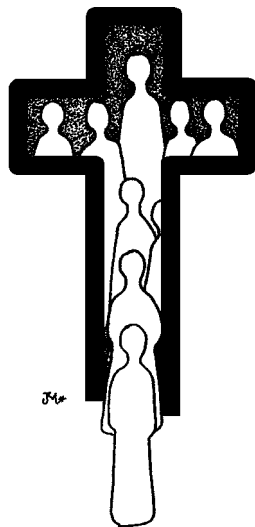


Pastoral Council Prayers and Faith Sharing

Advent through the 6th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Cycle B



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.

Keep Watch
First Sunday of Advent, Cycle B
November 29, 2020

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: Lord God, as we enter into a new liturgical year, help us to watch for you. Give us the eyes of faith that we may follow in your path. Bless our conversation at this meeting and may all we do be pleasing to you. This we ask in the Holy Name of Jesus.

All: Amen.

Scripture Reading: Mark 13:33-37

Jesus said to his disciples:

"But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come.

It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch.

Watch, therefore; you do not know when the lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning.

May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping.

What I say to you, I say to all: "Watch!"

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

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing (choose one or two questions for faith sharing)

1. When we sleep we are cut off from the rest of the world. Our eyes are closed to the needs of others. Perhaps this is why the metaphor of sleep is seen in a negative way within this passage. How is God calling you out of sleep, out of passivity, to awaken your faith to serve God and others?
2. What are some of the challenges to stay watchful?
3. How is God using this passage of scripture to help you to grow in your faith?
4. How is God using this passage of scripture to help our parish to grow in faith?

Prayer at the End of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: For our local Church, may we be attentive to the voice of God, we pray to the Lord.

All: Awaken us, Lord.

Leader: For an increase in vocations to the priesthood, religious life, and lay ecclesial ministry, we pray to the Lord.

All: Awaken us, Lord.

Leader: For each of us, as we enter into the Advent season, that this will be a time of drawing closer to Christ, we pray to the Lord.

All: Awaken us, Lord.

Leader: Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...
(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts.

All: Awaken us, Lord.

Closing Prayer

All: Our Father . . .

Leader: Go in peace
+in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Comfort, Give Comfort to My People
Second Sunday of Advent, Cycle B
December 6, 2020

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: Lord God, you have said through your prophet Isaiah,
“*Comfort, give comfort to my people.*”
Help us both to experience and to minister that comfort in your name.
This we ask through Jesus Christ, who is our Peace and our Comfort.

All: Amen.

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 40: 1-5, 9-11

Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God.

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service is at an end,
her guilt is expiated; indeed, she has received from the hand of the Lord double
for all her sins.

A voice cries out: in the desert prepare the way of the Lord!
Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!

Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low;
the rugged land shall be made a plain, the rough country, a broad valley.

Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all humankind shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Go up onto a high mountain, Zion, herald of glad tidings;
cry out at the top of your voice, Jerusalem, herald of good news!
Fear not to cry out and say to the cities of Judah: Here is your God!

Here comes, with power, the Lord God, who rules by his strong arm;
here is his reward with him, his recompense before him.

Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs,
carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care.

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

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing (choose one or two questions for faith sharing)

1. How and when do you experience the gift of God's comfort in your life?
2. Within the celebration of the sacraments, how do you receive God's comfort?
3. How does our parish family extend God's comfort to others?

Prayer at the End of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: For all who bring comfort to those who are sick, may they be blessed,
we pray,

All: Send us your comfort, Lord.

Leader: For all ministers of Jesus Christ, that as they offer comfort to us they too
may be comforted by God, we pray,

All: Send us your comfort, Lord.

Leader: For those who are experiencing any distress or persecution, that the
comfort of God will be shown to them, we pray,

All: Send us your comfort, Lord.

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

All: Send us your comfort, Lord.

Closing Prayer

Leader: The child Jesus experienced comfort and love while being held in the arms
of Mary, his mother, and so we pray,

All: Hail Mary. . .

