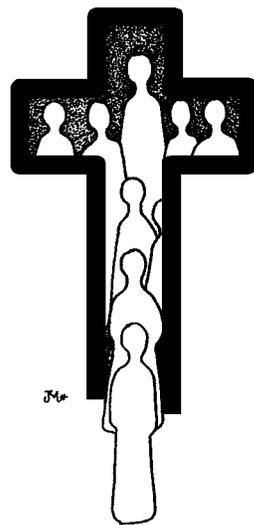


Pastoral Council Prayers and Faith Sharing

Lent – Easter 2021

Cycle B



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Department of Pastoral Services, Diocese of Rochester

AN INVITATION TO PRAY WITH YOUR PASTORAL COUNCIL

These opening and closing prayers have been prepared to help your pastoral council become what it is intended to be: a *leadership body* in *communion* with God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and focused on enabling the community to carry out the *mission* of the Church (to proclaim the Gospel, to worship God, to form community, and to serve especially those in need). As stated in the “Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines” of the Diocese of Rochester, the specific purposes of the pastoral council are:

- to develop a common vision and purpose, actively advocate for the poor and the powerless, and to extend Christian commitment to the surrounding neighborhoods and communities;
- to orchestrate a statement of mission for the parish community and become the reference point for activity in the parish;
- to provide recommendations for priorities, directions, and policies through pastoral planning for worship, evangelization, outreach, stewardship, etc.;
- to promote communication, understanding, and collaboration among parish organizations and between the parish, the diocese, and the universal Church.

In our rush to “get the business of the council done” we may forget that we are challenged to ongoing renewal through prayer, study, listening, and dialogue. Because of our familiarity with secular boards of directors, we may forget that we are a body of church leaders engaged with our pastor or pastoral administrator in discerning the ways God is speaking to this community in this time and place. For our actions to be imbued with the wisdom of God, they must begin with prayer, followed by listening to one another in faith and love and listening to the larger community of parishioners in similar faith and love, and end again in prayer.

And so, you are invited and encouraged to set aside time at the beginning and end of your pastoral council meetings to use these prayers. We are confident that the quality of your relationships with one another and the community at large and the quality of your decisions will be enhanced as you take time for shared prayer in God’s presence.

Peace and blessings,

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Hints for the Prayer Leader

It may be helpful to designate a different person on your council to lead prayer for each meeting. In this way, more and more of the leaders of your community will gain experience with leading prayer in small groups.

Preparation before the Pastoral Council meeting

1. Read through the prayer session for the Sunday following your meeting. Become familiar with it.
2. Make enough copies of the prayer for all you expect to attend the meeting. You may distribute these at the beginning of the meeting or send them out to members ahead of time along with the agenda and minutes of the previous meeting.
3. If a visual image is suggested for this particular prayer session, bring it to the meeting if possible. Having an image in the center of the gathering will help members remember throughout the evening that the meeting unfolds in God's presence.

A Walk Through the Prayer Outline

Prayer at the beginning of the meeting (allow 10-15 minutes on your agenda):

1. Invite those present to become quiet and remember that they are in the presence of God. After a brief pause, begin the **Invitation to Prayer**.
2. Either read the **Scripture** passage yourself or have someone else do so (ask them before the meeting begins).
3. Allow several minutes for **silent reflection** and consideration of the faith sharing questions.
4. Invite those present to respond (in groups of two or three or in the larger council group) to any of the suggested **questions for faith sharing** out loud. People may also choose to share how the reading spoke to them in general. All do not need to respond but allow silent pauses so that people can reflect comfortably.
5. Go on to the beginning of your meeting's agenda.

Prayer at the end of the meeting (allow 5 minutes on your agenda):

1. Begin the **intercessory prayers** as written in the prayer session.
2. Invite others to share their own prayers aloud.
3. When all who choose to share prayers are done, say "For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts."
4. Begin the **closing prayer**.

