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# BEST-LOVED PRAYERS

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## Our Father

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. Amen.



## 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 death. Amen.

## Glory Be

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning, is now,  
and will be for ever. Amen.







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# IN THE BEGINNING

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Prayers for New Beginnings

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## THE GROTTO



The Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, more than any other spot on the campus of the University of Notre Dame, is where our hearts find rest. The decisions and the discernments, the struggles and the triumphs, the laments and the gratitude: all memories flicker here in the tongues of fire and clear, liquid wax.

It is a good reminder for those of us who now live or work here, as I do. We can be energized by the wide eyes of a visitor, drinking in this beautiful place for the first time. Or often it is a pair of wrinkled, tired eyes, viewing the Grotto through a watery and grateful gaze, that remind us of the blessing we dare not take for granted.

My favorite place to pray at the Grotto is where I can see Our Lady on top of the Dome, arrayed in gold just beyond the trees. I ask to be in some way made worthy of the prayers I bear, to honor her Son through the work we do at this beloved institution.

So many long to return to this sacred place, and it is here where we at FaithND and the Alumni Association try to serve. A tall, green candle burns day and night for the countless intentions entrusted to our care. Reading these submitted prayers never ceases to put my own life and problems into perspective.

In the end, it is a comfort to know that someone will always be praying for us at the Grotto. The giants of this place have come and gone, some remembered in statues or paintings, others in the minds and stories of those they graciously touched. But the stones of the Grotto are what remind us of the bedrock of our faith, of things worth clinging to when all else seems passing. They are the keepers of this hallowed ground, of our spiritual home.

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Notre Dame Alumni Association



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## ✦ BEGINNING TO PRAY ✦

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**B**eginning to pray may well have something to do with how one was introduced to prayer.

In grammar school, the Benedictine sisters taught me to say, “Divine Infant of Bethlehem, come and take birth in my heart” some six thousand times during Advent (that being the ostensible number of years since creation in the Garden of Eden). I still say that prayer to this day as I walk along the sidewalks of the Notre Dame campus. Walking time is prayer time. So are red lights, elevator waits, even three identical digits on the digital clock. I often make the Sign of the Cross whenever I become aware of one of the million ways our lives could be endangered, given all the things within us and around us that can go wrong and often do.

In high school, Benedictine monks encouraged me to compose my own prayer. It was revelatory of the trials and fears of an adolescent young man: “Saint Agnes, virgin martyr, who loved her purity above all else, help me preserve mine; who suffered terrible tortures for the love of God, increase my love; and who suffered martyrdom, strengthen me in time of persecution.” I still say that prayer.

On to Notre Dame in the early 1950s, where morning inspection in the residence hall was followed by Mass—unless you turned around and went back to bed, the resident priest watching you scorn the grace of God. I went to Mass.

It was at Old College in my second semester that I was introduced to regular morning and evening prayer. Joining the Congregation of Holy Cross led me to a novitiate year in swampland around Jordan, Minnesota. I learned to write a prayer journal, and writing became a form of praying.



Amid life's competing demands, I now find early morning is my best prayer time. I love rocking on Sorin Hall's porch waiting for sunrise, with a cup of coffee sweetened with awe and delight in my Creator. I have by now become well aware of my need for and happiness with contemplative prayer—prayer greatly assisted by the right place and the right time. I ask for my next breath, which I know I cannot draw without God's constant assistance. I know what matters is not what I do, but what God is doing. Why anything? Why me? I can sit with that every morning and never grow weary of the wonder of it all.

I wish evening prayer would go better than it does. I find myself tired out at the end of the day and prayer is more difficult. I want to be thankful, and I know gratitude is the secret of any happy life. I believe God knows what we need and loves us, so our evening prayer need not inform God of what is going on in the world or plead with God to take care of us. Evening prayer can be simple: "Thank you for taking care of all this. I know you are. Goodnight!"

Prayer is never my initiative. It is always a response to a prior invitation that turns my mind and heart to God. We must receive before we can give. We must breathe in before we breathe out.

Prayer is an exchange with God. Prayer is attending to what God is doing within us and in the world. Prayer is the recognition that we are but a speck of stardust upon a speck of a planet in a galaxy, itself but a speck in an expanding universe. Our prayer is silent in the big scheme of things, but remains close to the heart of God. The God who wanted nothing so much as to be one of us in the flesh and to love us even unto death.

Prayer is listening to the silence in our hearts, and beginning to pray is a willingness to take our next breath in exchange with God, who is more part of us than we are part of ourselves. Beginning to pray is the beginning of the greatest adventure on earth.

**Nicholas Ayo, CSC**  
**Professor Emeritus of Liberal Studies**



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# PRAYERS FOR NEW BEGINNINGS

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See, I am making all things new.  
—Revelation 21:5

**W**e are always beginning again: new relationships, new homes, new experiences. The crux of our Christian faith—the Resurrection—teaches us that new life always follows death. Whether literal or figurative, new life also calls for blessing. These prayers express gratitude for all the newness of life and ask for God’s presence as we undertake new ventures, make new commitments, and begin new journeys.



## I Tremble on the Edge of a Maybe

O God of beginnings,  
as your Spirit moved  
over the face of the deep  
on the first day of creation,  
move with me now





in my time of beginnings,  
when the air is rain-washed,  
the bloom is on the bush,  
and the world seems fresh  
and full of possibilities,  
and I feel ready and full.  
I tremble on the edge of a maybe,  
a first time,  
a new thing,  
a tentative start,  
and the wonder of it lays its fingers on my lips.

In silence, Lord,  
I share now my eagerness  
and my uneasiness  
about this something different  
I would be or do;  
and I listen for your leading  
to help me separate the light  
from the darkness  
in the change I seek to shape  
and which is shaping me.

**Ted Loder**

## Prayer for the Spiritual Journey

God of life,  
give us a vision of our earthly journey.  
Guide us on our pilgrimage through this world.  
Be our constant companion as we find our way.  
Help us when we get lost.  
Strengthen us in times of fear.  
Grant us the courage to cross the borders that divide  
and break down the walls that exclude.





May we offer a welcome to all,  
especially our neighbor in need.  
And at the end of our sojourn,  
as we cross the border of death,  
lead us to our true homeland,  
where we hope to know at last your eternal embrace  
and be united as one body in Christ.

**Daniel G. Groody, CSC**

### Prayer for the First Day of the Year

Eternal and Almighty God, who makes all things new,  
we thank you that today you have allowed us to begin a new  
year.

Here in your presence we make our resolutions for the days to  
come.

We resolve to be faithful and true to those who love us,  
and loyal to those who are our friends,  
so that we may never bring worry to their minds or distress to  
their hearts.

We resolve to live in forgiveness and in kindness,  
that, like Jesus, we may go about always doing good.

We resolve to live in diligence and effort,  
that we may use the full gifts and the talents that God has given  
us.

We resolve to live in goodness and purity,  
that we ourselves may resist temptation,  
and that we may be a strength to others who are tempted.

