

About this journal

Each month will begin with a specific intention for our Archdiocesan Synod. We encourage all the faithful of the local Church to join us in praying together for that intention.

There will be a brief reflection for each week followed by a recommended Scripture passage for the day and a prompt to get you started. Since the Scripture passages will come from the daily Mass readings they can be found here: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings>.

Please remember that this journal is meant as an offering, not an obligation. We encourage you to use it in whatever way serves you best.

Why Pray?

The very first paragraph of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* begins:

God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness, freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength (CCC 1)

God is drawing close to us. Are we willing to seek him, to know him, to love him with all our strength? We begin the journey of seeking, knowing and loving him in prayer.

What is prayer?

God desires each of us to enter into a vital and personal relationship with him. This relationship is prayer (CCC 2558). Just as each relationship between two people is unique, so is each relationship between a person and God. Consequently, there is not a given formula for prayer. It is more important *that* a person prays than *how* a person prays.

We have the gift, however, of being able to learn from one another, from the saints and from people in the church who are particularly gifted at prayer. Therefore we will be offering suggestions from the experts to help us get started.

We encourage each person to discover how God speaks most clearly to him or her. Feel free to try different forms of prayer, but do not feel pressured to try them all. In fact, if you find a particular way of prayer leads you to intimacy with God, continue to pray that way until God draws you in a new direction.

Finally, it is good for us to remember that prayer is God's gift to us:

"If you knew the gift of God!" The wonder of prayer is revealed beside the well where we come seeking water: There, Christ comes to meet every human being. It is he who first seeks us and asks us for a drink. Jesus thirsts; his asking arises from the depths of God's desire for us. Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him. (CCC 2560)

How to Pray?

Since prayer is going to flow from our unique relationship with God, it is up to us to discover how God wants to communicate with us. To do this we seek to learn to listen to his voice in our hearts. The following is one method that might be helpful for us as we begin:

Always begin by recalling that you're in the Presence of God: It's easy to launch into prayer without realizing that you are called to enter into a conversation with God. One priest remarked that for many people, prayer is just "worrying on one's knees." Take a moment to recall that God is always with you and that he desires this time with you even more than you do. Ask him to help and guide you as you pray.

A-R-R-R: Acknowledge – Relate – Receive – Respond

Acknowledge: After you become aware of God's Presence, it's important to become aware of your own heart. Take some time to acknowledge your thoughts, feelings, and desires as you begin to pray. Acknowledge your physical and emotional needs ("I'm tired; I'm hungry; I'm worried; I'm excited; I'm lonely;" etc.), but try to also acknowledge the spiritual stirrings within you ("I want to be free from this temptation to sin; I feel God is leading me to do this; I want more of what God wants to give me;" etc.) If there is a particular grace you are seeking, write it down. Perhaps it will be answered immediately. Perhaps you will see over time that God is putting a certain desire into your heart to prepare you for what he wants to give you.

Relate: Once you have acknowledged the stirrings of your heart, relate them to God. It's easy to just think about these things and assume God knows them, but he wants you to share them with him. Tell him what is in your heart. Ask him about anything that's troubling you. Share your desires with him. He loves having a "heart-to-heart" with you!

Receive: After sharing your heart with God, allow him to share *his* heart with you. This is a time to quiet your own heart and mind and listen to God who loves you. Perhaps he will speak through a reflection you read, or a scripture passage, or simply with a "still small voice" inside you. (See 1 Kings 19:12-13)

Respond: To end your time of prayer, respond to God. Thank him for what you received; resolve to do what he asks of you; tell him how much you love him.

Journaling is a great way to conclude your prayer time. It often helps to process what took place during your conversation with God. It also can be very helpful to refer back to your notes in future times of discouragement or discernment. Many times God is doing a work in you that takes days, months, perhaps even years. Journaling can help you learn to recognize the subtle ways God is carrying out his good purpose in you. (See Romans 8:28)

A Word of Encouragement from Saint Ambrose

God's temple is holy; you are his temple.

My Father and I will come and make our home with you. Let your door stand open to receive him, unlock your soul to him, offer him a welcome in your mind, and then you will see the riches of simplicity, the treasures of peace, the joy of grace. Throw wide the gate of your heart, stand before the sun of the everlasting light that shines on every man. This true light shines on all, but if anyone closes his window he will deprive himself of eternal light. If you shut the door of your mind, you shut out Christ. Though he can enter, he does not want to force his way in rudely, or compel us to admit him against our will.

... It is the soul that has its door, its gates. Christ comes to this door and knocks; he knocks at these gates. Open to him; he wants to enter, to find his bride waiting and watching.

Opening Reflection

Lord, fill us with your Holy Spirit and set our hearts on fire with love for you as we remember your Sacred Heart.



Pentecost, Titian, 1545



Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, attributed to Lambert Lombard, 1558

May 31 – June 6, 2020: *“And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house...Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:2-4a).*

Last week, when we celebrated the Ascension of the Lord, the *Catechism* pointed out how closely it is linked to Christ’s *descending* in the Incarnation. This week we witness God descending again, but this time he does so in the third person of the Trinity – The Holy Spirit.