Notes

1. The intercessory prayers may be moved to the end of the “prayer at the beginning of the meeting” or offered in the middle of the meeting—as well as at the end as suggested in the prayer sessions.
2. These prayer sessions, while designed for pastoral councils, can be used at the meetings of the parish staff and other parish committees with minor adaptation.

Faith Sharing Guidelines

Each person is led by God on his or her personal spiritual journey. Faith sharing refers to shared reflections on the action of God in one’s experience as related to Scripture and faith. Faith sharing is not discussion, problem solving, or scripture study. The purpose is an encounter, between a person in the concrete circumstances of life and the Word of God, which leads to a conversion of heart. The entire faith sharing process is seen as prayer, i.e. listening to the Word of God as revealed in scripture and in each other’s experience.

1. Participants are given time to reflect before sharing begins, and a period of comfortable silence might occur between individuals sharing. Silence is a vital part of the total process of faith sharing.
2. Sharing is optional. Each person shares at the time and on the level where he or she feels comfortable.
3. There is no set order for sharing (you do not need to go in a circle around the group).
4. Listen respectfully and openly. If someone does not hear the sharing or does not understand, he or she can ask for clarification.
5. There is no discussion or commenting on what is shared. An appropriate response from the prayer leader or group might be a smile, a nod, or a “thank you.”
6. The prayer leader and group are not there as “problem solvers” or “advice givers.”
7. Participants are encouraged to share in the first person (I feel...I believe...etc.).
8. Anything that is shared in the group is confidential and does not leave the group. It is meant to be a gift for this group only.

Beginning Lent
1st Sunday of Lent, Cycle B
February 21, 2021

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: The Covenant God made with Noah is different from the covenants made with Abraham and Moses in that it encompasses the whole of creation. Lord, help us to understand the immensity of your covenant with us and every living creature, and give us a longing to be good stewards of your creation.

All: Give us a longing to be good stewards of your creation

Leader: Teach us integrity that we may honor every human person.

All: Give us a longing to be good stewards of your creation

Leader: Teach us righteousness as we work towards equal distribution of resources to all.

All: Give us a longing to be good stewards of your creation

Leader: Teach us kindness to our forests, our animals, our seas and our sky.

All: Give us a longing to be good stewards of your creation

Leader: Fill us with a new appreciation for our part in the new covenant.

All: Give us a longing to be good stewards of your creation

Scripture Reading: Gen. 9:8-15

God said to Noah and to his sons with him: See, I am now establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you: the birds, the tame animals, and all the wild animals that were with you—all that came out of the ark. I will establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all creatures be destroyed by the waters of a flood; there shall not be another flood to devastate the earth. God said: This is the sign of the covenant that I am making between me and you and every living creature with you for all ages to come: I set my bow in the clouds to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and every living creature—every mortal being—so that the waters will never again become a flood to destroy all things of flesh.

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing

1. How does God's covenant with us and all creation fit into this season of Lent?
2. What do we as a faith community need to focus on in terms of God's creation?
3. How might we share the resources of this community to improve the life of another community this Lent?

Prayer at the End of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: For those who hunger, we pray...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For the homeless in our streets, we pray...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For those overwhelmed with grief or anger, we pray...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

For what else shall we pray?

(When all are finished offering prayers)

For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Closing Prayer

All: The season of Lent invites us to renew our covenantal relationship with God and the entire creation.

We ask God to open our hearts to a greater awareness and understanding of this call.

We make our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

“This is my Son, the beloved; listen to him”
2nd Sunday of Lent, Cycle B
February 28, 2021

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: This is my Son, the beloved; listen to him.

All: This is my Son, the beloved; listen to him.

Leader: Jesus leads us up the mountains of goodness and truth.

All: This is my Son, the beloved; listen to him.

Leader: We stand side by side with our ancestors in faith.

All: This is my Son, the beloved; listen to him.

Leader: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

All: This is my Son, the beloved; listen to him.

