn, "Christ is beside us, before us, behind us, within us, below us, and above us," so if God is with us, loves each of us very much, and is great and merciful, who can be against us?

Great and awesome God, sometimes when we pray, we forget who created the heavens and the earth, the seas and all they contain, we forget who made us, we forget who is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end, we forget who is over all, and in all, and with all, really, God, we forget who You are just like the Israelites we forget the God who has saved us, we forget that only God is God, we forget how great you are; we need to be more like the people of the Old Testament whom you knew and favored and who knew without question who You are and Who to ask for divine help as they made their offerings and prayed:

Hearken to my words, O Lord,
attend to my sighing.
Heed my call for help,
my king and my God!
To you I pray, O Lord;
at dawn you hear my voice;
at dawn I bring my pleas expectantly
before you.

Lord, before you no god was formed and after you there shall be none, you are the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, the God of our fathers, you yourself said "Be still and know that I am God, supreme among the nations, supreme on the earth!" Maybe if we are clear in our minds who is our God, the God of gods, the Lord of lords, the King of kings, the Great God, mighty and awesome, the One whose name and majesty is praised above the heavens, the God of justice and love who cares for us in every time and place, despite our tendency to stray from you in our foolishness; if we do not forget that you put your laws and commandments in our minds and wrote them upon our hearts, that you are our God and we are your people, and if we always remember to do Thy will, then you would more readily receive the gifts we offer and let our service give you glory as you in turn listen to the prayers which we, too, place expectantly before you through our faith as we seek the goodness and light known by the saints whose light, as Pope Benedict says, "comes from God enabling us to in turn know better the interior richness of God's great light."

That we may live in your light which lights the way on our journey as we walk with you in your ways, for those who are with you are called, chosen, and faithful, you are the Lord of Light who takes away the darkness and makes crooked ways straight, doing these things for us and never forsaking us as we become children of the light, never forgetting that we are not gods but God's creatures and beloved children as we reflect the light of your face shining upon us in love; that we may follow the example of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in worshiping and serving you, our true and only God, for you said, "I am the light of the world. Do not be afraid, for I came into the world as light, so that everyone who believes in me might not remain in

darkness, for whoever follows me will not walk in the dark, but will have the light of life, for your clear and pure light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth” as you forgive, protect, and deliver us from our own weakness and wandering and grant us the grace to worship you with reverence and to entrust ourselves to you in love.

That we may welcome Christ with smiling faces and hospitable hearts, following the sacred obligation from biblical times to welcome all, for if we neglect hospitality, we may even turn away one of God’s holy angels or Christ himself, for what we do for our least brothers and sisters we do for Christ, and the quality of our hospitality to others is likely to reflect the quality of our hospitality to him, whether we give him half our cloak, a cup of water, our bowl of soup and our bread, or receive him in others, in prayer, in the word, in holy communion, or in the innocence of the little ones who are the lambs of God, and the many other gifts we are given each day in which we may see a rainbow made up of Christ’s glory, light and love reflected in beautiful color and mirrored in beauty as we glimpse all that comes from his hand as we in turn reflect his brightness to others as it truly is, walk in his light, and follow his way, for blessed are those who live in Christ as he lives in them, for they shall see God in every circumstance of daily life, and like John the Baptist, we may be decreased to nothing so that Christ may increase.

Lord, you went about doing good and healing the sick, you healed Simon’s mother-in-law when she was afflicted with a severe fever, we pray that you will strengthen those who follow in your footsteps by caring for the poor souls in hospital, rehab, or other institutions, especially our priests and those who work in pastoral care, and that you will hear the prayers we offer for our sick brothers and sisters who have commended their bodies and spirits into your hands, that they may seek you out in prayer and the sacrament of healing, that you will watch over and protect those who labor under the burden of illness in every danger and that you will give strength and support and be present in the darkness that surrounds those who suffer pain, illness or disease, and those who have regressed or had other difficulties following surgery, that they may know that you are with them always, and we pray that through your loving kindness you will hear their prayers, grant aid and comfort to all who weep, and transform their tears into the waters of life, and that they may be healed, restored to good health and enriched by your blessings, just as Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, was healed after Aaron asked Moses to intercede for her and he uttered the five-word prayer: “O Lord, make her well.

That you will grant hope, help, consolation and peace to those who suffer, especially the sick and the dying as they share in the sufferings of Christ, never forgetting that every suffering offers us an opportunity, through faith and hope, to enter with Christ into the mystery of the cross for the salvation of the world, and those who with love and care faithfully watch beside them as they suffer with those who suffer, especially when they are unable to communicate with each other; that you will lay your healing hand upon those afflicted and comfort them in their distress, that they may not despair and that they may keep the faith as they rely on your promises and place their hope in you, that the terminally ill may be sustained by faith in God and by the love of others; we pray for all who are embarked on the final journey as they see their end approaching as they walk in the valley of approaching death, that you will strengthen them for and on their journey to the Father, and that you will be with those who watch alone in pain and fear and those who await you in patient faith at the door left open for them that no one can close.

For our loved ones and for ourselves, especially for the helplessness and anguish we feel when they are sick and in hospital and suffer and are dying and are afraid and cannot help themselves and we are unable to help and comfort them, but in our faith we trust in your goodness and compassion, and in the competence of the medical staff, as you and we suffer with them; we pray that as the Divine Physician of our bodies and souls you will place your wounded and healing hands upon them when they feel abandoned and alone as they are overwhelmed in their distress; that you will hear and answer our prayers and petitions for our loved ones, keeping them in your good care and peace, that you will bless and be with the nurses and doctors and all who tend them, and be with us as we hold their hands, weep and pray and keep vigil for and with them, just as Mary kept vigil at the foot of the cross; and that you will share our happiness, tears of joy, and thankfulness when they respond and do well; and our sadness, and tears of dis-

treas, when things do not go well, that you will hold them in your arms and comfort them as they walk their final walk in this life and be with them forever in heaven as they rest in your love and peace and you take away all weeping as we dry one another’s tears.

That as guardian of our souls you will abide with us and open our ears to hear, our eyes to see, our hearts to accept, our will to obey, for in faith we hear and see, and in joy we praise; to choose as you would have us choose, that we may proclaim the good news with our lives and that we may never forget that you are the way, the truth and the life and that through you we may always have faith, hope and love because that is what makes us the people of God as we walk freely in your light of Easter joy and love and follow you as we start each day anew so that those who do not know Christ may see the light of the Gospel in each of us as a credible sign of your presence and work, and that you will grant us the eyes of faith to see your presence, though sometimes deeply hidden, in each of them.

That as each new day dawns you will guard the hearts of the young and uncertain as they search for meaning in life, that they may experience true understanding, respect, patience and love; and that you will help our teenagers make the right decisions, forgive and be with those who make the wrong decisions and guide them to follow in your footsteps and not take the wrong path and that you will be with them in their trials and not let them fall away from you and that you will bring back those who have listened to the wrong advice or followed the “counsel of the wicked, lingered in the way of sinners, or have sat in the company of scorners” and fallen away.

