

A Month of Praying with the Psalms: A Daily Practice The Rev. Eugenia A. Gamble

The book of Psalms is the family prayer book of the people of God. It offers us ways to take every emotion conceivable to God in prayer, often with wild rides even in one verse! Most often the psalms were sung or chanted, usually antiphonally in worship. However we address them today, they have the capacity to open us up to ourselves, and before God, in profound poetic ways. Because the Psalms are poetry and song, it is best not to literalize them, but to let them open up inside of us as the Spirit deems best. Each day this month I will share a verse and invite you to pray it as your daily practice. In rotation, I will also teach you about the Four Pillars of Prayer, a method of praying that dates back to the early monastic period. In those days in convents and monasteries, those who came to the communities came for a variety of reasons, not all of which had to do with deep religious conviction. For women in particular, some came because families could not afford their care, or it was the only place that a woman could get an education. The immersion into a life of prayer had to be carefully taught. The young novices prayed together every three hours around the clock. In their first days, to help them learn and remember, they were asked to turn to a particular pillar that held up the chapel roofs and pray in one way, then to the next and a different method and on around the four pillars. I will be introducing those ways as we move go along. To begin with, we will practice one of the pillars for six days, and then the next and so forth so that you can get an understanding of each stance. After this month you can use these practices on your own with the psalms or any passage of scripture to which you feel drawn. I hope this time of praying with our family prayer book in Scripture will help you feel a renewed companionship with God and each other. I will be praying along with you! Love, Eugenia

1 – Psalm 46:1-2a *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear...”*

Today, I invite you to find a place where you can be comfortable and undisturbed for a few moments. Read the verse aloud slowly three times. Try to slow your reading a bit with each repetition. Each time you read, try emphasizing a different word. Is there a word that seems to resonate with you especially today? If so, take a moment to just sit with that word. For example, your word might be ‘refuge.’ Ask God why that word leapt out at you today? Repeat it again and again in your mind. See if God raises something for you to consider. Take a moment to ponder that. This is the first pillar of prayer: Lectio, the prayerful encounter of the word. In this stance of prayer, we invite God to awaken our hearts to the word for the day and help us experience the unique gift that the word has for each of us. When you complete your lectio, you may close your prayer time with the following prayer, or the Lord’s Prayer.

Prayer: Dear God, help me today to nestle into you. If fear and worry enter my mind, turn my thoughts to you, trusting you for everything I need today. Amen.

2 – Psalm 46: 10a *“Be still and know that I am God!”*

Today, I invite you to find a place where you can be comfortable and undisturbed for a few moments. Read the verse aloud slowly three times. Try to slow your reading a bit with each repetition. Each time you read, try emphasizing a different word. Is there a word that seems to resonate with you especially today? If so, take a moment to just sit with that word. For example, your word might be ‘be’ or ‘know’ or even ‘and’. Let the Spirit guide you. Ask God why that word leapt out at you today? Repeat it again and again in your mind. See if God raises something for you to consider. Take a moment to ponder that. This is the first pillar of prayer: Lectio, the prayerful encounter of the word. In this stance of prayer, we invite God to awaken our hearts to the word for the day and help us experience the unique gift that the word has for us today. When you complete your lectio, you may close your prayer time with the following prayer, or the Lord’s Prayer.

Prayer: Dear God, I am rattled and frazzled! There is more to do than I can do. Still me, O God, quiet my heart and mind. Remind me that you are God so I don’t have to be. Amen.

3 - Psalm 46:11 *“The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.”*

Today, I invite you to find a place where you can be comfortable and undisturbed for a few moments. Read the verse aloud slowly three times. Try to slow your reading a bit with each repetition. Each time you read, try emphasizing a different word. Is there a word that seems to resonate with you especially today? If so, take a moment to just sit with that word. For example, your word might be ‘Lord’ or even ‘with.’ Let the Spirit guide you. Ask God why that word leapt out at you today? Repeat it again and again in your mind. See if God raises something for you to consider. Take a moment to ponder that. This is the first pillar of prayer: Lectio, the prayerful encounter of the word. In this stance of prayer, we invite God to awaken our hearts to the word for the day and help us experience the unique gift that the word has for us today. When you complete your lectio, you may close your prayer time with the following prayer, or the Lord’s Prayer.

Prayer: Dear God, you have been faithful to us throughout all time. I thank you that I can find refuge and peace in your today. I know you are with me and it is enough! Amen.

4 - Psalm 47:1 *“Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with loud songs of joy.”*

Today, I invite you to find a place where you can be comfortable and undisturbed for a few moments. Read the verse aloud slowly three times. Try to slow your reading a bit

with each repetition. Each time you read, try emphasizing a different word. Is there a word that seems to resonate with you especially today? If so, take a moment to just sit with that word. For example, your word might be 'songs' or 'joy' or even 'clap.' Let the Spirit guide you. Ask God why that word leapt out at you today? Repeat it again and again in your mind. See if God raises something for you to consider. Take a moment to ponder that. This is the first pillar of prayer: Lectio, the prayerful encounter of the word. In this stance of prayer, we invite God to awaken our hearts to the word for the day and help us experience the unique gift that the word has for us. When you complete your lectio, you may close your prayer time with the following prayer, or the Lord's Prayer.

