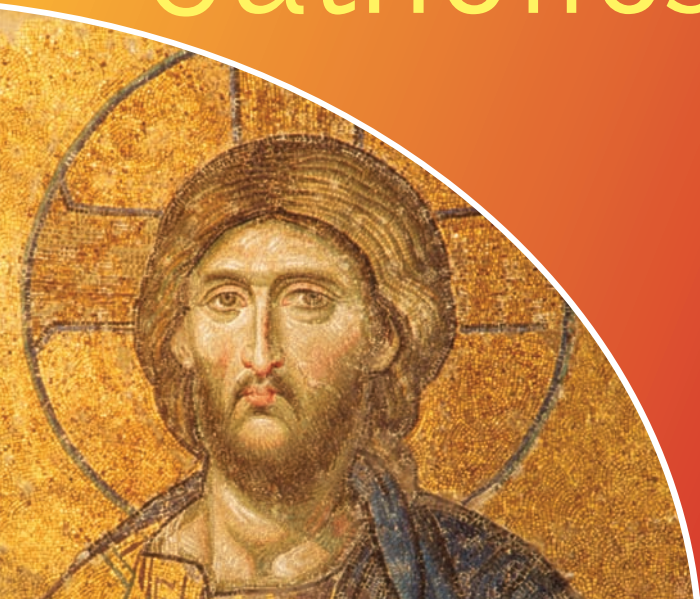


Fr Stephen Wang

A Way of Life for Young Catholics



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A Way of Life for Young Catholics

by
Fr Stephen Wang

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CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY
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- Using this Book -

This Way of Life is written for young Catholics who want to live their faith more deeply but are not sure what steps to take. It contains practical, down-to-earth advice on all sorts of issues that come up in the lives of young Catholics. It is not for experts, but for ordinary young people who have been touched by God in some way but are not sure how to respond. It will be especially helpful for older confirmation candidates, for students at college and university, and for young adults who are hoping to learn more about their faith and put it into practice in the reality of their daily lives.

This is not the kind of book that you read straight through. It is designed so that you can dip into it. Look at the “Table of Contents” and see if anything interests you. There are lots of lists and headings and things to do - this is to make the book clear and easy to use. The risk with giving lists is that we become overwhelmed and do nothing, and end up feeling guilty about what we haven’t done! But the ideas that follow in this *Way of Life* are not meant to be a burden. They are here to give you food for thought, to guide you if you are stuck, to put you in touch with the wisdom and experience of the Church, and hopefully to inspire you. Perhaps one or two suggestions will strike you, and you will be able to put them into practice. You could keep this *Way of Life* on your desk or

by your bed, and come back to it now and then. See if something new strikes you. As you grow in the spiritual life, the Lord will give you new insights just when you need them. And he will nudge you to take new steps when the time is right.

I would like to thank the following people who looked at earlier versions of the text and offered invaluable suggestions about how to improve it: Robbie Low, Kate Finnegan, Simon Bishop, Katy Whisenant, Clare Watkins, and Fergal Martin.

- How to Live your Catholic Faith -

FIVE ESSENTIALS OF CATHOLIC LIFE

Whatever is happening in your life, however busy you are, however lost you feel - these five essentials are the foundation of the Christian life. Do everything you can to make them a part of your life.

1. Daily Prayer - In prayer, we lift our hearts to God, and we let him enter our lives. We don't need to pray a lot, but we do need to pray every day. If we don't, then our faith gets weaker and our love grows cold. At the very least, we can give two or three minutes at the beginning of the day when we wake up, and at the end of the day when we go to bed. It costs us nothing - but what a difference it makes! In the morning, for example, we can pray the Morning Offering, and say the Our Father, and ask God to bless our day. In the evening, we can thank God for the blessings of the day, and say sorry for our sins by saying an Act of Contrition, and finish with the Hail Mary and the Glory Be. These prayers are the foundations of our faith.