Scripture Reading: Mark 9:2-10

After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no fuller on earth could bleach them.

Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were conversing with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here! Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He hardly knew what to say, they were so terrified.

Then a cloud came, casting a shadow over them; then from the cloud came a voice, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him."

Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone but Jesus alone with them. As they were coming down from the mountain, he charged them not to relate what they had seen to anyone, except when the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what rising from the dead meant.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing

1. Where have we heard the Good News of Jesus this past week?
2. How can we prepare ourselves to listen carefully to the Word of God that will be spoken in this meeting?
3. How might I proclaim the living Word to others?

Prayer at the End of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: For what shall we pray ...
(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Closing Prayer

**All: God who speaks to us,
open our hearts and ears to truly listen
to your words of guidance and truth.
Keep us faithful always to your ways
as we exercise our ministries of care and leadership.
We make our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.**

Christ is the Wisdom of God
3rd Sunday of Lent, Cycle B
March 7, 2021

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: This is my Son, the beloved; listen to him.

All: This is my Son, the beloved; listen to him.

Leader: The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul;
the decree of the Lord is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple.

All: This is my Son, the beloved; listen to him.

Leader: The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;
the command of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eye.

All: This is my Son, the beloved; listen to him.

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:22-25

The Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom,
but we proclaim Christ crucified,
a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,
but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike,
Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.
For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom,
and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing

1. Who are the “wisdom keepers” in this parish/community?
2. What things happening in our life/world can distract us from serving God and staying focused on the needs of our community?
3. How can I let God’s power and wisdom have a stronger hold in my life?

Prayer at the End of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: As we seek to find new ways to proclaim your power and love...

All: Give us wisdom, Lord.

Leader: As we seek to respond to the needs of the poor in our community...

All: Give us wisdom, Lord.

Leader: As we weep with those who mourn...

All: Give us wisdom, Lord.

Leader: For what else shall we pray?
(When all are finished offering prayers)
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

All: Give us wisdom, Lord.

Closing Prayer

**All: Grant us your true wisdom, Lord,
as we your servants reflect on the needs of this community.
May our ministry always reflect your word,
your truth, and your compassion.
We make our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.**

We are God's Handiwork
4th Sunday of Lent, Cycle B
March 14, 2021

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: We are God's handiwork.

All: We are God's handiwork.

Leader: Created in Christ,

All: We are God's handiwork.

Leader: Made for a life of good deeds,

All: We are God's handiwork.

Leader: God's dream made flesh,

All: We are God's handiwork.

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2: 4-10

God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ (by grace you have been saved), raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast.

For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing

1. What gifts do I feel God gave me to share with this community?
2. What are some of the other gifts I see around this table?
3. What do we learn about God through the distribution of these gifts?

Prayer at the End of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: In thanksgiving for all this day has brought to us we pray...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: In compassion for those with low self-esteem, unaware of the gifts you have given them...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For those seeking new gifts of strength and courage at this time...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For what else shall we pray?
(When all are finished offering prayers)
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Closing Prayer

**All: Creator God,
we offer you this day
the works of our hearts, hands and minds.
We know that all our good gifts come from you.
We pray we may always use them to the glory of your name. Amen.**

I am Your God, You are my People
5th Sunday of Lent, Cycle B
March 21, 2021

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: Create a clean heart in me, O God.
All: Create a clean heart in me, O God.

Leader: Have mercy on us, O Lord.
All: Create a clean heart in me, O God.

Leader: Show us your compassion.
All: Create a clean heart in me, O God.

Leader: Fill us with a new Spirit.
All: Create a clean heart in me, O God.

Leader: Give us true joy.
All: Create a clean heart in me, O God.

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34

The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers the day I took them by the hand to lead them forth from the land of Egypt; for they broke my covenant and I had to show myself their master, says the Lord.