Prayer: Dear God, what a beautiful day, sun or rain, warm or cold, the world is filled with your exquisite creativity. O God, I rejoice in you. If I become glum, today, remind me of this moment! Amen.

5 - Psalm 47:2 "For the Lord, the Most High, is awesome..."

Today, I invite you to find a place where you can be comfortable and undisturbed for a few moments. Read the verse aloud slowly three times. Try to slow your reading a bit with each repetition. Each time you read, try emphasizing a different word. Is there a word that seems to resonate with you especially today? If so, take a moment to just sit with that word. For example, your word might be 'Lord' or 'most high' or even 'awesome.' Let the Spirit guide you. Ask God why that word leapt out at you today? Repeat it again and again in your mind. See if God raises something for you to consider. Take a moment to ponder that. This is the first pillar of prayer: Lectio, the prayerful encounter of the word. In this stance of prayer, we invite God to awaken our hearts to the word for the day and help us experience the unique gift that the word has for us today. When you complete your lectio, you may close your prayer time with the following prayer, or the Lord's Prayer.

Prayer: Dear God, I have no adequate words to describe your greatness and majesty. When I think of you, I am humbled to my core. Thank you God for befriending me, for forgiving so much and loving me still. Amen.

6 - Psalm 48:1 "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised..."

Today, I invite you to find a place where you can be comfortable and undisturbed for a few moments. Read the verse aloud slowly three times. Try to slow your reading a bit with each repetition. Each time you read, try emphasizing a different word. Is there a word that seems to resonate with you especially today? If so, take a moment to just sit with that word. For example, your word might be 'great' or 'greatly' or even 'to be praised.' Let the Spirit guide you. Ask God why that word leapt out at you today? Repeat it again and again in your mind. See if God raises something for you to consider. Take a moment to ponder that. This is the first pillar of prayer: Lectio, the prayerful encounter of

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Prayer: Dear God, today I want to focus on praise. When I praise you there is no room in me for doubt, anxiety or fear. It is like I turn into a drop of joy. All day long, may my experiences each remind me of your glory. Amen.

7 - Psalm 48:9 "We ponder your steadfast love, O God..."

Today we turn our hearts to the second pillar of prayer called Oratio from the Latin word for prayer itself. This way of praying is sometimes called heart prayer, and may feel a bit more familiar to you. Oratio is a way of releasing the heartbreak and fear we all carry. Sometimes the hurt is fleeting, sometimes it is deeply rooted in our hearts. In either case, oratio invites us to release it all to God. In this prayer we offer our deepest truth to God in a position of openness and trust. Traditionally, this prayer was prayed standing with arms outstretched to the side. This is a stance of openness and submission. Our tender under bellies are exposed to God, much like a pup may expose her tummy as a sign of submission. In oratio we don't just release our hurts, disappointments or fears. We, breathe deeply their release and honor the spaces within us that they leave behind, even if just for a moment. When we release our hurts to God, when we are ready, we then invite gratitude to fill those spaces. When we introduce gratitude into the places where pain once dwelt, it will inevitably come in with its lovely long train of joy, peace and encouragement. For many this is the easiest pillar of prayer. Or seems so. In my experience, it is only easy when we remain superficial and share with God only the retouched versions of ourselves. You may want to begin on the surface of things. That is a great way to begin. Just don't stay there and use this time like a kind of magic wand or white washed soliloquy of self-justification. All relationships deepen with real honesty. It is true with our relationship with God as well. If you have ever in a human relationship heard your partner say, "We need to talk" there is a bit of that on both sides or oratio. Remember though that, unlike some human relationships, God is always seeking the good and will never walk away, even if you do. So today, read your verse aloud slowly and prayerfully, and then tell God everything that is on your heart. When you are ready, you may close your prayer time with the following prayer, or the Lord's Prayer.

Prayer: Dear God, when I consider your love for me, I can hardly take it in. Help me please, to show a glimpse of that love to others today. Amen.

8 - Psalm 48:10 "Your name, O God, like your praise, reaches to the ends of the earth."

Today we turn our hearts again to the second pillar of prayer called Oratio, from the Latin word for prayer itself. This way of praying is sometimes called heart prayer and may feel a bit more familiar to you. Oratio is a way of releasing the heartbreak and fear we all carry. Sometimes the hurt is fleeting, sometimes it is deeply rooted in our hearts. In either case, Oratio invites us to release it all to God. In this prayer, we offer our deepest truth to God in a position of openness and trust. Traditionally this prayer was prayed standing with arms outstretched to the side. This is a stance of openness and submission. Our tender under bellies are exposed to God, much like a pup may expose her tummy as a sign of submission. In oratio we don't just release our hurts, disappointments or fears. We, breathe deeply their release and honor the spaces within us that they leave behind, even if just for a moment. When we release our hurts to God, when we are ready, we then invite gratitude to fill those spaces. When we introduce gratitude into the places where pain once dwelt, it will inevitably come in with its lovely long train of joy, peace and encouragement. For many, this is the easiest pillar of prayer. Or seems so. In my experience, it is only easy when we remain superficial and share with God only the retouched versions of ourselves. You may want to begin on the surface of things. That is a great way to begin. Just don't stay there and use this time like a kind of magic wand or white washed soliloquy of self-justification. All relationships deepen with real honesty. It is true with our relationship with God as well. If you have ever in a human relationship heard your partner say, "We need to talk" there is a bit of that on both sides or oratio. Remember though that, unlike some human relationships, God is always seeking the good and will never walk away, even if you do. So today, read your verse aloud slowly and prayerfully, and then tell God everything that is on your heart. When you are ready, you may close your prayer time with the following prayer, or the Lord's Prayer.