That you will deliver from all evil and bring to life everlasting those for whom things do not go well; those who struggle with life, health, addictions, work, unemployment, finances, bad relationships, bad marriages, family problems, especially problems with children, those who have lost loved ones; that you will grant them the grace through the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit to persevere in faith to the end and succeed in their struggles with the problems that darken their path though life, and that they may pray for all of us still on the road, especially those who walk in darkness.

For all missionaries as they work to build communities of faith in many lands, planting the seeds and leading the way with joy to the mountain of the Lord and those to whom they minister, that all the world may grow to the fullness of life you offer, that you will grant the light of love to those who labor in your name as you guide, bless and comfort them in their trials as they go forth to preach the Gospel, which is life and light, to those who have not heard it, proclaiming Christ to every creature from one end of the world to the other, that you will give them eloquent tongues and faithful lives to speak the word patiently and celebrate the sacraments reverently, that through their dedication and example your people will be filled with that love which wins devoted followers for your Son, that the hearts of all peoples will be opened to hear the good news of salvation as they are offered new life in your name, struggling to reconcile the central values of the Gospel with those of their own heritage, and that you will protect those whose ministry takes them into dark and dangerous places and that you will give strength to the servants of the Gospel who have grown weary and discouraged at their lack of success as they commend their souls, and sometimes their very lives, to the mystery of the cross and abandon themselves into your hands for the sake of others, especially those servants of your mercy who have died at the hands of those they were sent to serve .

That you will bless all wives and husbands and mothers and fathers with the gifts of wisdom, love, patience, and tolerance as they love and care for one another and their families, that you will strengthen the bonds of love that bind married couples with each other and with their families, that they may be wise and devoted parents as they raise and nurture their children, that you will strengthen them in their task of bringing to harvest the goodness of those lives for which God has entrusted to their care, leading those children in right ways and teaching them by their Christian example, for if they bring up their children well for God, he will settle their future a hundred thousand times better than they can as the children are raised to true maturity according to his plan; and that they may continue to breathe new life into their relationships and grow in harmony and love.

For marriage, that all people, especially our young and our judges and politicians, may see the importance and the sacredness of this bond before God that seals a man and a woman in holy vows as they pledge their

love, fidelity, hearts and souls in this holy sacrament to each other for life, the bond that is the foundation for all families and life itself.

For troubled marriages, that you and your angels will help those struggling with their marriages to forgive and love each other, assisting them in their struggles and healing their relationships, and that they may never forsake each other in good times or in bad, in middle-age crises or in old age as love sometimes dims, for richer or for poorer, in sickness or in health, and love, honor and cherish each other all the days of their lives, for true love and marriage are forever, love bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things, and that they may praise you in the joys of their successes and turn to you in their bitter sorrows and disappointments when their arguments and animosity linger, often causing them to respond to each other in anger and frustration as they just coexist, a state that many married couples find themselves in; never forgetting that you and your angels are with them for ever, always ready to help, for as the poet Yeats said "Things fall apart; the center sometimes cannot hold"; and we pray that no matter how hard it may be for married couples who have fallen apart to be more loving and caring, that they may forgive each other from their hearts and find reconciliation and peace, loving and respecting each other, and that Mary and Joseph, the Holy Couple, may walk with them as they live out their holy vows which joined the two of them as one, and which they welcomed freely and without reservation in their hearts with joy on the day their marriage was blessed.

For those who have a failing or dead marriage and are so filled with bitterness and hatred for each other that their marriages cannot be reconciled and their relationship is bound to end in tears, that they may separate and try to live peacefully, for it is likely that the bond of marriage never existed in their relationship and that they were never truly bound to each other before God in the Sacrament of Marriage; that for their own good they may each go their own way and that they may turn loose of the animosity they hold in their hearts for each other and seek forgiveness for their actions, recover, and in the end live in God's good peace.

You alone are God and you care day-by-day for all you have made despite your utter unworthiness, you came to call sinners and there is no savior but you, and we are your creation in joy, shaped by your hand and your wisdom, you fashioned our very being, you knitted us together in our mother's womb in your image, like the clay in the hands of a potter you have molded us according to your pleasure as you blew the breath of life into the clay you had shaped, we are an expression of your creative love, your goodness, and your compassion, you made new all of us who were blind and deaf and lame of spirit, you grasped us by the hand, you fix each of us like a peg in a sure spot; I pray as a sinner and a prodigal son you have called by name to be one of your chosen people, marked with the sign of the cross and given a new birth as I was washed and reborn in the baptismal waters and sealed in confirmation by the Holy Spirit, always remembering that it was you who chose us, not we who chose you, especially those of us who are converts to the faith and those who led us to become Catholics, may God rest their souls; actually we chose each other, you as our Father and we as your children, we are the same in our minds and souls and the same blood flows through our hearts, we are blood of your blood and heart of your heart; I pray that you will grant me the freedom and peace to serve you and my neighbor as you fill me with your holy presence this morning and that I may be open to you as I continue with my prayers, that I may know that you are the Christ, the living God, that I may rejoice as the warmth of your love fills my very being and a flood of peace swirls about me, and that I not be afraid as I bear the burdens of this day or when things do not go well because I must never forget that you are with me always sharing my load as the scars on my heart remind me that there are consequences to being chosen, the consequences that come with acceptance.

Lord, you are our glory and our shield, I pray that as I stumble along the narrow path you have laid out for me that I do not stray too far from where you lead me, for if I stray too far from the narrow path all the good within me will wither and die, and I pray that when I do stray you will notice that I am missing, come looking for me, seek me out, and lead me back home; that you will guard my soul from evil as I try to avoid the wickedness and snares of Satan, our ancient enemy, as he tries to mislead and capture me, listening always and trying always to follow your divine instructions as I, in a seemingly endless struggle, push away and try to block the Devil, his evil spirits, vile thoughts, and his darkness from my heart, mind and soul, never abandoning ourselves to the "enemy;" and that in your great kindness you will answer my

pleadings with your constant help, shielding me with your armor and breast plate which surrounds and protects us from the Evil One and gently guiding and pulling me back onto the right path, yanking and dragging me when necessary, as I pick up my mat, my pack and all that I have, shouldering the load and humbly follow you.

For all retired people, that now that we are old and our hair is gray, you will bear us up and not forsake us, carrying us to safety, especially those who shoulder the heavy burdens of illness and old age such as Alzheimer's or Parkinson's: that you will grant blessed rest for those who have labored and are burdened and whose work is done as their lives wind down, the rivers flow clear, the heather is fair, and the bracken is like burnished gold; and we pray that those who enjoy the many blessings and gifts of good health and a long life lived well may live each day to its fullest for your honor and glory and for their neighbor's good, having faith and praying always, still bearing fruit when they are old, still full of sap, still flourishing like sunflowers, always turning their heads toward your light; and that we may know your presence in all that we do as your face shines upon us, and you forgive and protect us from all evil and harm.

