

LET US GO FORTH

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Sample

*Let Us Go Forth!*

**20 TEEN  
PRAYER  
SERVICES** *for*

LITURGICAL, SCHOOL, & FAMILY OCCASIONS

Shannon Cerneka *and* Orin Johnson

 TWENTY-THIRD  
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➤ DEDICATION ◀

To our wives,  
Erin C. and Erin H.,  
and our families:  
thanks for putting up  
with all the craziness  
all these years.

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Our patient  
and flexible families

Kathy Hendricks  
and everyone at  
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The many people who have  
trusted us with ministries,  
especially with youth,  
over many years: this book  
would not exist without  
your confidence in us

Our parishes  
of employment:  
St. Peter Catholic Church  
in Fulton, MO and  
Sts. Joachim and Ann  
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in St. Charles, MO

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# How to Use This Book

In this book you will find several topics, each a particular facet of our Catholic faith, fleshed out in prayer services. Each one has elements of Scripture, music, and fun and engaging reflection activities. These have been created with an eye toward using them at the beginning and/or ending of school days, at all-school gatherings, PSR evenings, youth ministry events, at home in the family, etc.

The chapters have been created to flow along with the multiple calendars of our lives: civil, school, and liturgical. Within each chapter, anyone could use the various elements of each prayer service at other appropriate times to help all dig a bit deeper into our common faith. Music suggestions are also given in each prayer service: at least a possible opening hymn and closing hymn are listed, and some services use music for reflection or ritual moments as well.

Some of the Scripture passages, prayers, and activities may seem a little “dense” (or long, or profound, etc.) for young people. Our experience, though, is that we don’t give our young church enough credit, nor do we always challenge them enough when it comes to the deeper aspects of our faith. We believe you may be surprised at how well your students respond to the various elements of this resource. At the very least, don’t be afraid to try!

Lastly, though they have been grouped and ordered in ways that make sense to us, with some prayers and activities attached to particular feasts or occasions, don’t be afraid to use any of these resources in any way that makes sense in your local communities, and don’t be afraid, when you get the hang of how this resource is constructed, to try creating your own services and reflection activities.

# COMMUNITY

## *Welcome and Community*

After his baptism and time in the desert, Jesus formed a community of disciples as he began his ministry. Before his Ascension, he instructed his disciples to evangelize and to add to their numbers through the sacrament of baptism. Even God's very nature is a community of three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. Community is an essential part of being a Catholic Christian.

As a school year—or any year—begins, one of the most difficult tasks leaders have is bringing everyone together into community. There are always new students and staff in the schools, for instance, and the emotions of missing the ones no longer at the school.

The following prayer with Scripture and activity will help all embrace the importance of Christian community alongside our individual relationships with God. They will also help us recognize that it is God who invites us to, and forms us into, community.

### **Materials and Preparations**

- copies of the service for all leaders, readers, and speakers
- a copy of the "Call and Response" for all participants
- a large poster or projection displaying the dictionary definition of "community"
- several pieces of posterboard or paper
- sets of markers or pens for small groups

### **Location**

Consider gathering where small groups will have a chance to engage in discussion and all can participate easily in the activity—a common area, lunchroom, or gymnasium.



## PRAYER SERVICE

# Welcome and Community

As we pray today, we focus our hearts and minds on gathering in unity, recognizing that we are all one in Christ. Though we as individuals have some gifts and talents that differ from one another, we can always use these God-given gifts for a common purpose: building God's reign on Earth. The unity that our community has in Christ Jesus cannot be broken.

*[All stand.]*

### **GATHERING MUSIC**

Consider "We are Many Parts" (Marty Haugen, GIA) or other music familiar to the community with texts of unity in Christ.

### **GATHERING PRAYER**

*God Three-in-One,*

*in your three Persons, you are love:  
the lover, the beloved, and the loving.*

*Yet you are also one God, holy and true.*

*Make us, your people, signs of your love,  
and form us into one community of faith,  
with Christ as our head.*

*We ask this through Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*

### **SCRIPTURE** *(Matthew 4:12–23)*

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled: "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death light has arisen."

From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him.

He walked along from there and saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat, with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him.

He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people.

The Gospel of the Lord.