Prayer: Dear God, our world contains so much sorrow. Help me to remember that you are always there with the hurting and give me courage to work tirelessly on their behalf. Amen.

9 - Psalm 49:5a "Why should I fear in time of trouble?..."

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Prayer: Dear God, why in the world am I ever afraid? In the end there is nothing that can ever harm me. Take my fears and fill up their place with love and peace. Amen.

10 Psalm 50:3a "Our God comes and does not keep silence..."

Today we turn our hearts again to the second pillar of prayer called Oratio, from the Latin word for prayer itself. This way of praying is sometimes called heart prayer and may feel a bit more familiar to you. Oratio is a way of releasing the heartbreak and fear we all carry. Sometimes the hurt is fleeting, sometimes it is deeply rooted in our hearts. In either case, oratio invites us to release it all to God. In this prayer we offer our deepest truth to God in a position of openness and trust. Traditionally this prayer was prayed standing with arms outstretched to the side. This is a stance of openness and submission. Our tender under bellies are exposed to God, much like a pup may expose her tummy as a sign of submission. In oratio we don't just release our hurts, disappointments or fears. We, breathe deeply their release and honor the spaces within us that they leave behind, even if just for a moment. When we release our hurts to God, when we are ready, we then invite gratitude to fill those spaces. When we introduce gratitude into the places where pain once dwelt, it will inevitably come in with its lovely long train of joy, peace and encouragement. For many this is the easiest pillar of prayer. Or seems so. In my experience it is only easy when we remain superficial and share with God only the retouched versions of ourselves. You may want to begin on the surface of things. That is a great way to begin. Just don't stay there and use this time like a kind of magic wand or white washed soliloquy of self-justification. All relationships deepen with real honesty. It is true with our relationship with God as well. If you have ever in a human relationship heard your partner say, "We need to talk" there is a bit of

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Prayer: Dear God, thank you for the many large and small ways that you speak to me this day. Open my heart to hear you and to respond to your leading. Amen.

11 - Psalm 50:6a "The heavens declare God's righteousness."

Today we turn our hearts again to the second pillar of prayer called Oratio, from the Latin word for prayer itself. This way of praying is sometimes called heart prayer and may feel a bit more familiar to you. Oratio is a way of releasing the heartbreak and fear we all carry. Sometimes the hurt is fleeting, sometimes it is deeply rooted in our hearts. In either case, oratio invites us to release it all to God. In this prayer we offer our deepest truth to God in a position of openness and trust. Traditionally this prayer was prayed standing with arms outstretched to the side. This is a stance of openness and submission. Our tender under bellies are exposed to God, much like a pup may expose her tummy as a sign of submission. In oratio we don't just release our hurts, disappointments or fears. We, breathe deeply their release and honor the spaces within us that they leave behind, even if just for a moment. When we release our hurts to God, when we are ready, we then invite gratitude to fill those spaces. When we introduce gratitude into the places where pain once dwelt, it will inevitably come in with its lovely long train of joy, peace and encouragement. For many this is the easiest pillar of prayer. Or seems so. In my experience, it is only easy when we remain superficial and share with God only the retouched versions of ourselves. You may want to begin on the surface of things. That is a great way to begin. Just don't stay there and use this time like a kind of magic wand or white washed soliloquy of self-justification. All relationships deepen with real honesty. It is true with our relationship with God as well. If you have ever in a human relationship heard your partner say, "We need to talk" there is a bit of that in both sides or oratio. Remember though that, unlike some human relationships, God is always seeking the good and will never walk away, even if you do. So today, read your verse aloud slowly and prayerfully, and then tell God everything that is on your heart. When you are ready, you may close your prayer time with the following prayer, or the Lord's Prayer.

Prayer: Dear God, last night the stars seemed to smile at me. It was your smile, spread across the heavens. Help me to notice your handiwork today. Amen.

12 - Psalm 51:1a "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love."

Today we turn our hearts again to the second pillar of prayer called Oratio, from the Latin word for prayer itself. This way of praying is sometimes called heart prayer and may feel a bit more familiar to you. Oratio is a way of releasing the heartbreak and fear we all carry. Sometimes the hurt is fleeting, sometimes it is deeply rooted in our hearts. In either case, oratio invites us to release it all to God. In this prayer we offer our deepest truth to God in a position of openness and trust. Traditionally this prayer was prayed standing with arms outstretched to the side. This is a stance of openness and submission. Our tender under bellies are exposed to God, much like a pup may expose her tummy as a sign of submission. In oratio, we don't just release our hurts, disappointments or fears. We, breathe deeply their release and honor the spaces within us that they leave behind, even if just for a moment. When we release our hurts to God, when we are ready, we then invite gratitude to fill those spaces. When we introduce gratitude into the places where pain once dwelt, it will inevitably come in with its lovely long train of joy, peace and encouragement. For many this is the easiest pillar of prayer. Or seems so. In my experience it is only easy when we remain superficial and share with God only the retouched versions of ourselves. You may want to begin on the surface of things. That is a great way to begin. Just don't stay there and use this time like a kind of magic wand or white washed soliloquy of self-justification. All relationships deepen with real honesty. It is true with our relationship with God as well. If you have ever in a human relationship heard your partner say, "We need to talk" there is a bit of that in both sides or oratio. Remember though that, unlike some human relationships, God is always seeking the good and will never walk away, even if you do. So today, read your verse aloud slowly and prayerfully, and then tell God everything that is on your heart. When you are ready, you may close your prayer time with the following prayer, or the Lord's Prayer.