That you will have mercy on the poor souls in purgatory and all the dead whom no one remembers in prayer, especially those who have died alone or in their sleep, those who have died far from family and loved ones, those who have died unreconciled to others or to you, those who are buried by strangers in anonymous graves or whose remains are not buried at all, those who have been cremated before all the family has a chance to say goodbye and accept the death of a loved one, those who are in perpetual mourning, those who have died before we have had an opportunity to tell them what we have always wanted to say, the regrets and unfinished tasks we have, those who have no funeral or service of any kind, sometimes through their own choice and sometimes through the choice of others, and those for whom only a graveside service or day of remembrance is held, that we may mourn for them and that they may never want for our prayers, that we may say a prayer for those who have no one to pray for them, that they may live on in your peace and we pray for those who have gone before us to prepare a place for us in the Father's house where there are many dwelling places, and that you will open the gates of heaven to all who have put their faith in you, for in God's heart, opened to all peoples on the cross, there is a place for everyone who seeks him as they go rejoicing to the house of the Lord where righteousness shines like the sun in the Kingdom of our Father for ever.

For those among us who will be the next to die; that when we are faced by our own mortality we may stand ready, stay awake and be prepared to face our passing with hope and peace, going up with joy to the house of the Lord, as you release us from our fear of suffering and death; you have told us to remain steadfast and true until we die, we must be on our guard standing firm in our faith, being courageous and strong, that you will keep our eyes fixed on the triumph of love over death through the mystery of the cross and that you will grant us the strength to accept our cup of suffering so that we may share the cup of your joy as you give yourself as food for the journey, the viaticum, to all who face the passage from death to live; it does no good for us to ask that you delay the return of the Son of Man until we have time to "pack our bags" because he is coming at a time we do not expect, we know neither the day nor the hour, he will come like a thief at night, and no one can buy their own ransom or pay the price to God for their life. The ransom of their soul is beyond them. They cannot buy life without end, nor avoid going to the grave; but as the Sufi poet, Rumi, said: "It may look like the end. It may seem like a sunset, but in reality it is a dawn. For when the grave locks you in is when your soul is freed."

You have gone before us into the valley of death and return to lead us home, as with your crook and the staff of your cross you ward off the wolves of death as you gather us into your heart, sheltering us from the darkness of the shadow of evil and death and giving us comfort as we are born into eternal life and come to dwell with you for ever, for on that day we will breathe our last breath and our heart will beat it's last beat, our bodies return to the clay from which we were formed, our plans will come to naught and our "riches" will pass to others; and we pray that we may always live our lives in such a way that we do not dread the Lord's coming, but look forward to it in joy as he strengthens us in hope for his coming, and the fulfillment of his promises, he who is spirit and life; and when the time of our departure is at hand, we pray that we have competed well for the faith, that we have fi-

nished the race and kept the faith and followed your teachings, that you will shape our lives into an offering fit to bring before you at the hour of our death, and that you, who are our just judge, will say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant," and award the crown of righteousness, love and compassion to us and all who have longed for your coming, you reward our small service to you with unimaginable blessings, that with joy we may fulfill our goal, the salvation of our souls, for our reward is with you, our recompense is with our God.

That you will raise from death to new life all who have been buried with you in baptism and anointed in your name as you receive their souls as they are led rejoicing into the presence of their shepherd, for you have gone before them into the valley of death and returned to lead them home, that you will wipe away every tear from their eyes, for precious to the Lord is the death of his faithful, that you will bless and comfort those who grieve and despair with broken hearts as they weep for loved ones just as you wept over the death of Lazarus, your friend; but life has to go on, life will go on, sorrow's heartbeat must be stilled, overcome by hope; we pray that they may be consoled with the joy of the resurrection, for you have promised to restore life to all who desire to rise again, that your splendor may shine for ever upon those who have died, and that the dead may be held within and live on in our hearts forever, never to be forgotten as you grant them the joy of your kingdom.

For the young children who have had a parent die young and who will grow up without ever knowing that parent or with just faint memories, for the grandchildren who will never know or remember their grandparents, and for those who through your grace have blessed memories, some real and some garnered or shared by others, of their parents and grandparents and other loved ones.

For all the widows and widowers of the world, that all who have lost their spouses may bring their spirit and person to mind faithfully and often in prayer and good thoughts, that you will be close to them and console those who mourn the loss of loved ones in their trials and be their refuge and comfort in time of grief, sorrow and loneliness, that deep and inconsolable ache deep within, as you fill the hole in their hearts with your love, wiping away the tears of all who weep, calming their hearts and minds, being their companion and walking-the-walk with them, and as one writer said, "the terrible moments become less so as the present dissolves the past into memory," for often it is hard to wrap the mind around the fact that the loved one is really, truly gone: that they may remember their blessed spouses on Valentine's Day and on the day they proposed marriage, on their birthday, on their wedding and anniversary day, on the day of their death, and on other "special" days.

That they may never forget them as they "fought-the-battle" and died, that they may rejoice that their spouses have no more pain and suffering and are with the Lord forever, never forgetting the old song they have sung "that when they grow too old to dream they will have them to remember, for their love will live in their hearts;" and that they may always reflect upon the memories of all the good times that brought them together in sacred vows and that led them through their lives together, that these memories never fade, being forever branded on their heart and mind; that God and his angels may bless them every day as they live out their lives in his good grace and peace, never forgetting each other, removing the ashes and sackcloth of mourning, washing away the tears of sorrow that stain their face, and clothing them with the joy of the resurrection, for in time all things pass and that the departed spouses may pray and intercede and ask for the good of those left behind and are still on the road toward the kingdom to come as the faithful departed rest peacefully in the communion of the saints for eternity in the bosom of the Lord.

For those who do not mourn the loss of their brothers and sisters, their family members, much in the same manner that they did not love them or show concern for them in life, for all the elderly abandoned by their families. Those who have no feelings or love for the ones they should love, whether through their own callousness, insensitivity, or because of some other reason; that those who have died may be mourned by all the angels and saints, for even if their families forsake them you and your minions will never forsake them, you will hold them forever in your heart; that those who do not mourn or love may be joined together in their remembered grief, repent and seek your forgiveness and the forgiveness of those they have offended and

forgotten, and that they may pray for those who have passed on and their family members still in this life.

For those who have accidentally caused the death of another, especially the parents who have caused the death of one of their own children in an accident or feel they may have caused that death, that they may be forgiven and that this horrible load may be lifted from their mind and soul as they move on with their lives and that they may live in your peace, and may we pray for the parents whose children have died of SID or as the result of some terrible accident or illness.

For those who have deliberately or accidentally killed or tried to kill another human being as a result of anger or for other ungodly reasons, that they may recognize just what they have done and have sorrow and regret for their sin, for the Lord said, "you shall not kill, and whoever kills will be liable to judgment;" that they may seek out forgiveness for their crime against humanity, forgiveness from God, from society, from the family of the victim or victims, from their own family; that you will hear the prayers of sinners and the victims of sin, and deliver them by the power of your cross, that the victims may rest in peace and that God may place his comforting hand upon the grieving hearts of those who live on; and may we mourn for the victims of murder/suicide and so-called "mercy killings," and we pray that you will grant the fullness of life in heaven to those who have died a violent death.