*All:* Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*[All are seated. Allow 5–10 seconds of silence before continuing.]*

### **REFLECTION ACTIVITY**

Divide the young people into groups of four or five. Give each group a sheet of paper and a pencil. Give them this brief definition of what a community is:

A social, religious, occupational, or other group sharing common characteristics or interests and perceived or perceiving itself as distinct in some respect from the larger society within which it exists.

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/community>

Have the youth collectively list the total number of communities they belong to. These communities might include their family, town, baseball team, etc. Once they have finished, ask them to come up with a list of traits that those communities have in common. These traits might include wearing uniforms, events and activities attended by people who have the same interests, belief in the same things, etc.

Next, ask the students to look at their lists. Invite them to figure out how many of the traits would also be in a community that Jesus could belong to and why. The groups should then share these answers with the entire gathering.

The leader can then conclude the activity by underscoring not only the importance of community, but also how important and necessary it is for Jesus to be at the center of any community to which we belong.

*[All stand.]*

### **INTERCESSIONS**

Please respond, **R** “*Lord Jesus, make us one.*”

For those who lead us in faith—bishops, priests, principals, and teachers: that with them we may be unified in mind, heart, and purpose, we pray. **R**

For those in elected office, especially here in this town: that they always recognize the common good of the citizens they serve, we pray. **R**

For all of us gathered here today: may we recognize that our varied God-given gifts make us stronger as a community, and that our unity is more complete because of them, we pray. **R**

For those who are suffering or in pain: may we help them realize that their burdens are not theirs to carry alone, we pray. **R**

*[Other intercessions may be voiced aloud by those gathered.]*

## **PRAYER OF BLESSING**

*God of Love,*

*you have called us out of darkness  
into your own wonderful light.*

*Just as the first disciples were called,  
continue to call us together, that we,  
your people, may together worship you  
and serve you as one.*

*Lead our community in your ways of love.*

*In these and all other ways,*

*+ may the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil,  
and bring us to everlasting life.*

*Amen.*

## **DISMISSAL**

*Leader* With one voice, let us go forth to love  
and serve.

*All* Thanks be to God.

## **SENDING MUSIC**

Consider "With One Voice" (Ricky Manalo, OCP)  
or other music familiar to the community with  
texts of sharing the good news as one people of  
faith.

# GENERATIONS, WISDOM

*For Grandparents and Other Elders*

Grandparent events are always special. Most young people take great pride in their grandparents, and for good reason! They are amazing people who often play very important roles in our lives. They babysit us, take us on wonderful adventures, and make us s'mores. (Mmm...s'mores.) They love us, and we love them!

Even if we don't know our grandparents, we often have other elders in our lives who take on similar roles: uncles and aunts, neighbors, or family friends.

Grandparents and other elders serve a significant purpose in our lives. They help us understand the things in life that are truly important, the things that do not change over time, and the things that only they, as an older member of the community, could have any real perspective on. They remind us that love, goodness, truth, family, and most important, faith are what ultimately matter in this life—and the next! They are shining examples of God's wisdom.

The following prayer with Scripture and activity will help reinforce in those gathered the truth that our Christian life is a direct result of the faith passed to us from the elders in our life. Hopefully, participants will also walk away with at least the beginning of the idea that it will also be their responsibility to pass that faith along to future generations one day.

## Materials and Preparations

- copies of the service for all leaders, readers, and speakers
- blank sheet of paper and a pen or pencil for each small group
- copies of the interview questions for each group

A few weeks before the prayer service, ask the children to extend to grandparents and other elders in their lives an invitation to attend.

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## Location

A large but nice room that can accommodate not only the large gathered section of this service, but also the breakout small group section. Round tables would be nice for the small groups to gather around.

## PRAYER SERVICE

# For Grandparents and Other Elders

As we pray today, we focus our hearts and minds on how the faith of God's people is shared across generations. This transfer of truth and love is often most evident in the relationships we have with our grandparents and other elders in our lives. We pause today to pray with them and listen to their wisdom.

*[All stand.]*

### **GATHERING MUSIC**

Consider "In Every Age" (Janet Sullivan Whitaker, OCP) or other music familiar to the community with texts emphasizing how God is present throughout all generations.

### **GATHERING PRAYER**

*God of the ages,  
you are the Spirit of true Wisdom,  
sustaining the faith of your people  
across the generations.*

*Bless us today and all days with a  
holy confidence in you and your  
meaningful presence in our lives.*

*We ask this in the name of Jesus,  
your son and our Lord.*

*Amen.*

### **SCRIPTURE PASSAGE** (Psalm 103:11–18)

For as the heavens tower over the earth,  
so his mercy towers over those  
who fear him.

