

OF
CATHOLIC DIOCESE
BISHOP'S PASTORAL OFFICE
CHRISTCHURCH



Ideas and Resources for the
Year of Prayer 2024



Introduction

Pope Francis has declared 2024 a Year of Prayer for the Catholic Church as a lead up to the Jubilee Year in 2025. In preparation for the Jubilee, dioceses are invited to promote initiatives to remind people of the centrality of both individual prayer and community prayer.

“I wanted next year, in preparation for the 2025 Jubilee, to be entirely dedicated to prayer ... (to) rediscover the centrality of prayer ... Let us renew every day the joy and commitment to be men and women of prayer. Prayer that comes from the heart”.

Pope Francis

“(T)oday we begin the Year of Prayer; that is, a year dedicated to rediscovering the great value and absolute need for prayer in personal life, in the life of the Church, and in the world.

Pope Francis - Jan 21st, 2024

This short resource has been developed to help parishes respond to the call of Pope Francis and dedicate this year to prayer.

“In this time of preparation, I would greatly desire that we devote 2024, the year preceding the Jubilee event, to a great “symphony” of prayer. Prayer, above all else, to renew our desire to be in the presence of the Lord, to listen to him and to adore him. Prayer, moreover, to thank God for the many gifts of his love for us and to praise his work in creation, which summons everyone to respect it and to take concrete and responsible steps to protect it. Prayer as the expression of a single “heart and soul” (cf. Acts 4:32), which then translates into solidarity and the sharing of our daily bread. Prayer that makes it possible for every man and woman in this world to turn to the one God and to reveal to him what lies hidden in the depths of their heart. Prayer as the royal road to holiness, which enables us to be contemplative even in the midst of activity”.

Theme - The Our Father

In a letter about the upcoming Jubilee Year written in 2022, the Holy Father outlined his desire for an “intense year of prayer in which hearts are opened to receive the outpouring of God’s grace” and he set forth the theme; “to make the “Our Father,” the prayer Jesus taught us, the life programme of each of his disciples”.

“What would happen if we seriously, boldly, insistently, persistently prayed the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer - not as something to race through at Mass - but huge important real life-and-death prayer requests that we are desperate to see answered as outlined in the Catholic Catechism?”

Sherry Weddell

CC2750 *“By entering into the holy name of the Lord Jesus we can accept from within, the prayer he teaches us: “Our Father!” His priestly prayer fulfils, from within, the great petitions of the Lord’s Prayer: concern for the Father’s name, passionate zeal for his kingdom, the accomplishment of the will of the Father, of his plan of salvation and deliverance from evil”.*

Catechism of the Catholic Church



Ideas for parishes

Fr Jacques Philippe writes that it is “prayer that will give birth to all renewal in society and the world” ... the most useful thing the church can do today is to give people a thirst for prayer and teach them how to pray”.

This year of prayer is an opportune time for parishes to do this.

The following are some ideas that a parish might want to consider for celebrating the Year of Prayer. It might be opportune for a parish to form a small group to consider these ideas and plan some initiatives.

“It will suffice to tell you in a word - only your deep and profound union with God will assure the fruitfulness of your apostolate - whatever it may be”

St Pope Paul VI

Lent

The season of Lent is the perfect time to introduce this Year to parishioners. Lent is about turning back to the Lord, a time of renewal and conversion. The three great pillars of the Lenten Season are Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving. People make an effort to do something extra. Therefore Lent is the perfect time to introduce this.

- During the Lenten season you might like to introduce the Year of Prayer during a Sunday homily. Invite the people gathered to respond to the call of Pope Francis to commit to (1) *go deeper in their commitment to pray in 2024, and in their love of God and* (2) *to think about how they might accompany someone else to pray during the coming Year of Prayer.*
- Also during Lent, the perpetual adoration chapel will be promoted across all Masses in Christchurch. If allowed, an adorer will give a testimony and invite people to ‘come and see’.
- Many of the other ideas listed below can be run or started in the Lenten season.





The Our Father

The Holy Father has asked that The Our Father is the theme of the year of prayer and that it becomes the “life programme of each...disciple”.

- Dedicate two or three Sunday homilies to explaining the Our Father
- Use seven Sunday Newsletters to explain each of the seven petitions contained in the Our Father.
- Have a parish retreat or parish mission (see below) using the theme of The Our Father.