2. Sunday Mass - Whenever we go to Mass, the Lord speaks to us through his Holy Word; we are united with Jesus in the Sacrifice he offered on the Cross for our

salvation; we meet him in Holy Communion; we receive the power of his Holy Spirit; and we are united with the whole Church across time and space. It is the holiest act of worship possible on earth. Sometimes we feel inspired, sometimes we feel a bit dry; sometimes we feel very peaceful, sometimes we are completely distracted. The important thing is that we are there, every Sunday. This is not so much a duty, as an invitation. The Lord is there for us. He asks us to love and honour him, and invites us to share his life. How can we refuse? Whatever is happening in your life, however difficult or dry things are - do everything you can to be at Sunday Mass. Don't pretend it doesn't matter, or you are too busy. (We are not obliged to go to Sunday Mass if we are too sick to go, or if we are looking after someone who needs our care and we cannot get away, or if we are travelling and unable to find a church for Mass).

3. Regular Confession - In the Sacrament of Confession, Jesus forgives us our sins, pours out his loving mercy upon us, begins to heal what has gone wrong in the past, and helps us to make a new start in our lives. Of course we can say sorry to God at any time - but there is no more powerful way of receiving God's forgiveness than by going to a priest for confession. And if we have committed any serious sins ('mortal' sins), then we need to go to confession to receive absolution so that we can receive Holy Communion again.

Confession should be a regular part of our lives. A good habit is to try and go every month. We might end up saying the same things each time, or even feel that we don't have much to say - but gradually this habit will help us to grow in holiness and grow closer to Christ. Don't worry if you haven't been to confession for ages; don't worry if you are shy or embarrassed. The priest will help you. (See the section 'How to go to confession' p. 47).

4. Keep the Commandments - It matters how we live our lives. We are called to love God and to love our neighbour. We are called to be holy. Everyone is different, but there are certain ways of life that will help us to be holy, and other ways of life that take us in the wrong direction. We don't have to make things up as we go along: God has revealed to us the way to holiness, in the Ten Commandments, in the teaching of Jesus, and above all in the life and death of Jesus himself, as he lays down his life for us in love and service. And still today, God guides us in our Christian lives and in our moral decisions through the teaching of the Catholic Church. We may struggle and fail in our moral lives, but we can all make a fundamental decision to turn away from evil and to try and live a good life. This decision is what matters most, because then God can help us - in his own time - to overcome our weaknesses and grow in holiness. We can renounce sin, and promise to do everything in our power to keep his commandments.

5. Love Your Neighbour - Your neighbour is whoever you are with at any moment. It might be someone at home, or at work, or at college; it might be someone in the street or in the shop; it might be someone you are phoning or emailing or instant messaging. You might be very close to this person, or you might not know them at all. Whoever they are, you are called to love them, to be kind to them, to respect them, to support them, and to pray for them. It may be that we cannot do much to help them at this time. And it is perfectly natural and good that we should care more about those we are close to (family, relatives, friends, etc.) than about those we hardly know. But the essential thing, once again, is simply to make a decision that we will try to love our neighbour. We are bound to fail sometimes, and there will be situations where we have no idea why or how we should love someone. But at least we know that this person is my neighbour, and they deserve my love, and we will not pretend that they don't exist or that they don't matter.

FIVE ACTIVITIES THAT WILL HELP YOUR FAITH

We can't do all of this, all at once. But here are some things that can help us in our faith. See what is possible for you, and what is helpful. Take a risk - try something. And if it helps you to be stronger and happier and holier in your faith, then that is probably a sign that you should keep it up!

1. Visit the Blessed Sacrament - Some Catholic churches remain locked all day; but many, thank God, are still open. Jesus Christ is present in the Blessed Sacrament, reserved in the tabernacle. This is not just a metaphor or a symbol. He is truly present, true God and true man, in all his power and glory and majesty. Whenever we come near to the tabernacle, even if the Blessed Sacrament is not exposed, we come into his hidden but powerful presence; heaven is laid open before us; and we can share our lives with him in a most intimate and profound way. If you can, make some time to pray before the Blessed Sacrament each week. Make a special 'visit' to the church, just for a few minutes. Or set aside some time before or after Mass for this purpose.