As far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our sins from us.  
As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the LORD has compassion on those  
who fear him.

For he knows how we are formed,  
remembers that we are dust.

As for man, his days are like the grass;  
he blossoms like a flower in the field.

A wind sweeps over it and it is gone;  
its place knows it no more.

But the LORD's mercy is from age to age,  
toward those who fear him.

His salvation is for the children's children  
of those who keep his covenant,  
and remember to carry out his precepts.

The word of the Lord.

*All:* Thanks be to God.

*[All are seated. Allow 5–10 seconds of silence  
before continuing.]*

## REFLECTION ACTIVITY

The Book of Job 12:12 reads, “So with old age is wisdom, and with length of days understanding.” Our grandparents and elders are abundant sources of life experience and wisdom. Many have lived long enough to have known several U.S. presidents, have experienced amazing advances in technology, and have seen their own families grow in unexpected and fantastic ways. They are also walking their own faith journeys, each day growing in their relationship with God and doing what they can to live God’s vocation for them.

Split your young people into small groups of three youth accompanied by their visiting grandparent(s) or other elders. In each group, ask the youth to interview the visitors by asking the following questions:

1. How has your faith in God made a difference in your life?
2. What is your favorite way to pray? Why?
3. What can you tell us about the faith practice of your elders, grandparents, or other extended family?
4. What impact did your elders’ faith have on yours?
5. What one piece of advice can you offer to us younger members of the faithful?

Encourage the young people to listen attentively and respectfully to each answer.

A great way to extend the reach of this prayer service is to use the grandparents/elders’ answers to question five to create a display for your classroom, bulletin board, etc. In this way, the sage wisdom of the earlier generations can have a greater impact on all of your youth. Visit [pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com) or chat with an art teacher to find design ideas for these types of displays.

*[All stand.]*

## LORD’S PRAYER

Together now, let us pray the prayer given to us by Jesus, handed on throughout time and taught to us by the many faithful people in our lives. *Our Father...*

## PRAYER OF BLESSING

*God of all time,  
you are the Alpha and the Omega,  
the beginning and the end.  
You are the holy tie that binds all generations.  
We give you thanks today for our grandparents and  
other elders, bearers of your truth and wisdom.  
Help us, by their example, to grow in faith and love,  
so that one day we can be for younger  
generations what these men and women  
are for us.  
In these and all other ways,  
+ may the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil,  
and bring us to everlasting life.  
Amen.*

## DISMISSAL

*Leader* Let us go forth continuing to grow in our knowledge of, love of, and service to God and God’s people.  
*All* Thanks be to God.

## SENDING MUSIC

Consider “We Are His People” (Oddwalk) or other music familiar to the community with texts emphasizing our oneness in God and God’s endless love and care for us.

# CONSOLATION

## *At a Time of Tragedy*

Times of tragedy, hardship, and mourning are a part of the human experience. Even events that might seem insignificant from an outside perspective can cause great trauma and the need to pray together for Christ's peace and consolation. This prayer service has been designed to help participants prayerfully respond to a local, national, or global tragedy.

Here are a few truths that guided us in building a basic prayer structure:

- We as humans experience our share of suffering, death, loss, and grief.
- We generally do not experience these things alone. Typically, they are lived in the context of a community.
- Our God, who knows suffering, will be with us through it all.
- Prayer is our most effective way of inviting God into our grief.
- Silence speaks louder than most words at times of distress.

The following prayer with Scripture and activity will give young people the context to healthily name their sorrow, know the shared grief and support of the larger community, and allow our Lord to journey with them as they process through their emotions.

### **Materials and Preparations**

- prayer table (large enough to accommodate a large pillar candle and the participants' prayer rocks) with decorative tablecloth
- smooth rocks (quarter to half-dollar coin-sized), one for each participant
- fine-point permanent markers, one for each participant
- one large pillar candle (if fire codes prohibit the use of wax candles, use a battery-operated one instead)

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### **Location**

Consider being in a church or chapel where each participant could have his or her own space in the pews. Otherwise, another large room would suffice.