For all the mothers who have died bringing a child into the world, that the Lord will look kindly upon their sacrifice and that they may have a special place of comfort and peace in heaven, and that their child may live a long, happy life, always loving and never forgetting the mother that gave them life and love.

That God's holy blessing may rest upon our homes and all who live within the warmth and protection of their walls, that they may be safe both night and day, that the four corners may be filled with peacefulness, happiness and good health, and that the holy light of your divine presence will shine forth brightly on all who dwell within as you come and stay in this home, keeping their hearts pure and free from sin, and that the doors of our homes may be gateways to your deep and abiding love.

For our country and all who hold or seek public office, that the Holy Spirit will strengthen and lead them to honor their oath of office with all their heart mind, and soul, so help them God, and with integrity to honestly and blamelessly work for freedom, justice and peace for all, doing what is right, just and truly honorable in the eyes of God, seeking the welfare of all people, loving with truth what is good and hating what is evil, respecting and honoring the free decisions of citizens as they try to follow God's will as well, and that they may always uphold the right-to-life and marriage between a man and a woman; and we pray for all the "good politicians" and, with a tear, for corrupt or "bad politicians", especially those who have no regrets for their actions and the problems they have caused; that we may overcome our dislike for the "bad politicians" as we pray in a special way for those who have repented, sought forgiveness and redemption, and walk the straight line.

That we may all get along, bearing with one another with all humility, gentleness, and patience, and that the Lord of Peace may give to us, our country and our troubled world the peace proclaimed by the angels to the shepherds at Christmas; that grace and peace may descend upon us and be with us and that God may bless America as he sanctifies us and that he will keep us always thankful for the gift of freedom and justice for all, that he will keep us from every harm, keep us warm in the winter, cool in summer, and safe from all storms, earthquakes, droughts, floods and other terrible events as we protect one another and share our strength.

That we may have faith in God and ourselves, always trust in him, pray for each other, go to church, stand when the National Anthem is played and salute the flag with our hands over our hearts and our hats removed, give regularly to our church and our favorite charity, honor our mothers and our fathers, love and bless our spouses, children, and grandchildren, our brothers and sisters, and all our relatives, help the needy, stop at stop signs and railroad crossings and look both ways, buy Girl Scout cookies, celebrate the risen Lord as we share the Easter joy and a few Easter eggs and jelly beans, hand out May baskets and crown the Queen on May Day, have blessed memories of those who have passed on as we put a wreath and flowers on "the" graves on Memorial Day, watch the fire works and sing patriotic songs on the Fourth of July, honor all who served God and country on Veterans'

Day, especially those who gave their all, give thanks to God as we count our many blessings on Thanksgiving and feast on your bounty, sing carols to each other on Christmas Eve as we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child, decorate our Christmas tree, hang our wreaths, and exchange gifts, treat our neighbors as we would have them treat us as we follow the "Golden Rule" and keep your commandments, do a good deed every day, and eat hot dogs, potato salad, corn-on-the-cob, apple pie, watermelon, and roast marshmallows every opportunity we get; for this is the American Way and with and under God this is what it is all about.

Lord, we thank you for the gifts of earth, sea, and sky, and all that fills them, from the very beginning you created all things to proclaim your glory, by your will they came to be and were made, giving us the seas and rivers with an abundance of living creatures, dry land with sheep, cattle, and fowl, some of your creation could walk and some fly, some could swim and some crawl, but each form was perfect, each spirit complete, and you created Brother Sun with his light and warmth to shine upon your creation every day, you are the maker of the day and the night, the stars you have arranged in the dome of the night and Sister Moon who showers us with her reflected silver and blue light as she marks the months, and the rain and dew and your river in heaven which brims over to bring forth all kinds of fruits, grains and vegetables for our food, bearing crops and trees with their shade and fruit, your threshing lasts till vintage time, and your vintage till the time for sowing, for the earth is full of your riches so that we may dwell securely in your land, the hills are girded with joy, the meadows covered with flocks, the valleys are decked with wheat, for as the old hymn says:

All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all.

Your planted the seed of the tree of life deep in this earth and you have ordered time so that day and night and the seasons all serve the purpose of life and growth.

We ask you to bless and watch over our fishermen as they cast, spread and haul their nets, and our farmers and ranchers as they plant, till, herd, husband, and harvest, and as a result of their sweat and toil give us fish and meat to gladden our tables, wine and bread to strengthen our hearts and souls, and all kinds of green things, fruits, nuts and spices to delight us, oil for anointing, balm, light, and cooking; and we pray that you will bless those of us who through your bounty thankfully receive your gifts of the fruits of the earth and sea which we seal in thanksgiving with the sign of your cross before we eat and drink our fill, and that those who hunger and have no food may be fed by those who have food, not just by those who have more than they need; and we pray that those who harvest not reap the field to its very edge, that they may leave a few ears of corn for the poor, that the beasts of the field may eat what the poor leave, and that the hungry may receive a few fish from the nets of the fishermen and the gulls the scraps, for blessed are they who feed the hungry and God's holy creatures, their reward will be great in heaven.

That you will always be close to and reward all who through service and duty devote themselves to the protection of their neighbors and fellow citizens and put their own lives in danger for the sake of others, especially for our military personnel, firefighters, police officers, those who do search and rescue work, and all who are engaged in hazardous occupations, bringing services and goods for our use.

For all our troops, especially those who must face battle and share life and death, the death of their brothers-in-arms or the possibility of their own death, the death of their enemies, and for all those who have perished as innocent victims of war, those who have lost their lives as non-combatants; for in war sacrifices are made, soldiers fall in order for battles to be won, and unfortunately sometimes innocent victims fall as well, for in war both sides bleed; and even while the soldiers stand in the company of their comrades as a band of brothers with whom they share a family bond, a bond between men of good will, their esprit de corps, they often feel they stand alone with their thoughts, their prayers and their fears, but you and your angels are with them, always with them, they never stand alone; that you will receive into your rest those who have died so distant from their loved ones and those who will die and for all who mourn and shed tears for them, that all who have died in our country's service may exchange their suffering and death for eternal life dwelling with you for ever, and we pray especially for those who

gave their lives, and all that they treasured and held dear, sacrificing themselves so that others might live, for there is nothing greater one may do than to give up one's life for another.

That you will protect our military and watch over and grant peace of heart and mind to their loved ones and bless their families for all the sacrifices they make, which are sometimes greater than those of the service member, and, often alone and under financial and mental stress, all they endure, that the families may stay together and their marriages survive the stresses of the deployments, the reintegration of families after deployments, and day-to-day service; and for all the wounded, especially those in hospital or in rehab and those who suffer from "battle fatigue" and post-traumatic experiences; finally in closing this prayer I pray for those who sacrificed so much for our freedom and safety, for peace was their profession and their goal, and as Aristotle said, "We make war that we may live in peace;" that you in the words of the old WWII song may, "Bless them all, bless them all, the long and the short and the tall", for all gave some, some gave all; and as another old song said: "Where have all the soldiers gone? To the graveyard, every one, when will we ever learn? When will we ever learn? Where have all the graveyards gone? To flowers every one;" never forgetting that brave men are honored for their valor.

