

Praying through Advent



This advent course is made up of four sessions:

1. Praying with the Patriarchs
2. Praying with the Prophets
3. Praying with John the Baptist
4. Praying with Mary

Each week explores what each of these ancestors in the faith teach us about prayer – asking what we ought to be praying for. Each week we will also explore one particular method of prayer inspired by their witness:

1. Icons
2. Lectio Divina
3. The Jesus Prayer
4. The Rosary

Some of these types of prayer might be very familiar. Others unfamiliar. They're deliberately drawn from a wide breadth of the Christian tradition.

In addition, each session will weave its way loosely through the words and themes of the Lord's Prayer:

1. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.
2. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.
3. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
4. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

As we wait on Christ this advent, we will look to join our prayers with his and, through him, with all God's people.

Each session has three parts:

- A chance to engage with passages from Scripture
- An introduction to a method of prayer
- Time to pray

An Order for Closing Prayer

Almighty God,
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness
and to put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;
that on the last day,
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal;
through him who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Awaiting his coming in glory,
let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

**Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
forever and ever.
Amen.**

May the Lord, when he comes,
find us watching and waiting.
Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

WEEK ONE: PRAYING WITH THE PATRIARCHS

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Adoring the God who transforms creation

Genesis 17.1-8

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. ² And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.” ³ Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, ⁴ “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁵ No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷ I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. ⁸ And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God.”

Genesis 18.1-5, 9-11

The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. ² He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. ³ He said, “My lord, if I find favour with you, do not pass by your servant. ⁴ Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. ⁵ Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.” So they said, “Do as you have said.”

⁹ They said to him, “Where is your wife Sarah?” And he said, “There, in the tent.” ¹⁰ Then one said, “I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. ¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

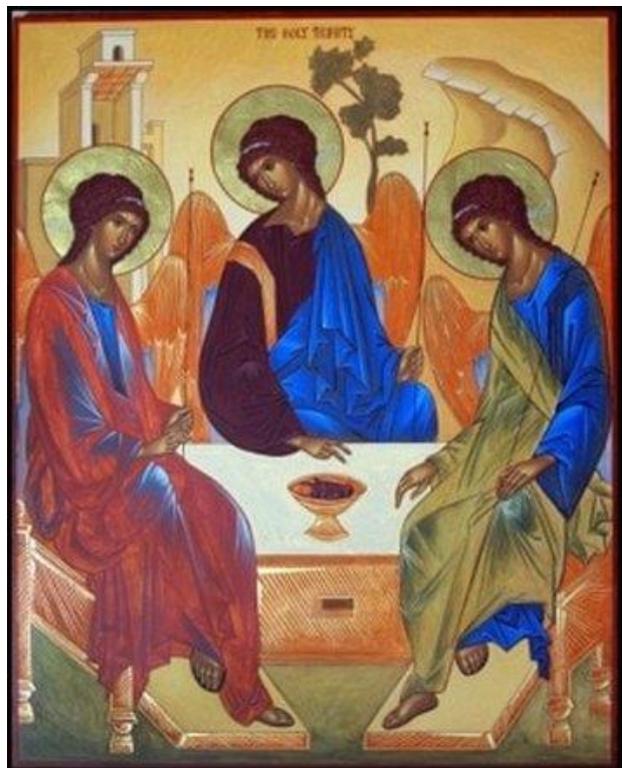
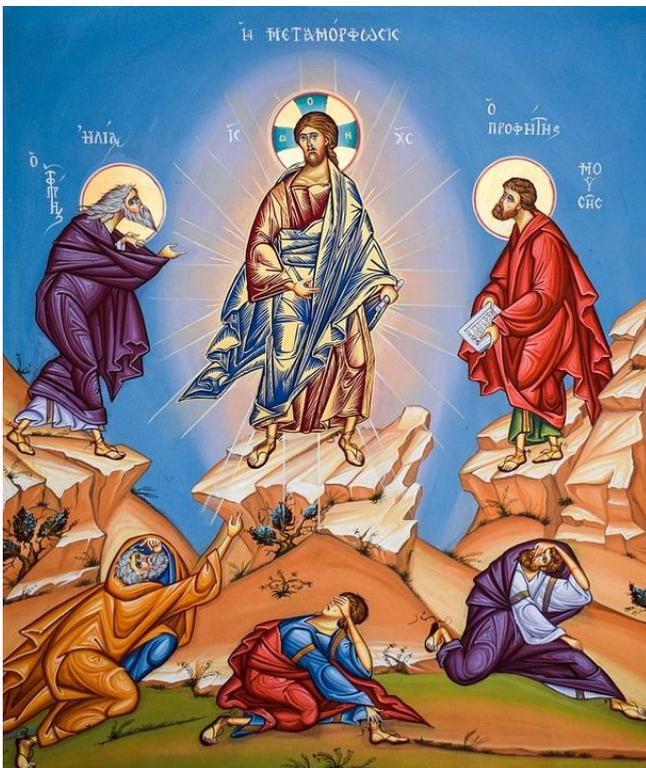
How does Abraham encounter God in these passages?