## PRAYER SERVICE

# At a Time of Tragedy

As we pray today, we focus our hearts and minds on Jesus, who knows suffering and pain. We take time to name our own pain and invite Jesus into our hearts to help carry these burdens with us. We trust that as we allow Christ into our darkness, we will be ever comforted and renewed by his light.

*[All stand.]*

### **GATHERING MUSIC**

Consider “His Light” (Oddwalk) or other music familiar to the community with texts of comfort in times of great difficulty.

### **GATHERING PRAYER**

*O God, eternal source of peace and hope,  
hear us, your people, in this time of sorrow  
and grief.*

*[silent pause, 10–15 seconds]*

*Unite us in our despair.  
Remind us of your love and covenant.  
Grace us with your comforting touch.  
We make this prayer through Jesus who suffered  
for us, our Lord, for ever and ever.  
Amen.*

### **SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**

*(Lamentations 3:47–59)*

Panic and the pit have been our lot,  
desolation and destruction;  
My eyes stream with tears over the  
destruction  
of the daughter of my people.  
My eyes will flow without ceasing,  
without rest,  
Until the LORD from heaven  
looks down and sees.  
I am tormented by the sight  
of all the daughters of my city.  
Without cause, my enemies snared me  
as though I were a bird;  
They tried to end my life in the pit,  
pelting me with stones.  
The waters flowed over my head:  
and I said, “I am lost!”

*[silent pause, 20–30 seconds]*

I have called upon your name, O LORD,  
from the bottom of the pit;  
You heard me call, “Do not let your ear be  
deaf to my cry for help.”  
You drew near on the day I called you;



you said, "Do not fear!"  
You pleaded my case, Lord,  
you redeemed my life.  
You see, LORD, how I am wronged;  
do me justice!

The word of the Lord.  
*All:* Thanks be to God.

*[All are seated. Allow 5–10 seconds of silence before continuing.]*

### REFLECTION ACTIVITY

At times like these, words can seem trite and ultimately lacking in their ability to express how we truly feel. This reflection activity is meant to give the young people as much silent time and space as possible.

Invite someone to read the next paragraph aloud:

During times of great tragedy, sometimes the only thing that makes any sense to do is pray. Many of us have thoughts and emotions we want to express. Jesus understands our sorrow and has promised to never leave us alone. Psalm 55:23 says: "Cast your care upon the LORD, who will give you support." At this time, you will be given a rock and a permanent marker. Take some time to reflect on your feelings. When you're ready, write one word on the rock that expresses and summarizes those feelings, and then place the rock somewhere around the candle on the prayer table. This candle represents Christ for us. Laying your rock on the prayer table symbolizes your willingness to surrender your independence to Jesus, letting him help and guide you through times of trial. Letting go of the weight of the rock will also signify laying down the burden

of whatever feeling or emotions you are choosing to give over to Christ.

Next, allow the ritual to begin. No music will be played during this time. This entire activity should be done in complete silence. Allow enough time for each person to complete the activity. Once the last person has placed their rock on the table, allow another five minutes of prayerful silence.

At the end of those five minutes, move directly into the general intercessions.

*[All stand.]*

### INTERCESSIONS

At the end of each intercession please respond:

**R** *God, heal us; be our peace.*

For our world, *[three-second pause]*  
we pray to the Lord: **R**

For our church, *[three-second pause]*  
we pray to the Lord: **R**

For our nation, *[three-second pause]*  
we pray to the Lord: **R**

For our community, *[three-second pause]*  
we pray to the Lord: **R**

For our schools, *[three-second pause]*  
we pray to the Lord: **R**

For our families, *[three-second pause]*  
we pray to the Lord: **R**

*[Please add any additional intentions deemed necessary, or invite those gathered to voice aloud their own, in similar style.]*

## **PRAYER OF BLESSING**

*O God,*

*while our hearts break during this difficult time,  
we know that we are now, as always,  
in your loving care.*

*As we end this time of prayer,*

*help us to know you in the thoughts, words,  
and actions of those closest to us.*

*In these and all other ways,*

*+ may the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil,  
and bring us to everlasting life.*

*Amen.*

## **DISMISSAL**

*Leader* As church for one another, let us go  
forth in God's comfort and peace.

*All* Thanks be to God.

## **SENDING MUSIC**

Consider "Hold Us Together" (Matt Maher, Thankyou Music) or other music familiar to the community with texts of unity, comfort, and love.