Lord, I pray for peace among warring nations and peoples, you are the God of all peoples and nations and as you guide our feet into the way of peace we pray that all the politicians, generals, rulers and religious leaders of the world may have the will to bring an end to wars, insurrections, jihads, and disagreements between and within countries and peoples that continue to bloody our world, that you will give them your judgment and that they may try to heal all that divides us and build a better world, tearing down the walls we have built between us; that world leaders may be pure of heart, for if they are "civilized" people, doing what is right and just and seeking the good of all, enlightened by God and having a moral compass, they should harbor no warlike tendencies as they work to understand the extremes they often try so hard to ignore: life and death, love and hate, joy and sorrow, good and evil, truth and falsehood.

That all, great and small, who belong to the flock you lead, may become instruments of your peace as they pursue the ways of freedom, justice, and peace for the sake of mankind and try to live in accord with one another, that they may beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, not raising their swords against one another nor training for war again, never forgetting that peace is God's achievement and an everlasting covenant of peace is ultimately God's desire; and that the peace and love of God may reign in our hearts and in the world for ever, that you will grant us the wisdom and courage to turn to you in prayerful confidence when the forces of sin and destruction threaten our peace and the peace of those around us, for blessed are the peacemakers, they shall be called children of God.

For the safety and release of those kidnapped or held prisoner around the world, their profound terror and suffering, those who suffer from the "Stockholm Syndrome," and for the souls of those executed and for their families, especially in Afghanistan and other troubled areas.

That you will bless, watch over, and assist our military chaplains, their auxiliaries, and all who assist them throughout the world, those now serving and those who have served so honorably and faithfully in the past.

For our military retirees who proudly served for so many years with honor, loyalty, and commitment, those honored and rewarded and those who just quietly and honorably served, the visible and the invisible, their families who with dedication and many sacrifices served their time as well, and for all who have served God and country, no matter how short the time, for those who wished they could have served, and those who have supported the military in special ways.

For our priests who are anointed and consecrated as priests forever in the ancient line of Melchizedek, priests of the new and eternal covenant, that they may be clothed with holiness and be faithful to their ministry of humbly loving, serving and tending the flocks given them to shepherd and entrusted to their care, always respecting, obeying and honoring those in authority in the Church, never forgetting or putting aside their obligations to their parish and their parishioners, at all times attending to the concerns of Christ, the Good Shepherd, and may always be true witnesses of the caring and merciful love of God.

That you will deepen in all pastors a self-sacrificing love for their flock, that you will bless, and grant wisdom and compassion to them as they administer your sacraments and minister to their parishioners, studying, preaching, and teaching your word, that you will give them the humble courage of Saint Peter and that they may not grow disheartened with their own failings, that they may be consoled and forgiven for their human weaknesses and that you will bring them comfort, joy, peace and strength.

For our retired bishops and priests, especially those who are infirm or ill, that you will watch over, bless, and give them rest now that their work is done, and for those who in their retirement, for the love of God and out of the goodness of their hearts, still work and assist their brother priests and the people of God.

That through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the everlasting love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit you will have mercy upon, forgive and assist those who through their own grievous actions have dishonored, debased or corrupted the ordained ministries of the Church, and broken the bonds of love and trust with their parishioners, their peers and those in authority appointed over them, that they may accept the blame, be culpable, and make amends for their actions and we pray that you will help them to be healed and reconciled with the Church, the people of God, their bishops, and themselves as they move on with their lives; and that you will be with those who cannot or do not show regret, who express no remorse for their actions, and who take no responsibility or blame for what they have done, as we weep in sorrow and distress with you and pray for the, the Church, and the victims of their actions; you said "Woe to the shepherds who mislead and scatter the flock of my pasture, I will take care to punish their evil deeds."

That through the Most Holy Trinity, which draws us to share in your life and love, you will be the reconciliation and guide for all the Church's ministers who are troubled or are in rehab, or have fallen away from or struggle with their ministries, those who reject the apostolic teaching and the Magisterium of the Church, those who can not resist the temptations and distractions of life and the world, those who are weak or are just incapable of handling the day-to-day workings and stresses of their ministries, or those who through no fault of their own are not responsible for their actions and need help, which we pray they will receive, and those who have questions or regrets about their vocations, their vows, or who they serve or where they are assigned, and those who have just given up and walked away.

That you will renew in love and service all those who are ordained to the diaconate, the priesthood, and the episcopacy and fill them with passion and spirit in proclaiming your word and loving and honoring you, the Church, and the people of God all the days of their lives.

For our seminarians, that you will grant the wisdom of the cross to all who wish to serve you, that they may study well and become wise, mature and faithful priests offering the gifts of word and sacrament, loving and humbly serving their bishop and those to whom God has called them to minister, feeding them with your word, guiding them in your ways, and at the end, bringing them safely to the Kingdom of God.

For vocations, that you will bless and guide the work of all vocation directors and send many laborers into the harvest, new fishers for souls, many to take up the cross for the salvation of the world, new messengers to proclaim your word and celebrate your sacraments, that when the Lord asks, "Whom shall I send? "Who will go for us?" those to whom the Lord speaks will hear his gentle voice and acknowledge his call by saying, "Here I am, Lord, send me!" as they follow where he leads; and we pray for a change of heart and mind of those who are timid, or for other reasons, are afraid or reluctant to accept the task of being set apart to bear witness to Christ by serving the Church and God's holy people and having the mantle of the priesthood cast upon them.

For all the sisters and brothers belonging to various religious orders, that they may remain faithful to their vows, the vision of their founders, and the rules of their orders, that they not be envious of the priests who have chosen the better part as handed down by God and as established by the Church, that they may return to the roots of their orders founded on the principles of humbly and prayerfully serving God and his holy people as they live in joyful fidelity, dedication and commitment to their heritage, that they may be renewed, reestablished and blessed by Christ, who is the servant of all, and that they may again become "servants-for-the-Lord," the factotum Do-

mine, as dedicated sisters and brothers of the Gospel, following the example and in the footsteps of such as Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, blessed Mary Jo Copeland of Minneapolis, and St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare in caring for the destitute, the sick, the elderly, teaching the little ones and bringing them and their families to the kingdom of God, that they may bear witness to the joy of living, praying, and working with those in need for the sake of the Gospel, and that they may have many new vocations to their rededicated calling as God smiles upon them.

That families who have broken the family circle and the bonds of relationship which tied them with one another may be reunited and reconciled in Christ and begin family life anew, that the love, tenderness and example of the Holy Family will rekindle love and caring in all families and make them truly happy; and that we may always honor the parents to whom we were born, for we have a great debt to them for the life, and much more, they gave us and for which we should be eternally grateful, for what can we give them for all that they gave us? And that we may have a measure of solace for and blessed memories of those who have passed on, gone from our lives, but not forgotten, never forgotten, for if we revere our fathers we will live a long life, and if we obey the Lord we will bring comfort to our mothers; that we may always pray for our mothers and fathers on the days of their birth and remember them on the days of their death.