But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

No longer will they have need to teach their friends and kinsmen how to know the Lord. All, from least to greatest, shall know me, says the Lord, for I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing

1. What do you think it means when God says, “I will be their God and they shall be my people?”
2. How do we live this out in our community? What characteristics might be displayed in the parish community that were different than the mainstream culture?

Prayer at the End of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: For courage to live a holy life as part of your Covenant, we pray...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For grace to be the face of Christ in the larger community, we pray...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For conviction to believe that You can heal our hearts and those of the suffering, and the poor in our neighborhoods, we pray...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For what else shall we pray?
(When all are finished offering prayers)
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Closing Prayer

**All: God everlasting light, help us to “see you more clearly,
follow you more nearly,
and love you more dearly,
day by day.” Amen.**

What She Has Done
Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion, Cycle B
March 28, 2021

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: Almighty God, Ruler of Heaven and Earth
Christ Jesus, Redeemer
Holy Spirit, Counselor to the Disciples

All: Open our hearts to your word. Guide us in your ways.

Scripture Reading: Mark 14: 3-9

While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. But some were there who said to one another in anger, "Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they scolded her. But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing

1. What is it that this woman has done that makes her action such an intrinsic part of the gospel message?
2. How is she a model of discipleship?
3. What can we, as modern-day disciples, learn from her example?

Prayer at the End of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: May the story of Jesus' passion and death ground us in awesome gratitude for the overwhelming graciousness of our God. Let us pray in Jesus' name.

All: Suffering Servant, receive our prayer.

Leader: May the lives we lead and the people we become be a fitting and glorious response to the divine love Jesus has shown us.

All: Suffering Servant, receive our prayer.

Leader: May we listen with open hearts to the stories of discipleship of all faithful women and men, past and present, as they break open for us the meaning of the gospel message.

All: Suffering Servant, receive our prayer.

Leader: For what else shall we pray...
(When all are finished offering prayers)
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts.

All: Suffering Servant, receive our prayer.

Closing Prayer

Leader: The closing prayer tonight is a single line of affirmation, the faith-filled words Jesus spoke in the darkest hours of his commitment to proclaim the gospel message. I will say the words that Jesus said at the Garden of Gethsemane: "Abba, all things are possible to you." We will take a moment of silence to take in Jesus' prayer. Each of you is then invited to respond from your own heart repeating the words: "Abba, all things are possible to you." And we will end together with "Amen."

Leader: *Abba, all things are possible to you.*

(When all who choose to do so have voiced the affirmation: "Abba, all things are possible to you.)
Let us pray.

All: Amen.

Witnesses
Easter Sunday, Cycle B
April 4, 2021

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: Let us pray...

Women: Give glory to Our God the Lord Almighty.

Men: We praise you, Lord God of Mercies.

Women: Give glory to Our Merciful God.

Men: We praise you, Lord Jesus, our brother and friend.

Women: Give glory to Our God who invites us into Love.

Men: We praise you, O God. Your love is everlasting.

All: Amen.

Scripture Reading: Acts 10:34a, 37-43

Peter began to speak and said:

“You know what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

“We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and granted that he be visible, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

“He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name.”

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Silent Reflection

Question for Faith Sharing

We are witnesses that the Risen Christ continues in our day to heal the oppressed and to do good. If you were called upon to testify to the redeeming power of Jesus Christ in your life, what experience or reflection on your own life would you share?

Prayer at the End of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: In the name of Jesus, grant us forgiveness, and let the peace of Christ reign. Grant that we grow in intimacy with you as more and more we come to recognize your presence and action in our lives. Let us pray...

All: Lord, receive our prayer.

Leader: Grant that the power of Christ be made visible through us. Let us pray...

All: Lord, receive our prayer.

Leader: For what else shall we pray?
(When all who choose to do so are finished voicing their prayers)
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

All: Lord, receive our prayer.

Closing Prayer

**All: Glory to God in the Highest
Sing glory to God
Glory to God in the Highest
And peace to God's people on earth.**