2. Go to Weekday Mass sometimes - You already go to Mass on Sundays, and that is the most important commitment. If there is time in your routine, try and go to Mass during the week; perhaps once a week, or once a month. There might be a Mass at your home church in the early morning or evening; or a lunchtime Mass near your college or work. This 'extra' Mass, which will be quieter and shorter than the Sunday Mass, is another way of dedicating our life to the Lord, and letting his love touch the ordinariness of the week. The power of his Word, and of Holy Communion, give us extra strength and guidance for our daily lives.

3. Do some Spiritual Reading - Find a Catholic spiritual book that encourages or inspires you in your faith. It might be about prayer, or the Christian life, or the saints, or Catholic belief. It doesn't matter, as long as it helps you. And read a little bit each day; or each week (perhaps on a Sunday). It is amazing how much a few wise thoughts can help us. We realise we are not alone. We learn new and exciting truths. We go deeper. Faith is the greatest adventure; and there are many inspiring people there to help us.

4. Join a Catholic Group - As young Catholics, it is good to get involved in parish life somehow. There are usually many things happening. If there doesn't seem to be much, be brave, and get together with some friends and suggest something that you could do as a parish to your priest. It also makes such a difference if we can find a Catholic group to join, with like-minded people. It helps us to feel that we are not alone in our faith. It might be a prayer group, or a justice and peace group, or a pro-life group, or a discussion group, or just a socialising group - all that matters is that there are Catholics trying to live their faith together in some way. Look around and see what there is, and then take the risk of joining one. If it works out, fine. If not, then don't give up - try another. You may have to look outside your parish and travel a bit. But it will be worth it. (There is a list of some groups and movements at the end of this book).

5. Go on Retreat or Pilgrimage - There are many kinds of retreats, prayer festivals, away days, pilgrimages, etc. Some of them might be organised by your parish or Diocese, others might be on a national level. It is good to get away from our daily routine now and then, with other Catholics, and focus on the Lord and on our faith. Not every retreat or pilgrimage will suit you personally, but you should be able to find something that is right for you. Ask your parish priest; look in the Catholic newspapers; ask some of the Catholic groups and movements listed below.

FIVE WAYS TO APPRECIATE THE MASS MORE

1. Learn about the Mass - Find out more about the meaning of the Mass by reading, or listening to tapes, or watching Catholic DVDs or TV. How can we appreciate the real wonder of the Mass if we know nothing about it?

2. Read the Scripture readings before you go to Mass - Read them during the week, or on the morning before you go. Think about what they mean, and what significance they have for your life. This simple habit makes it much easier to appreciate the readings during Mass, and to get more out of the sermon.

3. Arrive early - We can't settle and pray during Mass if we rush in at the last minute or arrive late. Leave home extra early, and actually plan to have ten minutes in the

Church before Mass starts. Kneel and worship the Lord; sit quietly. Talk to him. Bring your needs and concerns to him. And ask him to help you pray wholeheartedly during the Mass. You will notice the difference in your attention and in the spiritual fruits you receive if you do this regularly.

4. Really listen and pray during the Mass - It's so easy to drift through the Mass, to daydream, to let ourselves be distracted, to spend time mentally criticising the liturgy or the music or the priest... If we make a determined decision to concentrate and listen and be mentally and spiritually present, it really helps. We can imagine that the words are spoken for us - which they are. We can give our full attention to the scripture readings. And when Christ is made Really Present at the Consecration, when the bread and wine are changed into his Body and Blood, then we can welcome and adore him. And in this way, everything that happens becomes personal and precious.