How generous is our God, who not only came to live among us but (now that his perfect sacrifice has been offered) desires to come and dwell *in* us! It is fitting that we as a local Church began preparing publicly for our Synod on Pentecost 2019 and that the Archdiocesan Synod Assembly was scheduled for Pentecost 2021 before the Pandemic hit (the new date has not been decided as of the time this is being posted). We need to be filled with the power and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit if we are to follow God’s call for us.

“The mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit is brought to completion in the Church, which is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. This joint mission henceforth brings Christ's faithful to share in his communion with the Father in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit prepares men and goes out to them with his grace, in order to draw them to Christ. The Spirit manifests the risen Lord to them, recalls his word to them and opens their minds to the understanding of his Death and Resurrection. He makes present the mystery of Christ, supremely in the Eucharist, in order to reconcile them, to bring them into communion with God, that they may ‘bear much fruit.’” (CCC 737)

May 31: *Lord, fill us with the power of your Holy Spirit as we pray with John 20:19-23.*

June 1: *Lord, as we pray with John 19:25-34, we thank you for the gift of our Blessed Mother and ask Mary, Mother of the Church to pray for us.*

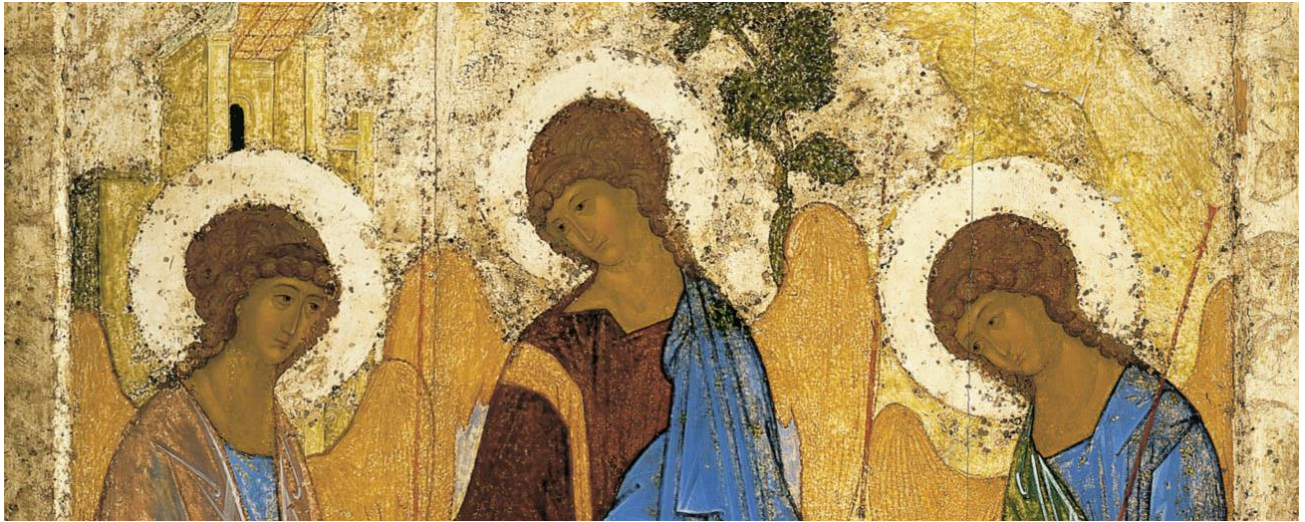
June 2: Lord, help us to ‘grow in grace and knowledge of you’ as we pray with 2 Peter 3:12-18.

June 3: Lord, as we remember the martyrs St. Charles Lwanga and Companions, help us to keep our eyes fixed on you as we pray with Psalm 123:1-2.

June 4: Lord, may we as an Archdiocese grow in our love for you and for our neighbor as we pray with Mark 12:28-34.

June 5: Lord, on this memorial of St. Boniface, may we follow his example and “remain faithful to what we have learned and believed” as we pray with 2 Timothy 3:10-17.

June 6: Lord, may we be evermore “persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient” as we pray with 2 Timothy 4:1-8.



The Trinity / The Hospitality of Abraham, Andrei Rublev, circa 1411-1427

June 7-13, 2020: *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” (2 Corinthians 13:13)*

Even though the season of Easter concluded on Pentecost Sunday, we still celebrate several Solemnities the following two weeks. The first of these is the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. It makes sense that this celebration would follow the Ascension of the Lord and Pentecost Sunday as we see the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity so clearly in these feasts: God the Son ascending to God the Father and then sending God the Holy Spirit into the hearts of his followers.

In the Catholic Church we often use the word, “mystery,” to refer to those “mysteries that are hidden in God, which can never be known unless they are revealed by God.” (Pope Pius IX, *Dei Filius* 4) The Holy Trinity is not just another mystery, but the *central* mystery of our faith:

The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the “hierarchy of the truths of faith.” The whole history of salvation is identical with the history of the way and the means by which the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, reveals himself to men “and reconciles and unites with himself those who turn away from sin.” (CCC 234)

May we as a Church be enlightened by and give witness to the Most Holy Trinity as we strive to live together in a community of love.