How does God transform Abraham and Sarah? How does this speak of God’s promises to us?

Icons

Luke 9.28-36

²⁸ Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹ And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³⁰ Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. ³¹ They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³² Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. ³³ Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said. ³⁴ While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” ³⁶ When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone.



WEEK TWO: PRAYING WITH THE PROPHETS

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.

Interceding for God's Kingdom

Micah 6.1-8

Hear what the LORD says: Rise, plead your case before the mountains,
and let the hills hear your voice.

² Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the LORD,
and you enduring foundations of the earth;
for the LORD has a controversy with his people,
and he will contend with Israel.

³ "O my people, what have I done to you?
In what have I wearied you? Answer me!

⁴ For I brought you up from the land of Egypt,
and redeemed you from the house of slavery;
and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

⁵ O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised,
what Balaam son of Beor answered him,
and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal,
that you may know the saving acts of the LORD."

⁶ "With what shall I come before the LORD,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?

⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

⁸ He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

**How does this passage invite us to pray?
What does this passage teach us about God?
What is 'justice'?**

Lectio Divina

Psalm 119.97-106

97 Oh, how I love your law!

It is my meditation all day long.

98 Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,
for it is always with me.

99 I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for your decrees are my meditation.

100 I understand more than the aged,
for I keep your precepts.

101 I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep your word.

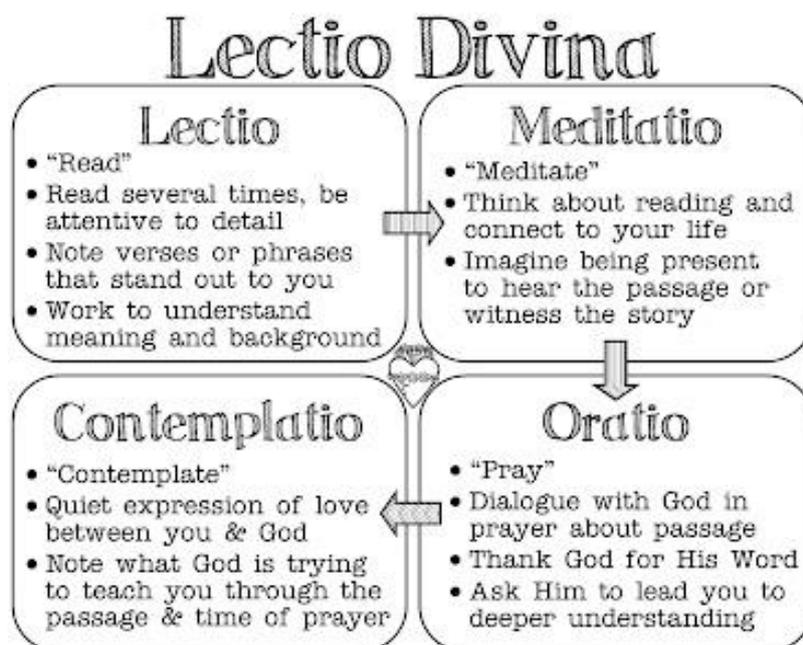
102 I do not turn away from your ordinances,
for you have taught me.

103 How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!

104 Through your precepts I get understanding;
therefore I hate every false way.

105 Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.

106 I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,
to observe your righteous ordinances.



WEEK THREE: PRAYING WITH JOHN THE BAPTIST

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Repenting our sin

Matthew 3.1-12

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ²“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” ³This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.’”

⁴Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, ⁶and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁷But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruit worthy of repentance. ⁹Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ¹⁰Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹“I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

What does it mean to be baptised with the Holy Spirit?

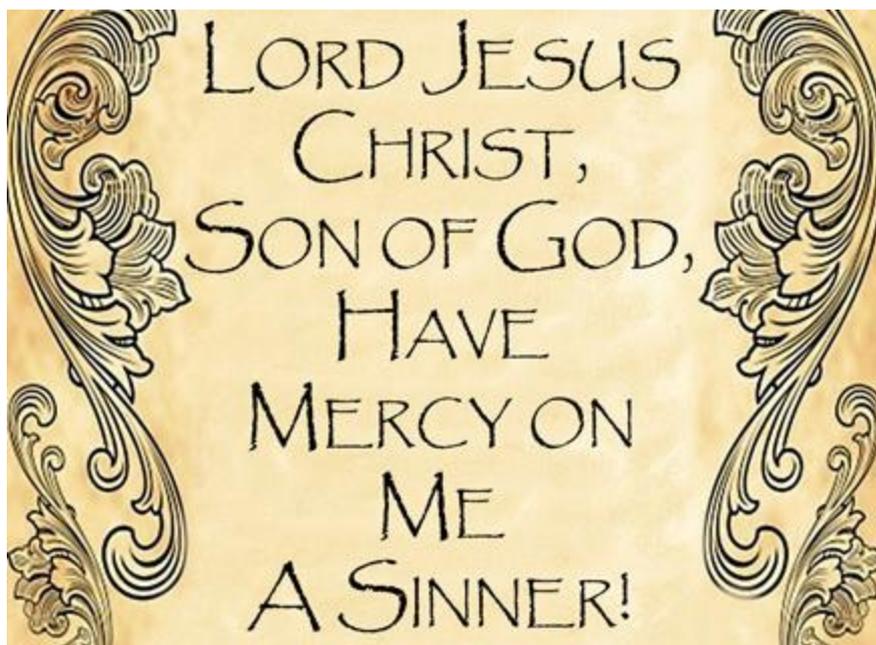
What does it mean to bear fruit worthy of repentance?

