

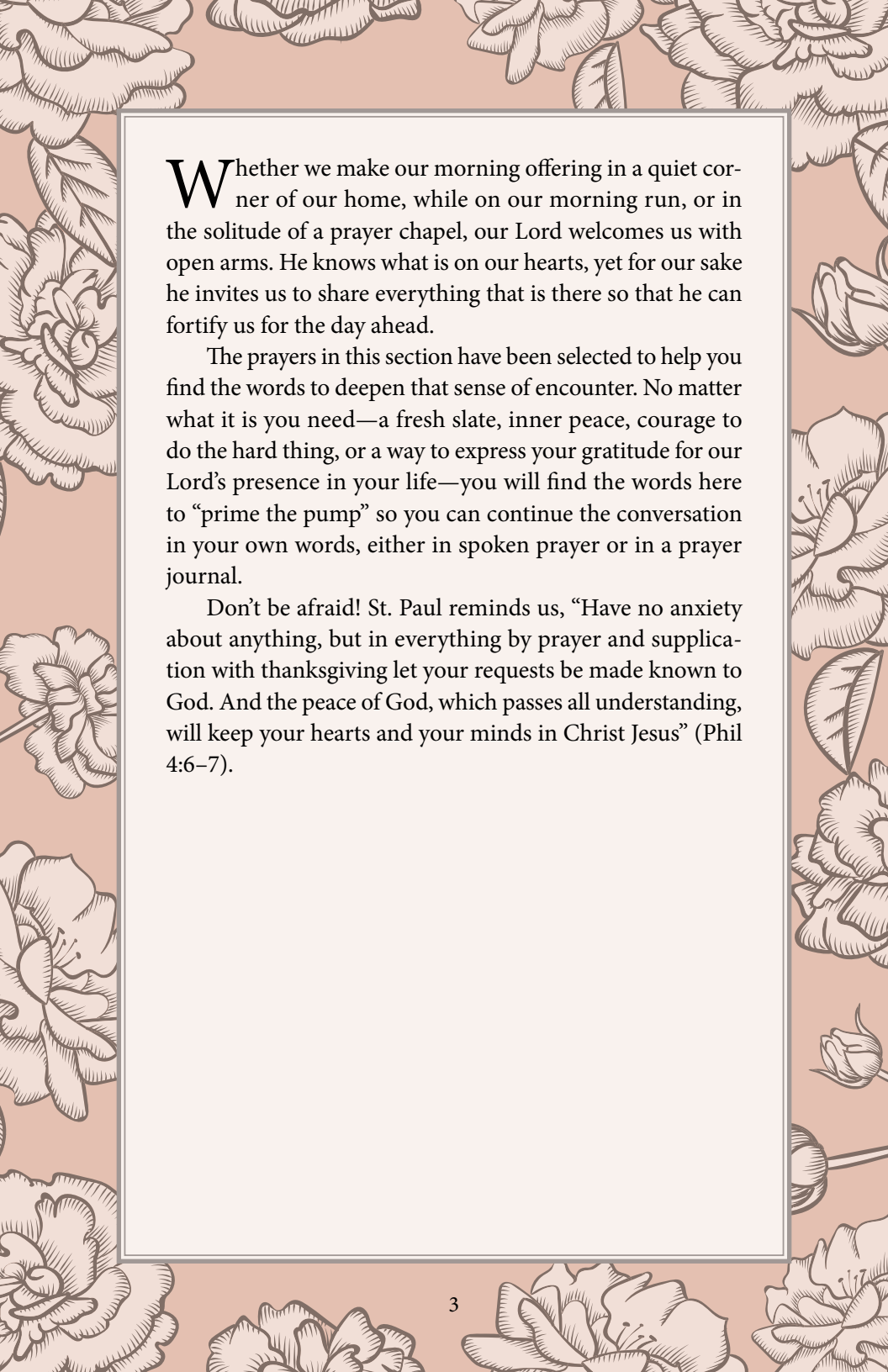
PART I



PRAYERS FOR ENCOUNTERING GOD

“Worship the LORD with gladness.”
Psalm 100:2 (NRSV)



A decorative border of stylized, hand-drawn flowers in a light brown color surrounds the central text area. The flowers are of various sizes and are scattered along the top, bottom, and sides of the page.