June 7: *Lord, may we offer you fitting praise as we pray with Daniel 3:52-56.*

June 8: *Lord, show us how to truly live the beatitudes as we pray with Matthew 5:1-12.*

June 9: Lord, as we pray with 1 Kings 7:7-16, strengthen us to trust in you to provide for us, even when it doesn't seem possible.

June 10: Lord, increase our resolve to profess you as our Lord as we pray with 1 Kings 18:20-39.

June 11: Lord, on this memorial of St. Barnabas, raise up people for the work you have for our Archdiocese as we pray with Acts 11:21-12:3.

June 12: Lord, teach us how to listen to your "tiny whisper" as we pray with 1 Kings 19:9-16.

June 13: Lord, may we always look to you for counsel and refuge as we pray with Psalm 16.



Disputation of the Holy Sacrament, Raphael, 1509-1510

June 14-20, 2020: *“I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.” (John 6:51)*

In the sixth chapter of John’s Gospel, referred to as the “Bread of Life Discourse,” Jesus speaks very plainly: “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink” (John 6:53-54) Many of those listening said, “This saying is hard; who can accept it?” (vs. 60). They left and no longer followed Jesus. “Jesus then said to the Twelve, ‘Do you also want to leave?’ Simon Peter answered him, ‘Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.’” (John 6:67-68)

Thank goodness the Twelve continued to follow Jesus! For on the night he was betrayed, when they were all gathered in the Upper Room, Jesus instituted the Eucharist, one means by which he continues to feed his Church today, the deprivation of which many of us recently felt; and which some of us, still homebound from the pandemic, may still be feeling.

*“‘The mystery of faith!’ With these words, spoken immediately after the words of consecration, the priest proclaims the mystery being celebrated and expresses his wonder before the substantial change of bread and wine into the body and blood of the Lord Jesus, a reality which surpasses all human understanding. The Eucharist is a ‘mystery of faith’ par excellence: ‘the sum and summary of our faith.’ ...For this reason, the Sacrament of the Altar is always at the heart of the Church’s life.... Every great reform has in some way been linked to the rediscovery of belief in the Lord’s eucharistic presence among his people.” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 6)*

June 14: *Lord, as we celebrate the Solemnity of Corpus Christi and pray with John 6:51-58, draw us deeper into the reality of your true Presence.*

June 15: *Lord, teach us to be merciful as we pray with Matthew 5:38-42.*

June 16: Lord, help us to love our enemies as we pray with Matthew 5:43-48.

June 17: Lord, open our eyes to see where you are inviting us to “pick up the mantle” and carry on your mission as we pray with 2 Kings 2:6-14.

June 18: Lord, may we worship you as our king as we pray with Psalm 97.

June 19: Lord, on this Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, may we ‘take your yoke upon us and learn from you’ as we pray with Matthew 11:25-30.

June 20: Lord, help us to continue to seek until we find you as we pray with Luke 2:41-51.



Christ Driving the Money Changers from the Temple, El Greco, circa 1570

June 21-27, 2020: *“Zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who blaspheme you fall upon me.” (Psalm 69:10)*

Anyone who’s spent time with toddlers knows why the label “Terrible Two’s” exists. It doesn’t take long for the effect of original sin to manifest itself in the human person. Once children learn to talk and become aware of their surroundings they make good use of the word, “mine!” They want things their own way.

In a sense, this struggle will confront us for the rest of our earthly life. This Sunday’s readings are all about this choice: Are we going to choose to follow God or choose to go our own way? In the first reading from the Prophet Jeremiah, his “friends” are watching him closely to try to trap him because they don’t like him proclaiming the word of the Lord. In Psalm 69, we hear prophecy of Jesus’ Passion: “For your sake I bear insult, and shame covers my face. I have become an outcast to my brothers, a stranger to my children, because zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who blaspheme you fall upon me.” Paul’s letter to the Romans tells us that through Adam’s choice, sin and death entered the world. Finally, in the Gospel Jesus says very plainly that those who deny him before others, he will deny before his heavenly Father.

Clearly, rejecting God and following our own way leads to destruction and despair. Fortunately there is another choice – we can choose to follow God and trust in his unfailing love for us. Jesus expresses it most beautifully in the Gospel: “Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father’s knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father.”

June 21: *Lord, give us a deeper awareness of your love for us as we pray with Matthew 10:26-33.*

June 22: *Lord, instead of judging our neighbor, open our eyes to see where you are inviting us to repentance as we pray with Matthew 7:1-5.*

June 23: Lord, direct our paths to the “narrow gate” as we pray with Matthew 7:12-14.

June 24: Lord, as we remember the birth of John the Baptist today, give our Church a greater understanding of your love for the unborn as we pray with Psalm 139:1-16.

June 25: Lord, as we continue on this journey to the Synod in 2022, show our Archdiocese how to build on the solid rock as we pray with Matthew 7:21-29.

June 26: Lord, teach us to come to you with the faith of the leper as we pray with Matthew 8:1-4.

June 27: Lord, help us to grow in faith and humility as we pray with Matthew 8:5-17.