That parents may love and honor their children for whom God has given them tremendous responsibility as well, giving them the needed love, support and belief; and that we may not lose touch or be separated from our brothers and sisters and the other family members whom God has blessed us with and that they may, in turn, return our love and care to us, that the siblings and in-laws who have fallen away may find their way back and that we may rejoice together in your love; and that we may remember in prayer and good thoughts this morning our kinsmen, especially our brothers and sisters and their families who have gone before us, and pray for the repose of their souls, and may we pray for those who are sick or in danger of death.

For all grandparents, that you will make them strong, loving, and wise as they love and pray for their grandchildren, that their grandchildren may live long and prosper, and see their children's children.

For all the young who have a mother and a father who care about them and love them freely, completely, and without reservation; those who know right from wrong because their parents teach them which is which, and because their parents live by example; that you will help and guide with your gentle hand children and their parents as they grow in age, wisdom, and grace, for the proud parents whose children have done well and for the parents who have both children who have done well and those who have not done well, that they may try to love them equally, but give that extra love and help, and maybe a gentle push, where and when needed, even a little harder shove if necessary; for the parents who sit at the sickbed of their children, many, in their concern and compassion, and often frantic with worry, wishing they were the ones sick, for the parents who risk or give their own lives to protect their families as Jesus did for us, and for those who have stood in sorrow and wept at their child's graveside just as Mary, in her sorrow, wept at the tomb of her child, that God will bless them and that his holy angels may comfort and protect them in their distress.

For the parents of children who have gone astray, especially the incorrigible, for the parents who suffer anxiety because of their children's decisions and life choices, that they may have understanding and compassion and that these parents never give up, for each of us has a spark of decency buried somewhere deep within us that needs to be fanned with love, hope and determination and nurtured till it flames to life again, and that you will comfort them in their distress and lead their wayward children back onto right paths; and that all parents, as best they can, may maintain an intact, stable, supportive and loving home, and that they may always love, forgive, and welcome their wayward children back into their forever family because we must love and accept each other, with tolerance and patience, as we are, not as we wish we were, although as St. Monica proved there is always hope in the human heart for transformation, and it never hurts to wish and pray for your children as she poured forth many tears and prayers to God because sometimes that spark deep within their soul springs to life deep within the soul revealing the pure heart as is attested by St. Augustine, her son.

For those who are indifferent or callous parents, some who do not even know they are fathers, for mothers who do not know who the fathers of

their children are, and mothers and fathers who have abandoned their children and offer no love or support for them, those who have become so involved in their own problems, their own lives and loves and jobs, especially those who are divorced, separated, or struggling with their marriages, that they ignore and forget their children who may try to seek them out, those who never had the love for their children they should have had, those who lacked the capacity to love those they should have cherished, those whose love is misplaced, loving others and not their own children, and those who for some reason just do not care, for children are to be loved and cared for, to be provided for and to be taught; that God may ultimately broach their hardened hearts and that through his grace they may see the light and come to love and support their abandoned children, even if it is in their old age as their lives wind down and they finally realize the wrongs they have done and as they seek God's and their children's forgiveness for the way they have lived their lives and treated them, for those for whom seeking forgiveness is beyond their capacity, and that you will help all parents to remain faithful to the life to which you have called them.

Lord, I pray that you will watch over and bless all the single parents of the world, those who have done a great job and those who struggle to hold their families together and give them shelter and food, that they may share and care, listen and understand, and succeed in making a loving Christian home for their families; and we pray in a special way for those who are awful parents, that they may improve and that "things" may get better for them and for their families.

As we entrust ourselves in faith to the protective care of the Savior's all-powerful but wounded hands, the piercings that are the wounds of our sinful humanity, we pray that you will keep in your care all children who have no one to love and trust, for the runaways and those who, rightly or wrongly, feel rejected, abandoned, or unloved, for those who can only remember the bad times and seem to dwell on them, that they may blot out their troubled times while bringing to mind the good times as they mature and move on with their lives and for those who never mature, that life may turn out well for them and that they may know that God, who is Father of all, always loves them, will not leave or forsake them, for even if their mothers and fathers and all others forsake them, God will not, he will never forsake the work of his hands; that he will keep in his care all abandoned, orphaned and abused children, and that he will hold them by the hand as he leads them through life if they but reach out to him.

For all who are weighed down and entrapped by harmful habits and addictions, for the many who do not know they have a problem or deny or ignore their problem, and those who are enablers, that they may be freed from whatever enslaves them, experience true hope, and be given a new beginning as they surrender themselves to you and recognize that they have fallen as they acknowledge their harmful habits and addictions and work to overcome them, that you will strengthen the hands that are feeble and make firm the knees that are weak as they search out the road to recovery, for while most do not choose addiction, all must make a conscious decision to seek recovery, and that through your mercy you will show them the path they should choose and guide their steps firmly on their way, and we pray in thanksgiving that those who are on the right path may continue to walk in your way, trying to avoid what would cause problems, carefully placing their feet so that they do not misstep or slip and fall back, and that if in their weakness or for other reasons they do slip, you will pick them up and set them on the right path again, and again, and again, God never wearies of calling us back from our willfulness and wandering, our stubbornness and stupidity; and for those who try, but cannot seem to get all the way on the right path, that you will give them the strength and reinforce their efforts to face hardships and challenges with confidence and success one day at a time.

That our Lady, Mother of Mercy, will watch over and help all who struggle with immigration problems, that in your goodness you will show them your mercy as you take those who are refugees seeking a better life for themselves and their families by the hand and guide them to a place they can call home; and we pray for the politicians who work within the government to create and maintain just laws, and those who must enforce the laws.

Lord, you love justice and right, I pray that as you fill the earth with your love, justice and right may be our aim as well and that you will deliver Native Americans, Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, other minorities, and all of us from poverty, violence and from ourselves and watch over and bless us and

that we not let racial prejudice or prejudice of any kind affect our view of others and that you will open our eyes to the equality of all peoples, and that we may never forget that we are all part of the same race and family: your human race, the race that seeks the face of God, and your holy family, for all of us are brothers and sisters in and of Christ who are knit together as one and we pray that we may love and honor each other as members of the same family.

Lord, you give us the gifts of knowledge and wisdom, which brightens our eyes, a strong faith, and clear sight so that we may walk in your footsteps, but there are times when so much happens in the world that we sometimes wonder where you are and our sight is so clouded we can not see where to walk; we wonder all the "whys," why so many bad things happen to "good" people, why this and why that, and we also can not understand why so many good things happen to "bad" people and why people we judge to be sinners often have good fortune, life just does not seem fair; and when these things happen does it mean that we have failed God or that God has failed us, and is there any difference between the two possibilities? Where is God? Is God really there? Is he really in our midst or not? Has he cast us out of his presence? Has he forgotten us? Is he really interested in us? Can he really hear our prayers? Has he abandoned us in time of trouble, in the midst of storms, disasters and dangers? Does he really act and keep his promises in the modern world as he did in biblical times? All Christian believers are sometimes uncertain and maybe it just appears or we think that God has failed us because what has really happened is that we, in our doubt, weakness and sinfulness, have failed God and do not recognize that he is ever present for us or we in our confusion are lost and do not understand what is happening, for Christ does dwell in love, hope and trust within us, even when we do not feel his presence he is there nonetheless, and in the righteousness of God he will bring us to life everlasting..