Prayer: Dear God, I just never seem to get it quite right. I fall short of your ways so often. Forgive me, God, and remind me of your great love for me. Amen.

13 - Psalm 51:2 "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sins.

Today we turn to the third pillar of prayer: meditatio. This pillar is not to be confused with what we more commonly think of as meditation. (That has more similarities to the fourth pillar that we will learn in a few days.) While oratio focuses on our feelings, meditatio focuses on our thoughts, how we make sense of our lives, our spiritual journey's and the scriptures that are the sign posts along our walk. In meditatio we open our hearts and minds to the questions that arise from the scripture upon which are focusing. In this form of prayer, we read the verse, or larger passage, before us over several times. In that process we ask questions of God as it relates to the passage. Such as, "Lord, what would you have me consider today? What is the needed gift you have for me in this verse? What do I learn about you in this verse that can help me grow? What do you want to teach me about myself in these words? Does this word help burn away illusions

or delusions that are holding me back or stunting my relationship with you or others? What is the context of this verse? How do you desire to expand my understanding by pondering this verse so that I can move forward more fully in your will? To help you with this, I suggest that you write the verse in your own hand as a part of your prayer and then after you close your prayer, take a few notes about what God has taught you in this time of prayer. Don't become concerned if you don't see much early on. As you practice this type of prayer your spirit will open wider and insights and direction will emerge in just the right time. It will be so wonderful to look back over these notes over the weeks or years and see the themes or patterns of how God uses this time to help you. Today's psalm is one of the most powerful examples of a prayer of confession. It also shows the power of self-awareness of one's faults and the longing for cleansing and new starts. Notice if those themes arise in your meditation.

Prayer: Dear God, I need a spiritual shower today! Take away the grime of failure and rinse me sparkling clean. Amen.

14 - Psalm 51:6 "You desire truth in the inward being; therefore, teach me wisdom in my secret heart."

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Prayer: Dear God, help me to listen today more than speak. Make me a teachable creature. Amen.

15 - Psalm 51:10 “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.”

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Prayer: Dear God, fill me with newness today, even if I seem stuck and feel very old. Remind me that with you I can start afresh. Amen.

16 - Psalm 51:15 “O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.”

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Prayer: Dear God, please give me the opportunity to bless others today by sharing your goodness and love. Amen.

17 - Psalm 52:8b – “I trust the steadfast love of God forever and ever.”

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psalm deals with the consequences of living in deceitful and unjust ways. In this verse we see the great theme of trust in God that is rooted in God's steadfast love for us. Notice if that theme arise in your meditation.

Prayer: Dear God, sometimes my trust seems to falter. I believe but I have trouble relying upon you when things get difficult. Deepen by trust, O God, that I can live in peace and witness in joy. Amen.

18 - Psalm 52:9a "I will thank you forever, because of what you have done."

Today we turn to the third pillar of prayer: meditatio. This pillar is not to be confused with what we more commonly think of as meditation. (That has more similarities to the fourth pillar that we will learn in a few days.) While oratio focuses on our feelings, meditatio focuses on our thoughts, how we make sense of our lives, our spiritual journey's and the scriptures that are the sign posts along our walk. In meditatio we open our hearts and minds to the questions that arise from the scripture upon which are focusing. In this form of prayer, we read the verse, or larger passage, before us over several times. In that process we ask questions of God as it relates to the passage. Such as, "Lord, what would you have me consider today? What is the needed gift you have for me in this verse? What do I learn about you in this verse that can help me grow? What do you want to teach me about myself in these words? Does this word help burn away illusions or delusions that are holding me back or stunting my relationship with you or others? What is the context of this verse? How do you desire to expand my understanding by pondering this verse so that I can move forward more fully in your will? To help you with this, I suggest that you write the verse in your own hand as a part of your prayer and then after you close your prayer, take a few notes about what God has taught you in this time of prayer. Don't become concerned if you don't see much early on. As you practice this type of prayer your spirit will open wider and insights and direction will emerge in just the right time. It will be so wonderful to look back over these notes over the weeks or years and see the themes or patterns of how God uses this time to help you. Today's psalm deals with the consequences of living in deceitful and unjust ways. Today's verse invites us to become aware of and reflect upon all that God has done for us, particularly in forgiveness and new starts. Notice if those themes arise in your meditatio.

Prayer: Dear God, you have saved me more times that I even know. Without your care and provision, I know I would not even be alive. I thank you forever! Amen.