How does being forgiven relate to forgiving others?

The Jesus Prayer

Luke 18.35-43

³⁵ As he approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. ³⁶ When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was happening. ³⁷ They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” ³⁸ Then he shouted, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” ³⁹ Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁰ Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, ⁴¹ “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, let me see again.” ⁴² Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has saved you.” ⁴³ Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.



Metropolitan Anthony Bloom: “More than any other prayer, the Jesus Prayer aims at bringing us to stand in God’s presence with no other thought but the miracle of our standing there and God with us, because in the use of the Jesus Prayer there is nothing and no one except God and us.”

St Seraphim of Sarov: “‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner’: let all thine attention and training be in this. Walking, sitting, doing, and standing in church before the divine service, coming in and going out, keep this unceasingly on thy lips and in thy heart.”

WEEK FOUR: PRAYING WITH MARY

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Daring to imagine

Luke 1.26-55

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. ³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴ Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶ And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸ Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

³⁹ In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰ where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴² and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³ And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴ For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

⁴⁶ And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,

⁴⁸ for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me,

and holy is his name.
⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him
 from generation to generation.
⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm;
 he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
 and lifted up the lowly;
⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things,
 and sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
 in remembrance of his mercy,
⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
 to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

**Imagine yourself in Mary’s place in this passage. How would you feel?
 What does God promise through the words of Mary’s song?
 How might imagination both lead us into temptation and deliver us from evil?**

The Rosary

MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY

JOYFUL MYSTERIES

Happy times in the Lives of Jesus
and Mary

1. The Annunciation
2. The Visitation
3. The Nativity of Jesus
4. The Presentation
5. Finding Jesus in the Temple

GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

These Mysteries show the Divinity of
Jesus

1. The Resurrection
2. The Ascension
3. The Descent of the Holy Spirit
4. The Assumption of Mary
5. The Coronation of Mary

SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

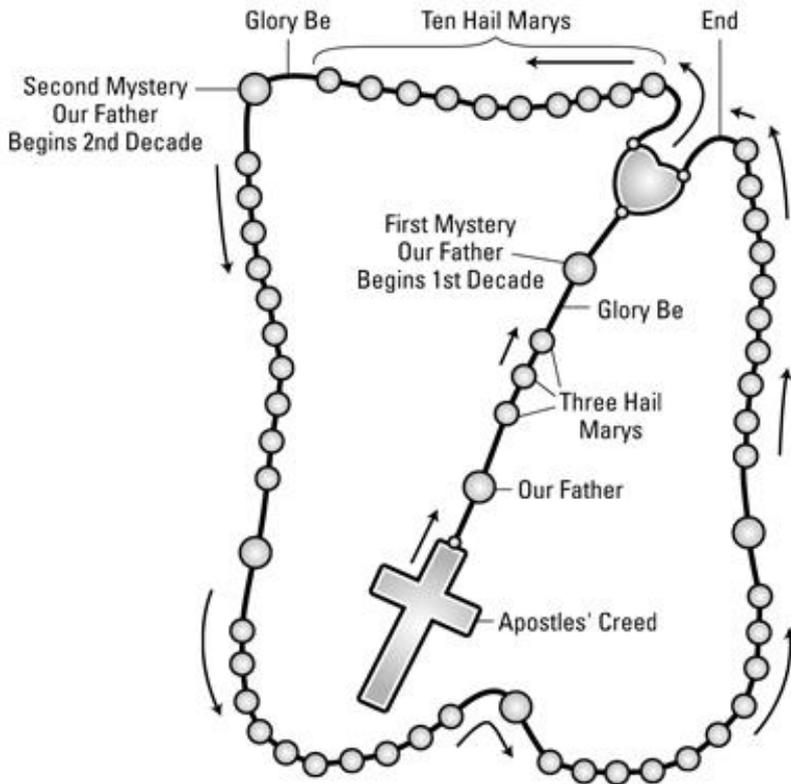
Sad moments in the Lives of Jesus and Mary

1. The Agony in the Garden
2. The Scourging at the Pillar
3. The Crowning with Thorns
4. The Way of the Cross
5. The Crucifixion

LUMINOUS MYSTERIES

These recall times in Jesus’ Life when He
revealed God’s Kingdom

1. The Baptism of Jesus
2. The First Miracle at Cana
3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom
4. The Transfiguration
5. The Institution of the Eucharist



Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory Be

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Optional Ending Prayers

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To you do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To you do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy toward us, and after this exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O God, whose Only Begotten Son, by His Life, Death, and Resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life, grant, we beseech thee, that while meditating on these mysteries of the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.