Whether we make our morning offering in a quiet corner of our home, while on our morning run, or in the solitude of a prayer chapel, our Lord welcomes us with open arms. He knows what is on our hearts, yet for our sake he invites us to share everything that is there so that he can fortify us for the day ahead.

The prayers in this section have been selected to help you find the words to deepen that sense of encounter. No matter what it is you need—a fresh slate, inner peace, courage to do the hard thing, or a way to express your gratitude for our Lord’s presence in your life—you will find the words here to “prime the pump” so you can continue the conversation in your own words, either in spoken prayer or in a prayer journal.

Don’t be afraid! St. Paul reminds us, “Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:6–7).




LORD, I BELIEVE IN YOU

Katie Prejean McGrady

While I was a sophomore in college, I had the opportunity to study in Rome for a semester. At nineteen I found myself roaming the streets of the Eternal City—eating my weight in gelato, visiting museums, and popping in and out of churches with countless saints’ relics and gorgeous art. Each time I walked into one of these churches, I’d find myself wondering what I should do (besides take pictures). It’s not like I had the time to pray a full Rosary in each church (nor did I have the desire to), but it didn’t feel like a quick Our Father was enough to pray in front of the tabernacle inside these old, profoundly beautiful houses of worship. So I asked the campus chaplain to recommend a prayer, and he handed me a copy of “The Universal Prayer” by Pope Clement XI (1649–1721).

I was captivated by the lyrical flow of the words, the depth of their meaning, and just how wide-ranging the petitions were. It quickly became my go-to “what to say when I’m in front of Jesus” prayer. It truly is universal, a “tell him everything without having to figure out something to say” sort of prayer. It covers the desire to be obedient and the need to remain focused on God’s will above all else. It expresses the hope that we will adore the Lord well. It gives voice to the understanding that we are made for heaven and should long for it above all else. Truthfully, what more could we say when sitting in front of the tabernacle, in Jesus’ presence, pouring out our heart?



With kids underfoot, a home to care for, work to be done, and life to be lived, I often find myself frazzled or at a loss for words when I have time before the Eucharist. Or, I have so much to say that I don’t feel that I have enough time to say it all! “The Universal Prayer” of Pope Clement XI fills in all the gaps. It captures most of what’s on my mind, reminds me of the power and glory of the Lord in the Eucharist, and helps me to rest in his presence.



The Universal Prayer

Lord, I believe in you: increase my faith.
I trust in you: strengthen my trust.
I love you: let me love you more and more.
I am sorry for my sins: deepen my sorrow.
I worship you as my first beginning,
I long for you as my last end,
I praise you as my constant helper,
And call on you as my loving protector.


Guide me by your wisdom,
Correct me with your justice,
Comfort me with your mercy,
Protect me with your power.



I offer you, Lord, my thoughts: to be fixed on you;
My words: to have you for their theme;
My actions: to reflect my love for you;
My sufferings: to be endured for your greater glory.

I want to do what you ask of me:
In the way you ask,
For as long as you ask,
Because you ask it.

Lord, enlighten my understanding,
Strengthen my will,
Purify my heart,
And make me holy.

Help me to repent of my past sins
And to resist temptation in the future.
Help me to rise above my human weaknesses
And to grow stronger as a Christian.





Let me love you, my Lord and my God,
And see myself as I really am:
A pilgrim in this world,
A Christian called to respect and love
All whose lives I touch,
Those under my authority,
My friends and my enemies.



Help me to conquer anger with gentleness,
Greed by generosity,
Apathy by fervor.
Help me to forget myself
And reach out toward others.

Make me prudent in planning,
Courageous in taking risks.
Make me patient in suffering, unassuming in prosperity.

Keep me, Lord, attentive at prayer,
Temperate in food and drink,
Diligent in my work,
Firm in my good intentions.

Let my conscience be clear,
My conduct without fault,
My speech blameless,
My life well-ordered.
Put me on guard against my human weaknesses.
Let me cherish your love for me,
Keep your law,
And come at last to your salvation.

Teach me to realize that this world is passing,
That my true future is the happiness of heaven,
That life on earth is short,
And the life to come eternal.