+In the name of the Father and Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Pray Without Ceasing
Third Sunday of Advent, Cycle B
December 13, 2020

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: Gracious God, your son Jesus taught us how to pray. Through the gift of your Spirit, guide our prayer. May this time of prayer and conversation bring us closer to you and help us to understand better your will for our church. This we ask in the holy name of Jesus.

All: Amen.

Scripture Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophetic utterances. Test everything; retain what is good. Refrain from every kind of evil. May the God of peace make you perfectly holy and may you, entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will also accomplish it.

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

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing

If we are going to pray at all times, we can't continually be on our knees. Prayer is not only a posture, but also an attentive and open spirit. Given that, consider the following questions:

1. When do you find time to pray?
2. What is the effect of your prayer time?
3. When do you find it difficult to pray? Do you think it is even possible to pray at those times?

Prayer at the End of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: The Holy Spirit guides our prayer; let us turn to our Advocate in our need:

Leader: When we are distracted in our prayer, we turn to you.

All: Holy Spirit, bless our prayer.

Leader: In planning our liturgies, we turn to you.

All: Holy Spirit, bless our prayer.

Leader: As we teach our children to know God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—we turn to you.

All: Holy Spirit, bless our prayer.

Leader: For the sick, we turn to you.

All: Holy Spirit, bless our prayer.

Leader: For those who do not know how to pray, we turn to you.

All: Holy Spirit, bless our prayer.

Leader: For other prayers we now mention...
(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)
We turn to you.

All: Holy Spirit, bless our prayer.

Closing Prayer

All: Our Father . . .

Leader: Go in peace + in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

I Will Serve the Lord
Fourth Sunday of Advent, Cycle B
December 20, 2020

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: God our Father, you sent your angel to Nazareth to reveal to Mary your plan for salvation. Send your Spirit into our hearts so that everything we do may make Jesus known. May his concern be our concern, and may his love for the poor be our love for the poor. In this we will follow the example of Mary, his mother and ours. This we ask in the holy name of Jesus.

All: Amen.

Scripture Reading: Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary.

And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you."

But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "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 called holy, the Son of God.

"And, behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God."

Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

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

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing

1. When she is visited by Gabriel and told that she will give birth to Jesus, Mary has one question, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" What questions did you have before you began your ministry, your vocation in your family, church, school, or work? How have your questions been answered?
2. In the living of your vocation and your ministry, what can you learn from Our Lady's example as found in this passage?

Prayer at the End of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: For all those seeking to discover their vocation or God's will at this time of their lives, we pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...
(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 our Father, as we prepare to celebrate the birth of your Son, help us to remember that he is our life and our peace. Bless our preparations and strengthen our faith that he may be born through our gestures of love. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Heirs of the Promise
The Epiphany of the Lord, Cycle B
January 3, 2021

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: Loving God,
 You have called us to be your children,
 heirs of the promise made in Christ Jesus.
 Grant us your grace and your guidance
 in this meeting and all days.
 Help us to reveal your love to all we encounter.
 We ask this in the name of the One who is Love Incarnate, Jesus Christ.

All: Amen.

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for your benefit, namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation.

It was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

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

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing (choose one or two questions for faith sharing)

1. Do you truly feel like an heir of the promise revealed in Christ? What privileges and responsibilities does this give you?
2. We will be celebrating the feast of Epiphany this next weekend. How have you revealed the good news to others, inviting them to become an integral part of the body of Christ?
3. How can we, as pastoral council members, serve our people and build up the community as we exercise the power of our position?

Prayer at the End of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: For the people we work with and the people we serve, we pray:

All: Lord, help us reveal your love.

Leader: For those who are sick or suffering, those who are lonely or in need of any kind, we pray:

All: Lord, help us reveal your love.

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, we pray:

All: Lord, help us reveal your love.

Closing Prayer

All: Gracious and merciful God, the magi traveled far to see your glory, revealed in Jesus. Help us appreciate the gift we have been given: the revelation that we are your beloved children, your holy apostles, your prophets by the Spirit. Give us the courage and strength we need to act as members of the same body, coheirs and copartners in the promise revealed by Christ Jesus. Grant that we might live the good news of the gospel and share that news with all we meet. We ask this, as we ask all things, through Jesus our Lord. Amen.