5. Pray in thanksgiving after Mass - Don't rush out as soon as Mass has finished. Pray in your place for a few minutes. Thank God for all you have received during the Mass. Worship him with the angels and saints, who are mysteriously present in the church. And ask his help to live your faith as you go back into ordinary life.

FIVE INSPIRING CHRISTIAN TRUTHS

This is not a Creed, or even a list of all the important Christian doctrines. You need to get a Catechism for that. This is just a list of some Christian truths that are absolutely basic, and which help us in our ordinary lives if we can remember them often.

1. God is our Loving Father - There is a God. He is infinite love, infinite goodness; he is infinitely powerful. He created the world through love, and he watches over and guides everything that happens (this is the doctrine of 'Providence'). Nothing happens without some reason. Even every sin or failure, if we repent and bring it to Christ, can be given meaning and lead to good. It makes such a difference to know that every person, every moment, every event, is in God's loving hands.

2. Jesus is our Saviour - We can't save ourselves from sin and death; we find it hard even to be kind to each other. Jesus Christ is the one Saviour. He is true God and true man. He came into the world to forgive us our sins, to reveal the heart of God, and to lead us through death to eternal life with the Father. He gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit so that we can share in the divine life of the Most Holy Trinity even now on this earth. Jesus loves you and cares for you. You never need to feel alone. He is

present with you always. Nothing can separate you from the love of Christ. Even sin, if we repent and ask for his help, is not a barrier. If we really knew and believed in the love of Christ, it would transform our lives.

3. The Power of the Holy Spirit is Given to Us - The love of the Holy Spirit, who is true God, has been poured into our hearts. We were given him at our Baptism and Confirmation; and this gift is renewed through all the sacraments, and through our faith. He makes us holy, and transforms us from the inside, so that we can share with him in the eternal love between the Father and the Son. We can call on him at any time, especially when we are weak, or when we need guidance and wisdom. He helps us to love, to pray, to cope with our difficulties. The Holy Spirit gives us incredible power, if only we would turn to him and trust in him. Whatever situation you are in, pray to the Holy Spirit to give you the spiritual gifts you need to do good and to do God's will. He will always help.

4. The Catholic Church is our True Spiritual Home - There are many different 'versions' of Christianity today, and sometimes we wonder where we should belong. The various Christian churches and communities have many good and holy things, that can lead to salvation, but only in the Catholic Church can we discover all the blessings

and gifts that Christ wishes to give us. The Church that Christ founded is still found today in the Catholic Church. Through the Catholic Church we receive the life of Christ in the sacraments; we hear the teaching of Christ through the bishops and the Pope; and we share in the great Tradition of Christian faith that stretches back through the centuries. Trust the Church - even if there are some things that confuse you. Love the Church - even if there are things you struggle with. Be proud of your Catholic faith. Keep your Catholic identity. Be faithful to the teaching of the Catholic Church in your own life, and if necessary defend it in front of others. The Church is a rock, a foundation; a spiritual home that will always be a place of safety and security. We should never abandon it.

5. The Blessed Virgin Mary is our Mother - Mary is the one who gave Christ to the world; who supported him throughout his life; who shared in his Sacrifice on Calvary; and who was given by Jesus to the Beloved Disciple to be his spiritual mother. In the same way, now in heaven, Mary is a true mother to everyone who loves her son. She loves you and cares for you; she prays for you. You are her dear child. Turn to her often - for help and prayer, or simply for company and consolation. Her maternal love is one of the greatest gifts God has given us. Her prayers are more powerful than any of the other saints.

HOW TO GIVE YOUR LIFE TO GOD

Even though your faith may be weak, and you may have lots of doubts, the most important decision you can make is to give your life to God. If you were baptised as a child, then your parents have already done this for you. But as we get older we need to take this step for ourselves. It makes such a difference.

How do we do this, practically? When you are at church, or in the privacy of your own room, kneel down and tell God, in your own words, that you give your life to him. Tell him that you believe in his Son, Jesus Christ - even if your faith is still unclear. Tell him you want to do his will. There are so many other things to say, but they can follow at a later time.