We know that you are our faithful God and you will not let us be tried beyond our strength, but sometimes our judgment of our strength is not the same as yours, but with every trial God will also provide a way out so that we may be able to bear it and our love and trust in you is deepened by the experience of our suffering; we pray that you will give us the strength and faith we need to deal with the doubt and confusion that creeps into our hearts when we feel threatened by evil, and that we may trust in you and rejoice as you anoint us with your grace and an unyielding, true faith as we serve you who are our strength and salvation.

Lord, so often when we reflect upon the past, the human mind seems to dwell on the trials, tribulations, and misfortunes that have happened in the past or what we have done or what we have failed to do or what could have been, we are overwhelmed by our memories, often the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, some in the far past and some in the near and recent past, until ultimately we finally realize that no matter how much we would like to, we cannot go back and correct, change or relive what is done and past, for we can not turn the clock back and go home again, for time passes and is gone and we cannot get it back, it is dust, but we must never dismiss our past as unimportant, for the past, the present, and the future are all meaningful; the past is what has formed us into the person we are today, good and bad, and the present and the future will continue to form and reform us, and hopefully take off some of the rough edges and fill in some of the pot holes, ruts, wrinkles and ridges, and that we may, guided by your goodness, learn from our mistakes and try not to repeat them as we travel on our daily journey on the road through life in thanksgiving for the time that has been and in anticipation for the time that is to come as we put our hope in the Lord's promise of the joy that awaits those who follow the road faithfully to the end, living in his ways.

Let us pray that we may reflect upon the good that we have done in our lives and the good that has been done to and for us, all that, through the mercy of God, we have, and on the people, things, and events that in the past have brought us happiness, warmed our hearts and souls, given us enjoyment, and blessed memories, especially the happy, peaceful times when life was simpler, one plus one always equaled two, and people always seemed to do what was right and just.

We pray that we may accept your merciful forgiveness and love, acknowledge our wrongdoings, forgive others as we accept the wrongs that have been done to us, and move on with our lives; that you will watch over each of us in our struggles and troubles, helping us always to trust in you, stay close to you, and reflect upon your goodness and the goodness of

those we meet each day as you teach us to follow the path of life that guides us through the narrow gate, cut into the shape of a cross by your sufferings, that leads to the heavenly city, the kingdom of God, where we may live with you and the angels and saints for ever, and that you will give us the courage to follow you through it today, suffering with you in pain and anguish as we, with all the obstacles that block our way, never give up hope and always believe in you so that even with all our sins, we, and the cross we carry, will not be too large to fit through the narrow gate..

That I may be forgiven as I am for all my failures, flaws, hidden faults and the many misjudgments and mistakes I have made and continue to make in my life, especially the ones over which I seem to have no control; that you will deliver me from sin and selfishness and that I may be kind and considerate, putting aside prejudice of all kinds, intolerance, ingratitude, anger, jealousy, envy, disrespect, and inattention and unconcern for others, trying to always be aware of and work to overcome my faults, my imperfections, and my naiveté; and that we sinners who have passed through the waters of baptism and been strengthened in the spirit by confirmation for the life and work of your kingdom may deny our very selves, have the courage to freely take up our crosses daily, which we do not carry alone, and follow you by walking humbly in your ways and serving you in love all the days of our lives and giving you honor and glory in everything we think and say and do; but the Lord cautions us, if we do not take up our crosses and follow him, we cannot be his disciples.

Lord, we are reminded in the words of St. Peter in his second letter that if we make every effort to supplement our faith with virtue, virtue with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with devotion, devotion with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love, and if we accomplish all these things they will keep us from being unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ which is a goal we should be working toward all the time; and as we journey toward the goal for which we hope in faith, we may encourage one another along the way in preparation for the life to come by reflecting upon whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovable, whatever is gracious, and whatever is worthy of praise.

That in the words of the Jewish scribe Jesus ben Sirach I may give you thanks, O God of my father, I praise you, O God my savior! I will make known your name, refuge of my life; you have been my helper against my adversaries. You have saved me from death, and kept back my body from the pit, from the clutches of the nether world you have snatched my feet; you have delivered me, in your great mercy. And it says further in the book of the prophet Isaiah: "I will lead the blind on their journey; by paths unknown I will guide them. I will turn darkness into light before them, and make crooked ways straight. These things I do for them, and I will not forsake them." At this morning hour, O Lord, I commend my spirit into your hands and ask that you will guide us through this day according to your will, for those who do your will shall enter the kingdom of heaven and it is you who will redeem us, Lord, in that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from your love, and in your love is all our hope for the life to come..

Lord, if you rescue us from all our faults, should we not extend the same help to our neighbor? And who is our neighbor? When a breach exists between us we both must work together to resolve the problem, for we can not do it alone, and one of us must be the first to start and we know that bridge building is costly, as the cross demonstrates; we pray that we may transform our thoughts into deeds, for what we pray for, we must also work for, as we labor with our neighbors to become bridge builders for the Lord, helping to repair the bridge that separates us so that we, and our brothers and sisters stranded on either bank, may rid ourselves of resentments, grudges, and retaliation, and in doing so be rescued and able to cross the dark waters of anger, doubt and sin and that our lives may be a light to each other as you free us from the shadows of our faults and we walk arm-in-arm as together we seek your help and guidance; for a bridge goes both ways and is open to all as you teach us to forgive one another, healing the breach that divides us, that you will give us the time, patience, acceptance and faith to understand and work with our neighbor, no matter how difficult this may be; that our prayer of contrition may be sincere, our humility real, and our hearts filled with love as you lead us safely over troubled waters to your

heavenly kingdom where we and our neighbor may live together with you in glory for ever and ever, for the bridge we are building is really a bridge to heaven, and how good and how pleasant it is when we live in unity and are near to you and are forgiven by you, our neighbor, and ourselves, for in this peace is our true contentment and happiness.

Lord, when we find ourselves in a sinking boat, we can not wait to find out whose fault it is, we must start bailing because it is a matter of survival; life is much like that; many times we can not wait to fix the blame when "things" go wrong and we are sinking, but both we, and our brothers and sisters, finding ourselves in the same boat, must work in immediate concert to save ourselves and each other; then when things have calmed down and more rational heads prevail, we can work in God's peace, love and goodness to solve the problems that exist between us, fixing our "leaky boats" and becoming once again your true disciples.