40 Hours of Eucharistic Adoration *- Lord teach us to Pray*

Fr Jacques Philippe writes that it is important for parishes to have a couple of big prayer events each year to give people a thirst for prayer and to teach them how to pray.

One of the best ways to do this is to run the 40 Hour Eucharist Devotion. During the 40 hours of prayer, it is possible to include many prayer experiences such as a family or school holy hour, Taize prayer hour, Reconciliation, Morning, Evening and Night Prayer of the Church, Rosary (Scriptural or visual), Stations of the Cross, Chaplet of Divine Mercy and more. These give people attending an experience of different forms of prayer.

The Pastoral Office has all the resources to help you organise and run a 40 hour devotion.





The parish as a school of prayer

St Pope John Paul II wrote that parishes “must become genuine “schools” of prayer”, where people meet Christ, learn to pray “so that “Prayer develops that conversation with Christ which makes us his intimate friends”. “From these schools of prayer, the entire church should set out into the deep on mission and evangelisation”. Therefore “education in prayer should become in some way a key-point of all pastoral planning”.

All of the ideas below and above help form parishes as schools of prayer. The Pastoral Office can offer a 90min formation talk on this topic for your parish.

Parish Mission / Retreat

These are powerful moments in which people encounter or reencounter Jesus Christ, experience prayer and learn to pray. A three-night parish mission on the Our Father or Prayer would be a beautiful way to help people go deeper in their prayer life. The Pastoral Office can help you with organising a parish mission or retreat.

The First 15

This idea encourages every parish meeting or gathering in 2024 starts with 15 minutes of prayer. From parish councils to staff meetings, to AGM's, to leadership teams. The pastoral office can provide you with prayer resources to help you with this.



Public Prayer / Prayer of the Church

St Pope John Paul II said that it was important to use the official prayer of the Church - and to teach people how to pray it. It is also important to do this together - St John Vianney said "Private prayer is like straw scattered here and there: If you set it on fire, it makes a lot of little flames. But gather these straws into a bundle and light them, and you get a mighty fire, rising like a column into the sky; public prayer is like that."

- One suggestion is that parishes could pray the prayer of the church before Mass during the week.

Parish Pilgrimage to a Shrine

In an address to reactors of Shrines in November 2023, Pope Francis spoke about the importance of visiting shrines and other places of prayer in the lives of the faithful. He said that "it is necessary for us to remain ever mindful that our Shrines are truly privileged places of prayer". During the same talk he talked more about the Year of Prayer.

- Arrange a parish pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Fourviere at Leithfield. Include opportunities for Mass, Adoration, Reconciliation, quiet time and fraternity.
- A parish pilgrimage to Akaroa is another option when people can learn about the roots of the faith in the Christchurch Diocese.

Monthly Night of Love

The "Night of Love" is a new campaign by the World Apostolate of Fatima, calling for nationwide Eucharistic vigils. In support of the United States National Eucharistic Revival, the "Night of Love" vigils of reparation to the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts are held to pray for the return of all those who have fallen away from the faith and from belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. These nights are often held monthly on the First Friday, in honour of the devotions to the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts. Read all about it at the link below.

https://www.ncregister.com/features/night-of-love-eucharistic-vigils?fbclid=IwAR3x_hpXbSQeZp_s1O-gv1FEZ4pHyjOMU9LfcWvGB_RuamFMKZvsh7ks4LU



Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Consider starting or increasing times of Adoration in your parish during the Year of Prayer. Before Weekday Mass is a very good option which gives people an experience of Adoration.

Prayer - *Pope Benedict XVI*

A number of years ago, Pope Benedict gave a series of weekly catechesis on prayer. These 45 lessons are profound and a beautiful way to learn how to pray. Prayer is essential to the life of faith. Pope Benedict examines the foundational principles of the life of prayer. He begins considering what we can learn from the examples of prayer found in a wide range of cultures and eras. Next, he turns to the Bible's teaching about prayer, beginning with Abraham and moving through Moses, the prophets, the Psalms to the example of Jesus. With Jesus Christ, Pope Benedict considers not only the Lord's teaching about prayer, but also his example of how to pray, including the Our Father, his prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane, and prayers on the Cross. The prayers of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and the early Church are also explored. Pope Benedict also draws on insights from spiritual masters, the saints, and the Church's liturgy. He challenges readers to live their relationships with God even more intensely, as it were, at a 'school of prayer'.