The first step is simply to give our lives to God. When we do this, our lives will change. We may not feel any different, but gradually we will notice the presence of God in our lives more and more. We will see his power and his love at work in our lives. Unexpectedly, he will send us help, just at the right time, in the form of events or people or new opportunities or new desires. And our faith, gradually, will grow stronger.

If you are not sure what to say, perhaps these words of Blessed Charles de Foucauld will help:

Father, I abandon myself into your hands;
do with me what you will.

Whatever you may do, I thank you.

I am ready for all, I accept all.

Let only your will be done in me,
and in all your creatures;

I wish no more than this, O Lord.

Into your hands I commend my soul;

I offer it to you with all the love of my heart,
for I love you Lord,

and so need to give myself,

to surrender myself into your hands,
without reserve,

and with boundless confidence;

for you are my Father.

God created you for a purpose. He loves you and cares for you. And he is closer to you than you can imagine. You will never find true peace or true happiness without him. As St Augustine wrote: "Lord, you have made us for yourself; and our hearts are restless until they rest in you".

- How to Pray -

FIVE WAYS OF PRAYING

At some stage in your spiritual life, you will want to make a bit more time for prayer each day. If you leave it to chance, it probably won't happen. The best way is to set aside a short time for prayer, at a particular time in the day, and stick to that time. Sometimes we feel like it, sometimes we don't. What matters is simply to be there, with the Lord. If one time doesn't work, then try another; and gradually God will help you to find a routine that suits you. But what do we do in that time? Here are five suggestions:

1. 'Formal' Prayers - There are many prayers in the Bible and in the Christian tradition that we can use in our own personal prayer. For example: the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be, the Creeds, the morning offering, an act of contrition, the Psalms, the well-known prayers composed by the saints. It is good to have a book that contains different prayers we can use. These prayers help us to enter into the depths of Christian prayer. They take us beyond our own personal concerns, or help us to express concerns we didn't know we had. The important thing is to pray them with sincerity, with attention, with our whole heart and mind - and not just to rush through them.

2. Talking to God - Talk to him, in your own words, as you would to a close friend or a loving parent. Be completely honest, and natural. Tell him what you are thinking and feeling. Tell him your hopes and your fears and your worries. Ask him to help you and those you care for. Entrust your intentions to him. Pray for the needs of the Church and of the world. He always listens to us. And he always answers us in some way - even if that answer may be difficult to hear or to understand.

3. Sacred Scripture - God speaks to us through the Bible, and his Son Jesus is present with us as we read and meditate on his Holy Word. There are many ways of using the Bible in personal prayer: We can read through one of the books of the Bible; we can turn to our favourite passages; we can choose a certain story or a parable or a psalm. Here is one method, which is a form of *'lectio divina'* (holy reading): Choose a short passage (perhaps from one of the Gospels; perhaps the reading from Mass for that day); read it slowly; then have some time to think and pray about it. What strikes you? What interests you? What seems relevant to your life? Then read the passage again slowly. Have another time to think and reflect. And finally, talk to God about what you are thinking and feeling, and ask his help in your life. If this method is useful, you could work through one of the gospels taking another passage each day. It is also useful to use a

Catholic commentary or Bible guide (like 'Bible Alive') to help us understand the passages.

4. The Rosary - Praying the rosary keeps us close to God and to Our Lady, and keeps us rooted in the central truths of our Christian faith. When we say the individual prayers, we lift our hearts and minds to God. As we meditate on the mysteries of the rosary, we remember the life of Christ and of his Blessed Mother. Mary herself, in many apparitions, has asked us to pray the rosary, and promised that we will receive great graces if we do. Praying the rosary has kept the faith of many individuals and families alive, and helped their lives to be transformed. It is traditional to try and pray five decades each day. But some people find this too hard. Why not try and pray one decade each day (1 Our Father, 10 Hail Marys, 1 Glory Be), and make this a part of your daily prayer. It will make such a difference to your life and faith.