For all for whom this day is special, those celebrating their birthday, their anniversary, or some other special event; that God may bless them in their joy and happiness, for you have redeemed them through the gift of your Son's incarnation, death, and resurrection, that his light may shine upon them, and that they may live for ever in the snug harbor of his unfailing love, for we are all in this world together and have to take care of and pray for each other; and we pray in a special way that you will stand by those who are facing all kinds of problems and difficult decisions today, helping them in their distress.

God be in my head and in my understanding; God be in my eyes and in my looking; God be in my mouth and in my speaking; God be in my heart and in my thinking; God be at my end and in my departing. (Sarum Primer Prayer – Old "Book of Hours" from the year 1514)

GOD GRANT ME SERENITY to accept the things I cannot change, COURAGE to change the things I can, and WISDOM to know the difference. (St. Francis of Assisi)

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, and where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, and it is in pardoning that we are pardoned and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. (Prayer of St. Francis)

Father, I abandon myself into your hands; do with me what you will. Whatever you may do I thank you; I am ready for all. Let only your will be done in me, and in all your creatures, I wish no more than this, O Lord. Into your hands I commend my soul; I offer it to you with all the love of my heart, for I love you Lord, and so need to give myself, to surrender myself into your hands, without reserve, and with boundless confidence. For you are my Father. (Prayer by Blessed Charles de Foucauld, martyred December 1, 1916 in North Africa)

Oh, my Guardian Angel, to whom God's love has committed my care, keep me free from danger in this life, bless and keep me in peace, and bring me to the joy of eternal life, where Jesus is Lord for ever and ever. Amen.

Lord, as my prayers wind down this morning may I not forget to pray in the words of the old song for "Old dogs and children and watermelon wine;" while it is natural to pray for children and maybe for some even to pray for watermelon wine, may we pray especially for those of us who are "old dogs" and with the aches and pains of old age become ill tempered and cantankerous, bark a little, bay at the moon, and maybe even whine, and are sometimes difficult to deal and live with, snapping at those we love; may we all use God's many gifts, for he is gracious and merciful, to be more kind and loving with one another, our spouses, our families, and our friends, and as we thank you again for this day may we live it in peace with ourselves and with each other for your glory, curled up like "old dogs" and basking in the warmth of your sun; and God, may others not judge us too harshly for the way we are because this is the first time we have been old and some of us are not handling it too well.

That you will make us wise so that we may see the moments of this day as you see them, that you will keep our eyes open to see as you see so that we may be mindful of the wonders of the world that surrounds us as we become aware as another old song says of, "little baby ducks, old pick-up

trucks, slow-moving trains, little country streams, pictures of our friends, little fuzzy pups, honest open smiles, kisses from a child, winners when they cry and losers when they try"; we need to see all the many gifts that you give us each day, especially the holy innocents, the lambs of God, and rejoice and be glad, doing works of kindness in your name and thanking you when you warm our hearts this morning and always as we take care and are earnestly on guard not to forget the things which our own eyes have seen, nor let them slip from our memory as long as we live, but teach them to our children and to our children's children so that these wonders and memories may last forever, living always in our heart.

Lord, there are some things I need to seriously think about before I close out my prayers this morning:

- You can love your children and be an awful parent
- You can love your spouse and be an awful husband or wife
- You can love God and be an awful Christian
- You can love the Church and be an awful Catholic
- You can love yourself and be an awful person

I need to reflect on these and through prayer and hard work, always remembering that love is patient and kind and does not rejoice in wrongdoing, and trusting in your loving kindness, forgiveness, and help, change the "awful" into "awe-full", becoming through you, O God, a person "full of awe" in my faith and in my love for you, the Church and those around me, trying to become, through your grace, a good parent, a good spouse, a good Christian, a good Catholic and most of all, a good person, and God, please don't let our names ever be erased from the Book of Life, and may you bless us all, each and every one. Thank you!

That the wisdom of my old age will, if your servant is deserving of your favor and grace, help me to become more loving, tolerant, accepting, understanding and forgiving of others and myself, following the tenets of the Church and the Lord, and that I may truly understand justice and it's meaning, that our song is of mercy and justice and our thoughts of peace and truth will free us to bear good fruit through love for God and our neighbor, for justice and right are the pillars of your throne, and love and truth walk in your presence.

That we may follow the example of the Old Testament Priest and Scribe Ezra and all those faithful to the Lord, humbling ourselves before our God as we are signed and blessed by the sign of the cross and confirmed in faith, reflecting upon and practicing his laws, commandments and guiding principles.

Lord, with one heart and soul we pray in thanksgiving that, with joyful hearts as we honor the Blessed Virgin Mary and seek her maternal protection, our voices may be joined to the great canticle of praise sung by her in the halls of heaven where she reigns as queen, the song that she began on earth, that we may grow in love for you through her intercession and ex-

ample as we pray for all who suffer from cancer, heart problems, strokes and other diseases and for all who need our prayers and help, especially those in Intensive Care and their families, and that you will keep us in your care today and always, letting us rest safely in the shadow of your all-powerful wings; and in the words of an old military prayer that dates back to antiquity, we pray: "Dear God, please don't let me screw this day up," and I thank you when I follow in your paths and do things right.

Lord, I thank you as I finish praying these special morning prayers that are ongoing conversations which bring me into relationship with you, you who are our God; that these prayers, "little treasures" of my heart, which you have given me the gift of time and talent to cobble together and to humbly pray, meditate upon, and work on at this morning hour as I awaken and rise before daybreak, crying for your help and rejoicing with new hope and joy as dawn slices through the sky, extinguishing the stars of night as the beauty of this dawning spreads its wings, your Morning Star rises brightly breaking the black-and-blue dome of our darkened world and all the birds begin their morning songs as they cheerfully greet the new day, for sunrise every morning brings joy and hope for the day to come and for the life to come.

That the Lord of Light may shower his blessings upon us on this new morn; and as I hope in your word and in praying these special prayers, which are my morning song, you give each of us our proper tasks, a role to play in life, I believe I am doing the work that you have chosen for me, and when I am weak and not willing, you seem to provide me strength and refresh and urge me on, keeping me faithful to my task; and through a need deep within me may I share these prayers with others when the opportunity arises, and as I wait in anticipation when I have shared these prayers, may my heart be warmed by those who respond favorably, and may I not be disheartened or disappointed by those who respond less favorably or not at all, for that is their choice.

That all who are exposed to these prayers, or any prayers, may be inspired by the Holy Spirit to pray, with faith, hope, joy, and love, for all good things in Christ, never forgetting the many gifts that you, O God, have given us as you hear our prayers rising up to you; and as your faithful servant, may I continue to pray until my heart beats it's last beat, and may my last breath be an alleluia as I pray my final prayer, go in peace and thank you with all my heart, mind, and soul for my life, my family, my friends, my community of faith and worship, the blessings of your love, and all else that you have given me, for your word has been fulfilled; may you, as the hour grows late, our end approaches, and we commend our spirits and our lives to your trust, bless and keep us, may you let your face shine upon us and may you be gracious to us, and may you look upon us kindly and give us peace! Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace. Amen.