Small groups (or existing groups) could be formed to read, reflect and share on these profound messages throughout the year.



FORMED

The Formed website (<https://formed.org/>) has many outstanding resources on prayer. These include:

- **Lectio: Prayer: Finding Intimacy with God** with Dr. Tim Gray In six video sessions, *Lectio: Prayer: Finding Intimacy with God* captures the secret to opening our hearts and minds to Scripture as the means to hear from God and then respond in conversation, basking in his presence and resolving to live in and through his love. <https://watch.formed.org/lectio-prayer-with-dr-tim-gray>
- **33 days to morning glory** <https://watch.formed.org/33-days-to-morning-glory-1>



Sycamore

This formation website (<https://www.sycamore.fm/>) also has many outstanding resources on prayer including resources for the Year of Prayer. These include:

- The year of prayer
<https://www.sycamore.fm/pathways/b-formation-pathways/year-of-prayer/>
- How to Pray
<https://www.sycamore.fm/pathways/b-formation-pathways/how-to-pray/>
- Lent Course
<https://www.sycamore.fm/pathways/b-formation-pathways/lent-course/>





A Year of Serious Intercessory Prayer

For the Year of Prayer, what would a year of serious intercessory prayer look like, that was more than just a bulletin notice or a prayer of the Faithful? Pope Francis talks about “prayer that moves mountains...persistent prayer can lead to miracles “because prayer goes directly to the heart of the tenderness of God”.

How does intercessory prayer provide an engine of discipleship for a parish that leads to real renewal and authentic evangelisation? St John Vianney, patron of Parish Priests, transformed his parish, “is famous for his intense prayer before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament for the conversion of the people of his parish”. What does the prayer of intercession look like in your parish - what could it look like in 2024? Here are some suggestions.

- Homily / Newsletter formation on the idea of organised intercessory prayer for their parish community and mission field as a whole rather than just focusing on individuals praying for their own immediate needs and those of their family and closest friends.
- Have a group of people come together, each take a section of the pews, and pray for those who will sit there during the next Sunday's Masses. And do this every Sunday for a year.
- A Small group of intercessors meets every week for one hour to pray and intercede for the needs of the parish.
- Parishioners walk the streets of the parish praying for the people who live there.

“Intercessory prayer cultivates the soil for the sowing of the Word. It can stir up spiritual hunger in a parish, suburb or city so that the hearts of even those who are from God are prepared to hear the Gospel when it is preached to them.” Intercessory prayer is a healthy part of parish life to support evangelistic efforts”.

Archbishop Vigneron



Conclusion and Further Resources

The Pastoral Office is very happy to help with any of the ideas above. The office has lots of existing resources and we are very happy to come and meet you and plan a programme for the year. Please also check out the resources listed below.

Year of Prayer website

<https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en/giubileo-2025/verso-il-giubileo/2024-anno-della-preghiera.html>

Letter outlining the Jubilee Year and the theme for the Year of Prayer

<https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en/notizie/comunicati/2022/lettera-di-papa-francesco.html>

Address by the Holy Father about prayer and the year of prayer

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2023/november/documents/20231111-incontro-santuari.html>

Understanding the Our Father by Scott Hahn

<https://watch.formed.org/understanding-our-father-biblical-reflections-on-the-lord-s-prayer-by-scott-hahn>

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2023/november/documents/20231111-incontro-santuari.html>

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/angelus/2024/documents/20240121-angelus.html>

Prayer that moves mountains - Pope Francis

<https://www.aciafrica.org/news/3446/persistent-prayer-can-lead-to-miracles-pope-francis-at-general-audience#:~:text=And%20I%20saw%20this%3A%20prayer,prayer%20to%20ask%20for%20grace.%E2%80%9D>

“It would be wrong to think that ordinary Christians can be content with a shallow prayer life that is unable to fill their whole life. In the face of the many trials to which today’s world subject’s faith, they would be not only mediocre Christians but “Christians at risk”.

St Pope John Paul II

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