5. Silence - We can end up 'doing' and 'saying' a lot in our prayer time, but we also need some time of silence, so we can listen to our own hearts, so we can listen to God, and so we can simply be in his presence and appreciate who he is. Silence is hard, because we fidget, and our minds and hearts get easily distracted. But it doesn't matter if we get a bit distracted. What matters is that we make a bit of space for the Lord, and try and be

still before him, and rest our hearts in him. We might feel peaceful or agitated or bored, but at least we have given him this space, and tried to let go of our busyness and noise. If we make a little time for silent prayer each day, then the Lord will help us to become more sensitive to his presence, and our prayer will become deeper and more intimate.

If you are not sure how to use your time of prayer, why not try the following: Set aside perhaps 15 minutes to pray in the morning. Close the door of your room. Keep some 'sacred space' in your room where you have a crucifix, some holy pictures, some holy water, and perhaps a candle. Kneel here. Begin by making the Sign of the Cross, and then pray some formal prayers, such as the Morning Offering, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Glory Be. Then have a few moments talking to God in your own words, telling him all that is on your mind and heart, and asking for his help. Then have five minutes reflecting on a passage of the Bible - sit down if it helps you to be comfortable. Then have a few moments of silence. And finish by praying one decade of the Rosary. Don't rush or force anything. If you drop one thing, and spend more time on another, that is fine. The important thing is just to pray, and a structure is only something to help us get going.

FIVE ELEMENTS OF PRAYER

These are not ‘methods’; they are different ways of ‘relating’ to God in prayer. We need to make sure that somehow, in our prayer each day and each week, we are relating to God in all these different ways.

1. Adoration - We worship and adore God for who he is, and not just for what he gives us. We praise him for his goodness and beauty and love. We adore him through Jesus Christ, and with the whole Church. Singing helps us to praise God. The Psalms are full of praise.

2. Repentance - Every day, we need to admit our sins and weaknesses, and ask for God’s mercy and help. And we can ask for God’s forgiveness for all sinners, especially those most in need of his mercy. These prayers of sorrow and contrition bring us joy and peace, because by turning to God in weakness, we allow his power and love to work in our lives.

3. Thanksgiving - We thank God for who he is, and for what he has done for us. We need to thank him in very particular ways for the blessings he has given us, even if things do not seem to be going well. To ‘count our blessings’ is an act of thanksgiving. Grateful people are full of joy.

4. Intercession - Jesus tells us, in the Gospels: "Ask!" We need to ask God the Father to help us in all our needs: big things; small things; everyday things; spiritual things. We are his children, and we should come to him with childlike simplicity, asking him to give us what we need and what we desire - as long as it is according to his will. We should put these requests into words, not because he is unaware of them, but because he wants us to express our needs and show him how much we trust him. The answer may come much later than we want, or in an unexpected way - but it will always come.

5. Contemplation - The first four types of prayer all involve us doing something: adoring, saying sorry, giving thanks, interceding. In contemplation, we are still before the Lord. But in that stillness, because of our faith, and our union with Jesus, we share in the life of God himself, of the Most Holy Trinity. We gaze at him, with the eyes of faith; we wonder about him; we become aware, very quietly, of his presence in the world, in the sacraments, and within our souls. Whenever we let go of our own activity, and step into the mystery of God, then we are allowing him to lead us on the great journey of contemplation.

FIVE FUNDAMENTAL CATHOLIC PRAYERS

It helps us to memorise certain prayers, so that we can use them at different times of the day and of the week, and so that our own personal prayer does not become too narrow. These prayers are especially useful and powerful when we do not know how to pray; or when we are worried or afraid; or when we are facing special trials or temptations. There are many prayers worth memorising - the more the better! Here are five essential prayers to memorise and use.

1. The Sign of the Cross - In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. [Cross yourself by using your right hand to touch your forehead, then your chest, then your left shoulder, and then your right shoulder].