19 – Psalm 52:9b "In the presence of the faithful I will proclaim your name, for it is good."

Today we turn to the third pillar of prayer: meditatio. This pillar is not to be confused with what we more commonly think of as meditation. (That has more similarities to the fourth pillar that we will learn in a few days.) While oratio focuses on our feelings, meditatio

focuses on our thoughts, how we make sense of our lives, our spiritual journey's and the scriptures that are the sign posts along our walk. In meditatio we open our hearts and minds to the questions that arise from the scripture upon which are focusing. In this form of prayer, we read the verse, or larger passage, before us over several times. In that process we ask questions of God as it relates to the passage. Such as, "Lord, what would you have me consider today? What is the needed gift you have for me in this verse? What do I learn about you in this verse that can help me grow? What do you want to teach me about myself in these words? Does this word help burn away illusions or delusions that are holding me back or stunting my relationship with you or others? What is the context of this verse? How do you desire to expand my understanding by pondering this verse so that I can move forward more fully in your will? To help you with this, I suggest that you write the verse in your own hand as a part of your prayer and then after you close your prayer, take a few notes about what God has taught you in this time of prayer. Don't become concerned if you don't see much early on. As you practice this type of prayer your spirit will open wider and insights and direction will emerge in just the right time. It will be so wonderful to look back over these notes over the weeks or years and see the themes or patterns of how God uses this time to help you. Today's psalm deals with the consequences of living in deceitful and unjust ways. Today's verse reminds us that gratitude and praise are not simply individual realities. They are to be shared in the worshiping community. Notice if those themes arise in your meditatio.

Prayer: Dear God, please give me courage today to speak of you, and to use words if I have to. Amen.

20 – Psalm 53:1 "Fools say in their hearts, 'There is no God.'"

Today we turn to the fourth pillar of prayer, contemplatio. Contemplative prayer is a way of letting go and resting in the presence of God without agenda or expectation. Ordinarily this type of prayer is enjoyed in silence. In the silence we let go of our egos constant agendas and simply open ourselves to rest in the presence of God. In the old revival traditions of the American South this is often spoken of as resting in the arms of Jesus. If the scripture of the day raises a praise filled spirit in you, you might read the text, settle yourself quietly in a stance of praise, breathe deeply and begin your silence by saying simply "I am here." As in today's verse the text might give you a sense of uneasiness, or even judgment of others. In that case, you might begin by trying to release your judgmental thoughts to God, or your worried or fearful ones. You might imagine each thought as a little boat floating down a flowing river, or as a rock that you toss into a pond. Once that clutter is cleared a bit, begin your contemplatio by saying, "I am here." It is very helpful in this style of prayer not to harshly judge yourself if you can't find any internal quiet. Intruding thoughts are natural. Simply notice them and send them down the river in little boats as well. Even if you can only really rest agenda-less with God for a split second, it is powerful and transformative. So don't give up on this

method if it feels like you are not 'doing it right.' Coming before God and saying, "I am here" is powerful in its own right. Some people find it helpful to 'pray between the words' if contemplatio is hard or uncomfortable. To do that, visualize in your mind the verse you are praying with. Focus your attention on the first word, really focus, for a few moments. Then go to the second word and do the same. After you have focused on the second word, let your mind's eye drift to the space between the words. You may experience a vastness in that space that allows you to enter into the silence and rest of God for a moment. I love to pray in this way! I often find that my mind's eye sees the whole expanse of the universe in that tiny space. For me, at least, it is beautiful and healing. It resets and releases agendas in the presence of the vast glory of God. You may close your prayer with the daily prayer below, or the Lord's prayer. As you move again into the verbal world, though, take a moment to silently, with your whole spirit, thank God for God's nearness and comfort.

Prayer: Dear God, I pray today for those who do not know you, those who cannot believe in you, those who must wind their way so alone. Touch them, God. Use me, if you will it. I pray as well for myself and all the ways that I do not yet know you or myself. Give me peace for the journey. Amen.

21 – Psalm 53:2 "God looks down from heaven on humankind to see if there are any who are wise, who seek after God."

Today we turn to the fourth pillar of prayer, contemplatio. Contemplative prayer is a way of letting go and resting in the presence of God without agenda or expectation. Ordinarily this type of prayer is enjoyed in silence. In the silence we let go of our egos constant agendas and simply open ourselves to rest in the presence of God. In the old revival traditions of the American South this is often spoken of as resting in the arms of Jesus. If the scripture of the day raises a praise filled spirit in you, you might read the text, settle yourself quietly in a stance of praise, breathe deeply and begin your silence by saying simply "I am here." As in today's verse the text might give you a sense of uneasiness, or even judgment of others. In that case, you might begin by trying to release your judgmental thoughts to God, or your worried or fearful ones. You might imagine each thought as a little boat floating down a flowing river or as a rock that you toss into a pond. Once that clutter is cleared a bit, begin your contemplatio by saying, "I am here." It is very helpful in this style of prayer not to harshly judge yourself if you can't find any internal quiet. Intruding thoughts are natural. Simply notice them and send them down the river in little boats as well. Even if you can only really rest agenda-less with God for a split second, it is powerful and transformative. So don't give up on this method if it feels like you are not 'doing it right.' Coming before God and saying, "I am here" is powerful in its own right. Some people find it helpful to 'pray between the words' if contemplatio is hard or uncomfortable. To do that, visualize in your mind the verse you are praying with. Focus your attention on the first word, really focus, for a few moments.