Help me to prepare for death
With a proper fear of judgment,
But a greater trust in your goodness.
Lead me safely through death
To the endless joy of heaven.
Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.²





WHEN YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE PRAYING

Daria Sockey

My daily prayer routine is centered on the Liturgy of the Hours—a repeating cycle of psalms, scriptures, readings from the saints, and other prayers that follow the liturgical seasons. This is all contained in a prayer book known as the Breviary, which I crack open every morning, afternoon, evening, and night for roughly ten minutes at a time. I've learned that maintaining the habit of prayer means *just doing it* each day, whether or not I feel like it, rather than waiting for the perfect prayerful mood to strike.

But what about those times when you're feeling so distracted or stressed that prayer threatens to become just one more item to check off an endless to-do list? Nothing but a recitation to be gotten over with before starting a new chore?

A few years ago, while doing the Office of Readings, I came across a passage from St. Anselm's *Proslogion*. (It appears every year on Friday of the first week of Advent.) I was so struck by it that I copied it on an index card and keep it tucked in my Breviary. Any time that I approach my daily prayer with a head full of racing thoughts, I take a few deep breaths and read this meditation, which ends with a short but beautiful prayer that gets my mind on the right track. As I read St. Anselm's "Prelude to Prayer," I visualize myself doing the actions it describes. It never fails to take me away from my worries and into a place of calm—a place where I am truly ready to seek the Lord's face.

St. Anselm's Prelude to Prayer

Insignificant man, escape from your everyday business for a short while, hide for a moment from your restless thoughts. Break off from your cares and troubles and be less concerned about your tasks and labors. Make a little time for God and rest a while in him. Enter into your mind's inner chamber. Shut out everything but God and whatever helps you to seek him; and when you have shut the door, look for him. Speak now to God and say with your whole heart: "I seek your Face; your Face, Lord, I desire."³



WHEN YOU REALLY NEED MERCY

Justina Kopp

The Jesus Prayer came into my life in a moment when I desperately needed mercy. After college, I was reeling from a painful relationship and breakup, and even though I was working as a campus minister, my faith was feeling strained. My heart and mind deeply needed renewal and healing.

After a particularly grueling Lent, I managed to find a last-minute Confession time on Holy Saturday morning. Holy Saturday has always been my favorite day of the liturgical year, but I was feeling disconnected. I made my way over to the cathedral and joined the surprisingly long line for Confession, mentally gathering up my unsurprisingly long list of sins.

Finally, it was my turn. When it was time for the Act of Contrition, the priest requested that I use the Jesus Prayer, due to the number of people waiting. I hadn't done this before, but I found it was concise and to the point: I just asked Christ to have mercy on me, to grant me not just forgiveness but healing as well.

After that experience in the confessional, I decided to silently carry this prayer in my heart every time I walked up to receive Communion. After all, isn't the Eucharist the ultimate sign of God's miraculous mercy for us? We all need the mercy of our all-loving God. Years later, when I was seeking healing through therapy, my counselor would remind me of God's "infinite space pit of mercy" that is there just for me . . . just for each of us.

The Jesus Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God,
have mercy on me, a sinner.



STOLEN MOMENTS WITH JESUS

Kendra Tierney

I believe Jesus Christ is present in the Eucharist in every Catholic church. He is waiting for me, hidden in the tabernacle or exposed in the monstrance. The problem for me is never belief. It's that *he* waits quietly, patiently, not making demands. My children are less subtle in their requests on my time.

It's easy to allow my responsibilities as a wife and mother to fill not only my hands and my days but also my heart and my thoughts. But my vocation to family life is founded on my love of God, so I'm always going to be a better wife and mother when I'm being a better Catholic. My solution for this season of life has been stolen moments with Jesus: a few minutes before the tabernacle after Mass, a stop in the silent church—noisy kids in tow—while running errands, beginning some time with my husband or friends with Jesus in the adoration chapel, and always—*always*—recourse to an Act of Spiritual Communion. I say it at the end of a visit to the Blessed Sacrament (be it long or short), any time I'm driving past a Catholic church and cannot go inside, or when family obligations keep me from daily Mass. It's a reminder of my love for Jesus and his for me, in this and every season of life.

Act of Spiritual Communion

I wish, my Lord, to receive you
With the purity, humility, and devotion
With which your most holy Mother received you
With the spirit and fervor of the saints. Amen.⁴

Or:

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I desire to receive you into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace you as if you were already there and unite myself wholly to you. Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.⁵