

About the Prayer School

The Prayer School has been developed as a way to share and experience different ways of praying. Whilst we feel drawn to deepen our relationship with God through prayer we sometimes find *we do not know how to pray as we ought* (Rom 8:26). Others, like *The Pilgrim*, find it hard to *pray without ceasing* (1 Thess 5:17) as St Paul urges us to do.

The Prayer School draws on ancient, contemporary and creative ways of praying to present tools for renewing our prayer life; helping us to pray when it is difficult to do so.

The Prayer School can be offered in different formats; it can be either residential or non-residential; as a complete program or sessions may be offered individually.

An Introduction to Prayer: What it is and is not (3 hours)

Basil Pennington, a Benedictine monk, once said that for most of us prayer has become a heavily burdened word, and practice. This, he adds, no doubt has been the result of misunderstanding what prayer is and is not. John Michael Talbot, a Franciscan friar and musician refers to prayer as a mystical union and loving embrace between God and ourselves; understood in this context prayer is in essence the intimate communication between God and us.

This introduction to prayer deconstructs our old beliefs about prayer and allows us to discover new and exciting ways of being in prayerful union with the God of the universe. The aim being to move us from thinking of prayer as more than a shopping list of intercessions or being limited to our liturgical texts. Thus we discover what prayer is and is not; opening us to discover the richness of ancient prayers, the beauty of contemporary styles of prayer, and the freshness of creative praying.

Praying with Songs of Prayer from Taizé (5 hours, including breaks)

This workshop has been structured to provide participants with an understanding of the context in which the songs of prayer from Taizé emerged. The concept of prayer is explored, particularly in relation to song as prayer. There will also be an opportunity to explore the structure of prayer as used in the Taizé community, and ways for adapting this in a local situation.

There will be opportunity for both 'singers' and 'instrumentalists' to explore songs as prayer with their own respective 'instrument'. Participants will then put together all the information that has been discussed by preparing and participating in a contemplative prayer service using the songs of prayer from Taizé.

Anglican Prayer Beads: Rediscovering an Ancient Tradition (6 hours, including breaks)

From ancient times devotees of all faith traditions have used prayer counters or prayer beads in their devotional practices. They have been used in the Christian tradition from as early, if not before, the 2nd century. Rosaries, as they are commonly referred to, became popular in the Roman church from around the mid 13th century; and have more recently become popular in the Anglican church with the development of the Anglican Rosary, or Anglican Prayer Beads.

This workshop briefly explores the history of prayer beads in the church, in particular their recent use in the Anglican Church. There will be opportunity to make your own set of prayer beads. There will be discussion about how to write your own prayers for use with prayer beads and an opportunity to experience a group meditation using prayer beads.

Note: All materials for making one set of prayer beads is included in the cost of the workshop. Rosaries are made from either Jerusalem Olive Wood, Jerusalem Rose Petals, Rosewood or semi-precious gemstones depending on availability. A booklet on the Anglican Rosary is also included in the cost.

The Jesus Prayer: Praying the Prayer of the Heart (4 hours, including breaks)

At the heart of Eastern Orthodox spirituality is the prayer of the heart, or the invocation of the Holy name of Jesus; commonly referred to as the Jesus Prayer. The Jesus Prayer was popularised through the book *The Way of the Pilgrim*.

This workshop uses *The Way of the Pilgrim* as the basis of exploring the prayer of the heart; and how this is understood in its Orthodox context. There will be opportunity to make a simple prayer rope for use with praying the prayer of the heart. There will also be time for quiet contemplation in God's presence as we enter into the practice of this ancient spiritual prayer.

Note: Materials are provided to make one prayer rope, this is a simple prayer rope and is not the same as those used in the Orthodox Church.

Lectio Divina: The Art of Praying with the Scriptures (3 hours)

Lectio Divina, once practiced only by those in monastic and religious communities, has become increasingly popular among the laity of the church. It is the sacred art reading the scriptures. Lectio Divina is more than a bible study, spiritual reading or prayer, indeed it is these and more.

In Lectio Divina we read or listen to the word of God, and allow it to speak to us, to enter into our being. In us, the word of God changes and transforms us such that we become that which we contemplate, that is the word of God; we become as it were the word or prayer incarnate. By being transformed through Lectio Divina we begin to affect those around us, we become as St Theresa of Avila often said, the hands, feet, and eyes of God, we become God's instruments on earth. Through us God works in the world.

This workshop explores the ancient art of Lectio Divina. We discuss and experience for ourselves what it means to open ourselves to the transforming word of God. There will be both theoretical and practical input.

The Way of the Cross: A Universal Reflection on Christ's Dying and Rising (3 hours)

The Way of the Cross, is a contemporary reflection on the traditional stations of the cross. It has been developed by the members of Franciscans International. FI works on behalf of the poor for peace, justice and the care of creation at the United Nations in Geneva and in New York.

Its members live and work alongside the poorest of the poor where everyday human rights are violated. Out of their experience of witnessing first hand the injustices of the world FI members have developed this contemporary reflection on the Stations of the Cross. It brings to mind the continued relevance of this ancient prayer and meditation for our world today. Pray with the poor and marginalised in this powerful adaptation of Christ's journey to his death and resurrection.

Contemplating the San Damiano Crucifix (3 hours)

The San Damiano Crucifix lies at the heart of Franciscan spirituality. A young broken man of Assisi knelt before the cross and opened his soul to God; asking God to show him God's plan for his life. Francesco Bernardone was a changed man that day. He lived his life dedicated to the Glory of God and spreading the good news of Christ to all.

St Francis was a man of action, as he got up from contemplating the cross at San Damiano he offered himself in service to God and humanity following the simplicity of the Christ he saw not only in the cross but in the Gospels.

The San Damiano Crucifix is a magnificent piece of Byzantine art, or more correctly, iconography; a brilliant pictorial of the Gospel of St John. Through exploring the images of the crucifix, and hearing something of its place in Franciscan spirituality, we learn how it is possible, to kneel down a broken person, and rise a servant of Christ.

Prayer School Costs

The Prayer School can be delivered as a complete program, either as a residential or non residential program; over consecutive days or a series of separate days. It is also possible to select specific sessions of interest only.

The complete program \$60

Individual sessions

Introduction to Prayer: What it is and is not \$10

Praying with the Songs from Taizé \$15

Anglican Prayer Beads: Rediscovering an Ancient Tradition \$20

The Jesus Prayer: Praying the Prayer of the Heart \$15

Lectio Divina: The Art of Praying with the Scriptures \$10

The Way of the Cross: A Universal Reflection on Christ's Dying and Resurrection \$10

Contemplating the San Damiano Crucifix \$10

Please note

Costs are suggested donation per person and cover materials, notes provided and facilitator's fee. Depending on the location, and number of workshops booked, a minimum number of bookings may apply.

Facilitators' travel and accommodation costs are not included and are additional.

If conducted as a residential program the costs of venue accommodation and other expenses are also additional.

Customised Programs

If your parish, school or community group has a specific request please feel free to contact one of the brothers of the Society of St Francis to discuss your needs. We would be happy to customise a program to fit in with your needs and interests. We can offer facilitation for quiet days, retreats, planning days, confirmation preparation and team building.

We welcome invitations to visit and spend time with your community.

Pax Et Bonum



Lord, Teach us to Pray



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A Prayer School

led by brothers of
the Society of St Francis