The Baptism of the Lord, Cycle B

January 10, 2021

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: Holy and loving God,
you have invited us to the waters of baptism and made us your own,
caring not for what we have, but what we are.
Guide us to invite others to these waters of life through gentle words and
loving care.
We ask this as we ask all things, in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

All: **Amen.**

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 55:1-11

All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come, receive grain and eat; come, without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk!
Why spend your money for what is not bread; your wages for what fails to satisfy?
Heed me, and you shall eat well, you shall delight in rich fare.
Come to me heedfully, listen, that you may have life. I will renew with you the everlasting covenant, the benefits assured to David.
As I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander of nations,
so shall you summon a nation you knew not,
and nations that knew you not shall run to you,
because of the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, who has glorified you.
Seek the Lord while he may be found, call him while he is near.
Let the scoundrel forsake his way, and the wicked man his thoughts;
let him turn to the Lord for mercy; to our God, who is generous in forgiving.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.
As high as the heavens are above the earth,
so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts.
For just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down
and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful,
giving seed to him who sows and bread to him who eats,
so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth;
it shall not return to me void, but shall do my will,
achieving the end for which I sent it.

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

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing (choose one or two for faith sharing)

1. How has my baptism made a difference in my life? How does it make a difference in the way I treat others?
2. How do I help God's word achieve its purpose in my family and community?
3. What are some signs it has taken root in my life, in this community?
4. Have we, as pastoral council members, considered God's will...God's hand in our deliberations? How has that made a difference in what we decide to do?

Prayer at the End of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: Lord, our thoughts are too often not your thoughts, nor are our ways your ways; that we may know your mercy and forgiveness, we pray:

All: Let your word take root in our lives.

Leader: That we may hear your word and heed it, letting it be fertile and fruitful in our families and communities, we pray:

All: Let your word take root in our lives.

Leader: For what else shall we pray?
(When all are finished offering prayers) That God may answer these prayers in kindness and compassion, achieving the purpose God intends, we pray:

All: Let your word take root in our lives.

Closing Prayer

**All: Gracious and merciful God,
let us be the seed of your word in the world. Help us to see with your eyes, to think with your mind, to act with your compassion.
Strengthen our baptismal commitment to you so that, at the end of this life, we may have achieved the end for which you sent us. We ask this through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Discerning Our Call
2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B
January 17, 2021

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: O Holy God,
many voices call our names; many paths invite us to follow.
Only your call invites us to true life.
Help us to listen carefully, to discern your voice,
to have the courage to follow you.
We ask this as we ask all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

All: Amen.

Scripture Reading: 1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19

Samuel was sleeping in the temple of the Lord where the ark of God was. The Lord called to Samuel, who answered, "Here I am."

He ran to Eli and said, "Here I am. You called me." "I did not call you," Eli said. "Go back to sleep." So he went back to sleep.

Again the Lord called Samuel, who rose and went to Eli. "Here I am," he said. "You called me." But he answered, "I did not call you, my son. Go back to sleep."

At that time Samuel was not familiar with the Lord, because the Lord had not revealed anything to him as yet. The Lord called Samuel again, for the third time. Getting up and going to Eli, he said, "Here I am. You called me." Then Eli understood that the Lord was calling the youth.

So he said to Samuel, "Go to sleep, and if you are called, reply, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'"

When Samuel went to sleep in his place, the Lord came and revealed his presence, calling out as before, "Samuel, Samuel!" Samuel answered, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

Samuel grew up, and the Lord was with him, not permitting any word of his to be without effect.

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

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing (choose one or two questions for faith sharing)

1. Many voices--from our families, friends, merchants, and media--call out to each of us every day. How are you able to discern the voice of God among them?
2. How do you, as a follower of Christ, help others to hear the voice of God and follow?
3. We hear of a vocations crisis, yet some would insist the call is for new ways of serving God in the world today. What are some new ways God may be calling you or the people of this community? How will you answer?

Prayer at the End of the Meeting

You may want to end the meeting with the song "Here I Am Lord" instead of or in addition to the following prayers of petition and closing prayer.

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: God calls each of us to love and service. Let us take some time to think about the ways God is calling us today and how we might best listen to that call.