Then go to the second word and do the same. After you have focused on the second word, let your mind's eye drift to the space between the word. You may experience a vastness in that space that allows you to enter into the silence and rest of God for a moment. I love to pray in this way! I often find that my mind's eye sees the whole expanse of the universe in that tiny space. For me, at least, it is beautiful and healing. It resets and releases agendas in the presence of the vast glory of God. You may close your prayer with the daily prayer below, or the Lord's prayer. As you move again into the verbal world, though, take a moment to silently, with your whole spirit, thank God for God's nearness and comfort.

Prayer: Dear God, when I look around our public life these days, I do not see a lot of wisdom. Find us, O God, and show us your ways. Amen.

22 – Psalm 53:6a “O that deliverance for Israel would come from Zion!”

Today we turn to the fourth pillar of prayer, contemplatio. Contemplative prayer is a way of letting go and resting in the presence of God without agenda or expectation. Ordinarily this type of prayer is enjoyed in silence. In the silence we let go of our egos constant agendas and simply open ourselves to rest in the presence of God. In the old revival traditions of the American South this is often spoken of as resting in the arms of Jesus. If the scripture of the day raises a praise filled spirit in you, you might read the text, settle yourself quietly in a stance of praise, breathe deeply and begin your silence by saying simply “I am here.” As in today's verse the text might give you a sense of uneasiness, or even judgment of others. In that case, you might begin by trying to release your judgmental thoughts to God, or your worried or fearful ones. You might imagine each thought as a little boat floating down a flowing river or as a rock that you toss into a pond. Once that clutter is cleared a bit, begin your contemplatio by saying, “I am here.” It is very helpful in this style of prayer not to harshly judge yourself if you can't find any internal quiet. Intruding thoughts are natural. Simply notice them and send them down the river in little boats as well. Even if you can only really rest agenda-less with God for a split second, it is powerful and transformative. So don't give up on this method if it feels like you are not ‘doing it right.’ Coming before God and saying, “I am here” is powerful in its own right. Some people find it helpful to ‘pray between the words’ if contemplatio is hard or uncomfortable. To do that, visualize in your mind the verse you are praying with. Focus your attention on the first word, really focus, for a few moments. Then go to the second word and do the same. After you have focused on the second word, let your mind's eye drift to the space between the word. You may experience a vastness in that space that allows you to enter into the silence and rest of God for a moment. I love to pray in this way! I often find that my mind's eye sees the whole expanse of the universe in that tiny space. For me, at least, it is beautiful and healing. It resets and releases agendas in the presence of the vast glory of God. You may close your prayer with the daily prayer below, or the Lord's prayer. As you move again into the

verbal world, though, take a moment to silently, with your whole spirit, thank God for God's nearness and comfort.

Prayer: Dear God, today I pray for your holy land and all the peoples who call it home, in Gaza, Israel, and all the surrounding lands. Help the world's people to find their rest in you. Amen.

23 – Psalm 54:1 “Save me, O God, by your name, and vindicate me by your might.”

Today we turn to the fourth pillar of prayer, contemplatio. Contemplative prayer is a way of letting go and resting in the presence of God without agenda or expectation. Ordinarily this type of prayer is enjoyed in silence. In the silence we let go of our egos constant agendas and simply open ourselves to rest in the presence of God. In the old revival traditions of the American South this is often spoken of as resting in the arms of Jesus. If the scripture of the day raises a praise filled spirit in you, you might read the text, settle yourself quietly in a stance of praise, breathe deeply and begin your silence by saying simply “I am here.” As in today's verse the text might give you a sense of uneasiness, or even judgment of others. In that case, you might begin by trying to release your judgmental thoughts to God, or your worried or fearful ones. You might imagine each thought as a little boat floating down a flowing river or as a rock that you toss into a pond. Once that clutter is cleared a bit, begin your contemplatio by saying, “I am here.” It is very helpful in this style of prayer not to harshly judge yourself if you can't find any internal quiet. Intruding thoughts are natural. Simply notice them and send them down the river in little boats as well. Even if you can only really rest agenda-less with God for a split second, it is powerful and transformative. So don't give up on this method if it feels like you are not ‘doing it right.’ Coming before God and saying, “I am here” is powerful in its own right. Some people find it helpful to ‘pray between the words’ if contemplatio is hard or uncomfortable. To do that, visualize in your mind the verse you are praying with. Focus your attention on the first word, really focus, for a few moments. Then go to the second word and do the same. After you have focused on the second word, let your mind's eye drift to the space between the word. You may experience a vastness in that space that allows you to enter into the silence and rest of God for a moment. I love to pray in this way! I often find that my mind's eye sees the whole expanse of the universe in that tiny space. For me, at least, it is beautiful and healing. It resets and releases agendas in the presence of the vast glory of God. You may close your prayer with the daily prayer below, or the Lord's prayer. As you move again into the verbal world, though, take a moment to silently, with your whole spirit, thank God for God's nearness and comfort.