2. The 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.

3. The 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 our death. Amen.

4. The 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 ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

5. The Apostles' Creed - I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen. (There are slightly different translations of the Apostles' Creed. This is the modern one used in the *Catechism*).

FIVE OTHER IMPORTANT PRAYERS

Here are five other extremely useful prayers, which you can gradually memorise.

1. Come Holy Spirit - Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love. [Verse] Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created. [Response] And you shall renew the face of

the earth. Let us pray: O God, who has taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that by the gift of the same Spirit we may be always truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

2. Hail, Holy Queen - Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy; hail our life, our sweetness, and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us, and after this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary. [Verse] Pray for us, O holy Mother of God. [Response] That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

3. The Memorare - Remember, O most loving Virgin Mary, that it is a thing unheard of, that anyone ever had recourse to your protection, implored your help, or sought your intercession, was left forsaken. Filled therefore with confidence in your goodness I fly to you, O Mother, Virgin of virgins. To you I come, before you I stand, a sorrowful sinner. Despise not my poor words, O Mother of the Word Incarnate, but graciously hear and answer my prayer. Amen.

4. Prayer for the dead - Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen. (And make the sign of the cross at the same time).

5. Prayer to your Guardian Angel - Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here; ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

FIVE PRAYERS FOR PARTICULAR TIMES IN THE DAY

Here are five other prayers to say during the day.

1. A morning offering - O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer you my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day, in union with the holy sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world. I offer them for all the intentions of your Sacred Heart, and for the intentions of the Holy Father. Help me not to sin today. Help me to love you, and to love my neighbour, and to do your holy will in all things. Amen. (There are many versions of this prayer, but the main idea is simply to start each day by offering everything that will happen during the day to God).

2. The Angelus - The Angel of the Lord declared to Mary: And she conceived of the Holy Spirit. *Hail Mary, etc...* Behold the handmaid of the Lord: Be it done to me

according to your word. *Hail Mary*, etc ... And the Word was made Flesh: And dwelt among us: *Hail Mary*, etc ... Pray for us, O holy Mother of God: That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ. Let us pray: Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ, your Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may be brought by his passion and cross to the glory of his resurrection, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen. May the divine assistance remain always with us, and may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen. (To remind us that God the Son became man for our salvation. Traditionally said in the morning, at midday, and in the early evening. It is customary to genuflect at the phrase 'And the Word was made Flesh').

3. Grace before meals - Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts, which we are about to receive from thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

4. Thanksgiving after meals - We give you thanks, almighty God, for these and all your benefits, who live and reign, world without end. Amen. (It is customary then to pray for the dead). May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

5. Commendation - (Just before going to sleep) Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, assist me in my final agony. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in peace with you.

FIVE 'ACTS' TO MAKE FREQUENTLY

In the tradition of Catholic prayers an 'act' is a prayer in which we express our conviction about something. When we make an 'act' we strengthen this conviction and it becomes more a part of us. It's like telling someone that we love them: This is not just passing on information, it actually makes the love more real and powerful. We can make these 'acts' at any time. We should especially make them when our conviction is weak or even disappearing, because that is just when we need to renew them. For example, if you feel your faith is weak or even non-existent, that is the very time to make an act of faith - even though we don't feel like it. This is not hypocrisy. Praying an 'act' allows us to touch something deeper than our feelings, and strengthens and renews that hidden conviction.

1. An act of faith - My God, I believe in you and all that your Church teaches, because you have said it, and your word is true.

2. An act of hope - My God, I hope in you, for grace and for glory, because of your promises, your mercy, and your power.

3. An act of charity - My God, because you are so good, I love you with all my heart, and for your sake, I love my neighbour as myself.

4. An act of contrition - O my God, because you are so good, I am very sorry that I have sinned against you; and I promise that with the help of your grace, I will not sin again. Amen.

5. An act of entrustment to the Sacred Heart - Sacred Heart of Jesus, I put my trust in thee. Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me.

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