Lord, in the midst of many voices, we long to hear your one, true summons. Teach us to listen and respond to whatever you ask of us, we pray:

All: Here we are. You called us.

Leader: When we see situations of injustice or need, may we be your instruments of mercy and compassion, we pray:

All: Here we are. You called us.

Leader: When we see distress of body, mind, or spirit, may we be your instruments of healing, we pray:

All: Here we are. You called us.

Leader: When we encounter disagreements and divisions, may we be your instruments of peace, we pray:

All: Here we are. You called us.

Leader: When we see death, mourning and despair, may we be your instruments of gentleness and hope, we pray:

All: Here we are. You called us.

Closing Prayer

**All: Gracious and merciful God,
help us to hear your voice every day, every moment of our lives.
Be with us and do not permit any word of ours to be without effect as long as it is spoken in your name. We ask this, through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Seeking God's Guidance
3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B
January 24, 2021

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: Compassionate and loving God,
 everything we are comes from you. Everything we have is your gift.
 Guide us to become the people you intended us to be. Teach us to use our
 gifts and our material goods to help others and to bring about your reign.
 We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, and your Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Scripture Reading: Psalm 25: 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

Read this passage slowly...pause for silent reflection. Reread it and ask people to write down a word or phrase that spoke to them in a special way. Reread it a third time and have people share a word or phrase that spoke to them in a special way.

Make known to me your ways, Lord; teach me your paths.
Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior.
For you I wait all the long day, because of your goodness, Lord.
Remember your compassion and love, O Lord; for they are ages old.
Remember no more the sins of my youth;
remember me only in light of your love.
Good and upright is the Lord, who shows sinners the way,
guides the humble rightly, and teaches the humble the way.

Questions for Faith Sharing

1. Why do you think this word or phrase was so significant to you at this time?
2. What do you believe God is telling you through this?
3. What could this mean for this meeting and any decisions that are to be made?

Prayer at the End of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: We believe God answers all who humbly ask for guidance. When shades of doubt cross our hearts and minds:

All: Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior.

Leader: When we are challenged by unkind words or hateful actions:

All: Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior.

Leader: When faced with the challenges of sickness, aging, or death:

All: Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior.

Leader: For what else shall we pray?
(When all are finished offering prayers)
God, answer these prayers of our hearts in kindness and compassion:

All: Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior.

Closing Prayer

Leader: Let us pray Psalm 25 slowly together, remembering the words and phrases that spoke to us in a special way earlier:

All **Make known to me your ways, Lord; teach me your paths.**
Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior.
For you I wait all the long day, because of your goodness, Lord.
Remember your compassion and love, O Lord; for they are ages old.
Remember no more the sins of my youth;
remember me only in light of your love.
Good and upright is the Lord, who shows sinners the way,
guides the humble rightly, and teaches the humble the way.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,
who is, who was, and is to come at the end of the ages. Alleluia.

Discerning the Voices of True Prophets
4th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B
January 31, 2021

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: Holy and loving God,
 in every age you call your people to speak out
 against wrongdoing and injustice in order to defend your truth.
 Help us to recognize these prophets
 and grant us the courage to follow their call.
 We ask this as we ask all things, in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

All: Amen.

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 18:15-22

Moses spoke to all the people, saying:

“A prophet like me will the Lord, your God, raise up for you from among your own kinsmen; to him you shall listen. This is exactly what you requested of the Lord, your God, at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let us not again hear the voice of the Lord, our God, nor see this great fire any more, lest we die.'

“And the Lord said to me, 'This was well said. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kinsmen, and will put my words into his mouth; he shall tell them all that I command him. If anyone will not listen to my words which he speaks in my name, I myself will make him answer for it. But if a prophet presumes to speak in my name an oracle that I have not commanded him to speak, or speaks in the name of other gods, he shall die.'

"If you say to yourselves, 'How can we recognize an oracle which the Lord has spoken?', know that, even though a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if his oracle is not fulfilled or verified, it is an oracle which the Lord did not speak. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously, and you shall have no fear of him.