Prayer: Dear God, help me to give up the need to control how others think of me. Help me to leave that to you. Amen.

24 – Psalm 70:3 “Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.”

Today we turn to the fourth pillar of prayer, contemplatio. Contemplative prayer is a way of letting go and resting in the presence of God without agenda or expectation. Ordinarily this type of prayer is enjoyed in silence. In the silence we let go of our egos constant agendas and simply open ourselves to rest in the presence of God. In the old revival traditions of the American South this is often spoken of as resting in the arms of Jesus. If the scripture of the day raises a praise filled spirit in you, you might read the text, settle yourself quietly in a stance of praise, breathe deeply and begin your silence by saying simply “I am here.” As in today’s verse the text might give you a sense of uneasiness, or even judgment of others. In that case, you might begin by trying to release your judgmental thoughts to God, or your worried or fearful ones. You might imagine each thought as a little boat floating down a flowing river or as a rock that you toss into a pond. Once that clutter is cleared a bit, begin your contemplatio by saying, “I am here.” It is very helpful in this style of prayer not to harshly judge yourself if you can’t find any internal quiet. Intruding thoughts are natural. Simply notice them and send them down the river in little boats as well. Even if you can only really rest agenda-less with God for a split second, it is powerful and transformative. So don’t give up on this method if it feels like you are not ‘doing it right.’ Coming before God and saying, “I am here” is powerful in its own right. Some people find it helpful to ‘pray between the words’ if contemplatio is hard or uncomfortable. To do that, visualize in your mind the verse you are praying with. Focus your attention on the first word, really focus, for a few moments. Then go to the second word and do the same. After you have focused on the second word, let your mind’s eye drift to the space between the word. You may experience a vastness in that space that allows you to enter into the silence and rest of God for a moment. I love to pray in this way! I often find that my mind’s eye sees the whole expanse of the universe in that tiny space. For me, at least, it is beautiful and healing. It resets and releases agendas in the presence of the vast glory of God. You may close your prayer with the daily prayer below, or the Lord’s prayer. As you move again into the verbal world, though, take a moment to silently, with your whole spirit, thank God for God’s nearness and comfort.

Dear God, today I open myself to you in complete trust, remembering that you are my rock and my salvation. Amen.

25 – Psalm 54:4 “But surely, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life.”

Today we turn to the fourth pillar of prayer, contemplatio. Contemplative prayer is a way of letting go and resting in the presence of God without agenda or expectation. Ordinarily this type of prayer is enjoyed in silence. In the silence we let go of our egos constant agendas and simply open ourselves to rest in the presence of God. In the old

revival traditions of the American South this is often spoken of as resting in the arms of Jesus. If the scripture of the day raises a praise filled spirit in you, you might read the text, settle yourself quietly in a stance of praise, breathe deeply and begin your silence by saying simply “I am here.” As in today’s verse the text might give you a sense of uneasiness, or even judgment of others. In that case, you might begin by trying to release your judgmental thoughts to God, or your worried or fearful ones. You might imagine each thought as a little boat floating down a flowing river or as a rock that you toss into a pond. Once that clutter is cleared a bit, begin your contemplatio by saying, “I am here.” It is very helpful in this style of prayer not to harshly judge yourself if you can’t find any internal quiet. Intruding thoughts are natural. Simply notice them and send them down the river in little boats as well. Even if you can only really rest agenda-less with God for a split second, it is powerful and transformative. So don’t give up on this method if it feels like you are not ‘doing it right.’ Coming before God and saying, “I am here” is powerful in its own right. Some people find it helpful to ‘pray between the words’ if contemplatio is hard or uncomfortable. To do that, visualize in your mind the verse you are praying with. Focus your attention on the first word, really focus, for a few moments. Then go to the second word and do the same. After you have focused on the second word, let your mind’s eye drift to the space between the word. You may experience a vastness in that space that allows you to enter into the silence and rest of God for a moment. I love to pray in this way! I often find that my mind’s eye sees the whole expanse of the universe in that tiny space. For me, at least, it is beautiful and healing. It resets and releases agendas in the presence of the vast glory of God. You may close your prayer with the daily prayer below, or the Lord’s prayer. As you move again into the verbal world, though, take a moment to silently, with your whole spirit, thank God for God’s nearness and comfort.

Dear God, I have waked up tired today. I don’t even know why. Help me to find the rest I need in you, O my Helper. Fill me with the energy I need to live this day in joy and peace. Amen.

26 – Psalm 54:2 “Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.”

Today we have completed our cycle through the Four Pillars of Prayer and begin action with lectio. I invite you to find a place where you can be comfortable and undisturbed for a few moments. Read the verse aloud slowly three times. Try to slow your reading a bit with each repetition. Each time you read, try emphasizing a different word. Is there a word that seems to resonate with you especially today? If so, take a moment to just sit with that word. For example, your word might be ‘Hear me’ or ‘words’. Let the Spirit guide you. Ask God why that word leapt out at you today? Repeat it again and again in your mind. See if God raises something for you to consider. Take a moment to ponder that. This is the first pillar of prayer: Lectio, the prayerful encounter of the word. In this stance of prayer, we invite God to awaken our hearts to the word for the day and help

us experience the unique gift that the word has for us. When you complete your lectio, you may close your prayer time with the following prayer, or the Lord's Prayer.

Dear God, thank you that my words and feelings matter to you. Help me today to hear your guidance and speak only how you would have me speak. Amen.

27- Psalm 54:6 "With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you; I will give thanks to your name, O Lord, for it is good."

Today, I invite you to find a place where you can be comfortable and undisturbed for a few moments. Read the verse aloud slowly three times. Try to slow your reading a bit with each repetition. Each time you read, try emphasizing a different word. Is there a word that seems to resonate with you especially today? If so, take a moment to just sit with that word. For example, your word might be 'freewill' or 'offering' or even 'good.' Let the Spirit guide you. Ask God why that word leapt out at you today? Repeat it again and again in your mind. See if God raises something for you to consider. Take a moment to ponder that. This is the first pillar of prayer: Lectio, the prayerful encounter of the word. In this stance of prayer, we invite God to awaken our hearts to the word for the day and help us experience the unique gift that the word has for us. When you complete your lectio, you may close your prayer time with the following prayer, or the Lord's Prayer.

Dear God, I am thinking today of how I can give to you. Help me to listen to what you want and not count the cost. Amen.

28 – Psalm 55:1 "Give ear to my prayer, O God; do not hide yourself from my supplication."

Today, I invite you to find a place where you can be comfortable and undisturbed for a few moments. Read the verse aloud slowly three times. Try to slow your reading a bit with each repetition. Each time you read, try emphasizing a different word. Is there a word that seems to resonate with you especially today? If so, take a moment to just sit with that word. For example, your word might be 'prayer' or 'hide' or even 'supplication' Let the Spirit guide you. Ask God why that word leapt out at you today? Repeat it again and again in your mind. See if God raises something for you to consider. Take a moment to ponder that. This is the first pillar of prayer: Lectio, the prayerful encounter of the word. In this stance of prayer, we invite God to awaken our hearts to the word for the day and help us experience the unique gift that the word has for us. When you complete your lectio, you may close your prayer time with the following prayer, or the Lord's Prayer.

Dear God, I have many people on my heart this morning. There is much that I want to ask of you. Thank you for your attention to my every need. Amen.

29 – Psalm 55:2a “Attend to me, and answer me; I am troubled in my complaint. I am distraught by the noise of the enemy...”

Today, I invite you to find a place where you can be comfortable and undisturbed for a few moments. Read the verse aloud slowly three times. Try to slow your reading a bit with each repetition. Each time you read, try emphasizing a different word. Is there a word that seems to resonate with you especially today? If so, take a moment to just sit with that word. For example, your word might be ‘attend to me’ or ‘answer me’ or even ‘noise of the enemy.’ Let the Spirit guide you. Ask God why that word leapt out at you today? Repeat it again and again in your mind. See if God raises something for you to consider. Take a moment to ponder that. This is the first pillar of prayer: Lectio, the prayerful encounter of the word. In this stance of prayer, we invite God to awaken our hearts to the word for the day and help us experience the unique gift that the word has for us. When you complete your lectio, you may close your prayer time with the following prayer, or the Lord’s Prayer.

Dear God, the destructive forces in our world seem so powerful. I am sick of seeing the poor tyrannized, the weak exploited, the foolish manipulated. O God, please intervene! Amen.

30 – Psalm 55:6 “And I say, “O that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest...”

Today, I invite you to find a place where you can be comfortable and undisturbed for a few moments. Read the verse aloud slowly three times. Try to slow your reading a bit with each repetition. Each time you read, try emphasizing a different word. Is there a word that seems to resonate with you especially today? If so, take a moment to just sit with that word. For example, your word might be ‘wings’ or ‘fly away’ or even ‘be at rest.’ Let the Spirit guide you. Ask God why that word leapt out at you today? Repeat it again and again in your mind. See if God raises something for you to consider. Take a moment to ponder that. This is the first pillar of prayer: Lectio, the prayerful encounter of the word. In this stance of prayer, we invite God to awaken our hearts to the word for the day and help us experience the unique gift that the word has for us. When you complete your lectio, you may close your prayer time with the following prayer, or the Lord’s Prayer.

Dear God, I want to run away! Help me to remember that I can take refuge in you and help to meet the challenges of today with faith and courage. Amen.

31 – Psalm 55:22 “Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you...”

Today, I invite you to find a place where you can be comfortable and undisturbed for a few moments. Read the verse aloud slowly three times. Try to slow your reading a bit with each repetition. Each time you read, try emphasizing a different word. Is there a

word that seems to resonate with you especially today? If so, take a moment to just sit with that word. For example, your word might be 'cast' or 'burden' or even 'sustain.' Let the Spirit guide you. Ask God why that word leapt out at you today? Repeat it again and again in your mind. See if God raises something for you to consider. Take a moment to ponder that. This is the first pillar of prayer: Lectio, the prayerful encounter of the word. In this stance of prayer, we invite God to awaken our hearts to the word for the day and help us experience the unique gift that the word has for us. When you complete your lectio, you may close your prayer time with the following prayer, or the Lord's Prayer.

Dear God, I offer you today each one of my burdens, grief and cares. I cast them to you like a strong-armed pitcher. Catch them and deal with them for me, please. Amen.