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

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing (choose one or two questions for faith sharing)

1. What prophets have you heard in your lifetime (famous and not)? How has their message affected you?
2. Have you ever acted as a prophet to others? What was their reaction?
3. How can we, as Pastoral Council members, help our people recognize and hear the voices of God's prophets today?

Prayer at the End of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: We ask God for the wisdom to recognize and heed the voices of the true prophets in our midst. When the cries of prophets rise up among us to fight injustice, we pray:

All: Guide us in your truth and help us do your will.

Leader: When we are challenged by those who oppose God's life-giving ways, we pray:

All: Guide us in your truth and help us do your will.

Leader: When we face persecution for proclaiming our Christian values, we pray:

All: Guide us in your truth and help us do your will.

(The leader may add or invite prayers that address the concerns dealt with in this meeting.)

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: Guide us in your truth and help us do your will.

Leader: God, grant us the ability to hear the true prophets among us and to follow the call that reflects your will. We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ.

All: Amen.

Closing Prayer

Leader: Let us pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit:

**All: Breath into me, Holy Spirit,
that my thoughts may all be holy.
Move in me, Holy Spirit,
that my work too, may be holy.
Attract my heart, Holy Spirit,
that I may love only what is holy.
Strengthen me, Holy Spirit,
that I may defend all that is holy.
Protect me, Holy Spirit,
that I always may be holy. Amen.**

Doing God's Will with Urgency
5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B
February 7, 2021

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: Healing God,
 you sent Jesus, the Word Incarnate, to dwell among us
 and to bring your healing, peace and promise to all.
 Help us to imitate him in his total willingness to serve others.
 We ask this as we ask all things, in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

All: Amen.

Scripture Reading: Mark 1:29-39

On leaving the synagogue Jesus entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever. They immediately told him about her. He approached, grasped her hand, and helped her up. Then the fever left her and she waited on them.

When it was evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were ill or possessed by demons. The whole town was gathered at the door. He cured many who were sick with various diseases, and he drove out many demons, not permitting them to speak because they knew him.

Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed. Simon and those who were with him pursued him and on finding him said, "Everyone is looking for you."

He told them, "Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come."

So he went into their synagogues, preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee.

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

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing (choose one or two questions for faith sharing)

1. Jesus moves quickly from healing Simon's mother-in-law and healing those of the town to other villages. How eager have I been to do God's will and to move on to new places to spread the Good News? How can I be more like Jesus in this?
2. Jesus took time to go off to a deserted place and pray. When I am busy and filled with urgency, do I find time to pray? How can I do so?
3. How can we help our community to be eager to bring healing and peace to others while remaining rooted in prayer?

Prayer at the End of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: When we see people in need, help us to be eager to assist them, we pray:
All: Lord, let us fulfill your purpose in our lives.

Leader: When we are overcome with stress and the pressures of everyday life, remind us that we are your own and call us to pray:
All: Lord, let us fulfill your purpose in our lives.

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, let us fulfill your purpose in our lives.

Closing Prayer

(Note: the Prayer of St. Francis may also be sung.)

Leader: Let us pray the words of St. Francis together, praying that we might truly fulfill God's will for our lives:

**All: Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.**

**O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.**

Serving the Greater Good
6th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B
February 14, 2021

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you just.
All: **Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you just.**

Leader: Happy are those who forgive.
All: **Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you just.**

Leader: Happy are those who are forgiven.
All: **Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you just.**

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 10: 31- 11:1

Whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.
Avoid giving offense,
whether to Jews or Greeks or the church of God,
just as I try to please everyone in every way,
not seeking my own benefit but that of the many,
that they may be saved.
Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

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

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing

1. What does it mean for us to glorify God?
2. What are the ways that we glorify God in our parish or community?

Prayer at the End of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: In gratitude for good people, compassionate hearts and new ideas, we pray...

All: Glory to God!

Leader: For our loved ones, who bring us such joy, we pray...

ALL: Glory to God!

Leader: For the beauty of God's world that lifts our hearts...

All: Glory to God!

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

All: Glory to God!

Closing Prayer

**All: God of all goodness,
we rejoice in the good gifts you give to us, your people.
Create in us hearts of gratitude and praise.
We make our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen**