

Oramus

A GUIDE TO CATHOLIC PRAYER

STUDENT WORKBOOK

Fr. Mark Touns

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A Letter from Fr. Mark Toups

Welcome to *Oremus*!* Over the next eight weeks, you are going to be inspired to deepen your prayer life while learning how to open yourself to God and receive everything he wants for you in prayer. As Catholics, we have a deep spiritual heritage in classic forms of prayer, including meditation, contemplation, and the spiritual senses. These rich forms of Christian prayer allow us to “dive deep” into the oceans of God’s merciful love.

In her autobiography, St. Thérèse of Lisieux describes prayer in this way: “For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven; it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy”⁴ (CCC 2558). If you’re hungry for this “surge of the heart,” this study is for *you*.

Would you like to hear God speak to you? When many Catholics hear the words “meditation” and “contemplative prayer,” their eyes glaze over and their thoughts wander. Such practices, they think, are reserved to priests, monks, and nuns; lay people certainly cannot do such things. Yet God calls all Christians, regardless of their state in life, to grow in holiness; this type of prayer provides the means to a deepened relationship with the Lord. However, all of us—including you—are invited to grow in an intimate relationship with God through the gift of prayer.

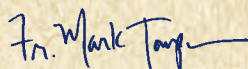
Oremus will provide you with the basics on both meditative and contemplative prayer, concentrating in a special way on a form of praying with the Bible known as *lectio divina*, as well as on “imaginative” prayer, a way of praying that allows the Holy Spirit to guide your spiritual senses. The principles of this study are drawn from the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius of Loyola.

About the *Oremus* program. There are eight sessions in the *Oremus* program. At each session, I will guide you through an easy-to-understand teaching on prayer. After each presentation, you will engage in a small-group discussion of the truths you just heard. You will also have a chance to talk about any challenges or developments you wish to share with the group from the previous week.

Here’s the best part: In between sessions, you will be invited to pray using specific Scripture passages in your workbook. I’ll give you a Scripture passage every day for the eight weeks. It’s like making an eight-week retreat in the midst of your busy life! You will also be invited to keep track of your thoughts and progress through short journal entries that you will be making in your workbook. These weeks are designed to help guide you step-by-step to draw close to God and to listen for his voice speaking to you.

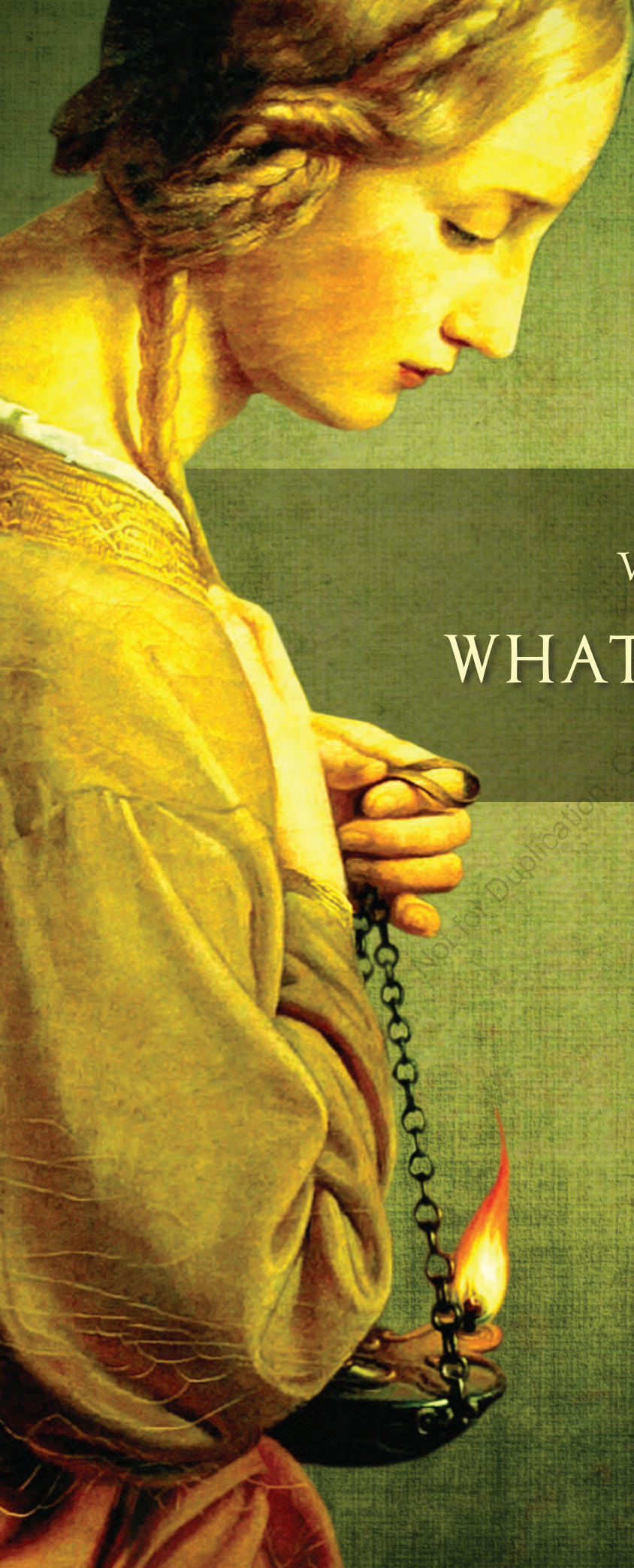
I’m looking forward to walking with you. See you soon at *Oremus*!

In Christ,



Fr. Mark Toups

**Oremus* \ō-’rā-mūs\ is a Latin word meaning “Let us pray.”



WEEK ONE:
WHAT IS PRAYER?



What Is Prayer?

SESSION OUTLINE

1. *"Man is in search of God. In the act of creation, God calls every being from nothingness into existence. ... Even after losing through his sin his likeness to God, man remains an image of his Creator, and retains the desire for the one who calls him into existence. All religions bear witness to men's essential search for God."* –CCC 2566¹

2. *"Human life without prayer, which opens our existence to the mystery God, lacks sense and direction."* –Pope Benedict XVI²

3. *"Many Christians are aware of the necessity and the beauty of contemplative prayer and have a sincere yearning for it. Yet, apart from tentative efforts soon abandoned, few remain faithful to this mode of prayer, and even fewer are really convinced and satisfied by their own practice of it. ... We would like to pray, but we cannot manage it. ... Our time of prayer passes, leaving us distracted, and since it does not seem to yield any tangible fruit, we are not loath to give up. From time to time we take up a book of 'meditations,' which presents us, ready-made, with the contemplation we ought to produce for ourselves. ... Often ... fearfulness ... robs us of the confidence to take steps on our own."* –Hans Urs von Balthazar³

4. *"He was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.'" –Luke 11:1*

5. *"It is in fact in Jesus that man becomes able to approach God in the depth and intimacy of the relationship of fatherhood and sonship. Together with the first disciples, let us now turn with humble trust to the Teacher and ask him: 'Lord, teach us to pray.'" –Pope Benedict XVI⁴*

6. "God calls man first. Man may forget his Creator or hide far from his face; he may run after idols or accuse the deity of having abandoned him; yet the living and true God tirelessly calls each person to that mysterious encounter known as prayer. In prayer ... God's initiative of love always comes first; our own first step is always a response." –CCC 2567
7. "It was not you who chose me but I who chose you." –John 15:16, NAB
8. "A step or two before the place where I am to contemplate or meditate, I will stand for the space of an Our Father and, with my consciousness raised on high, consider how the Lord my God looks upon me. Then I will make an act of reverence or humility." –St. Ignatius of Loyola⁵
9. "*We have come to believe in God's love*: in these words the Christian can express the fundamental decision of his life. Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction." –Pope Benedict XVI⁶
10. "We receive the first lesson from the Lord by his example. The Gospels describe Jesus to us in intimate and constant conversation with the Father: it is a profound communion of the One who came into the world not to do his will but that of the Father who sent him for the salvation of man." –Pope Benedict XVI⁷
11. "Yet only in God who reveals himself does man's seeking find complete fulfillment. The prayer that is openness and elevation of the heart to God, thus becomes a personal relationship with him. And even if man forgets his Creator, the living, true God does not cease to call man first to the mysterious encounter of prayer." –Pope Benedict XVI⁸
12. "For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for woe! plans to give you a future full of hope. When you call me, when you go to pray to me, I will listen to you. When you look for me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek me with all your heart, you will find me with you, says the Lord." –Jeremiah 29:11-14, NAB

DISCUSSION

QUESTION # 1

What challenges do you face in your prayer life? Explain.

QUESTION # 2

Describe your experience of prayer before hearing this week's teaching.

QUESTION # 3

What stayed with you the most from the teaching this week?

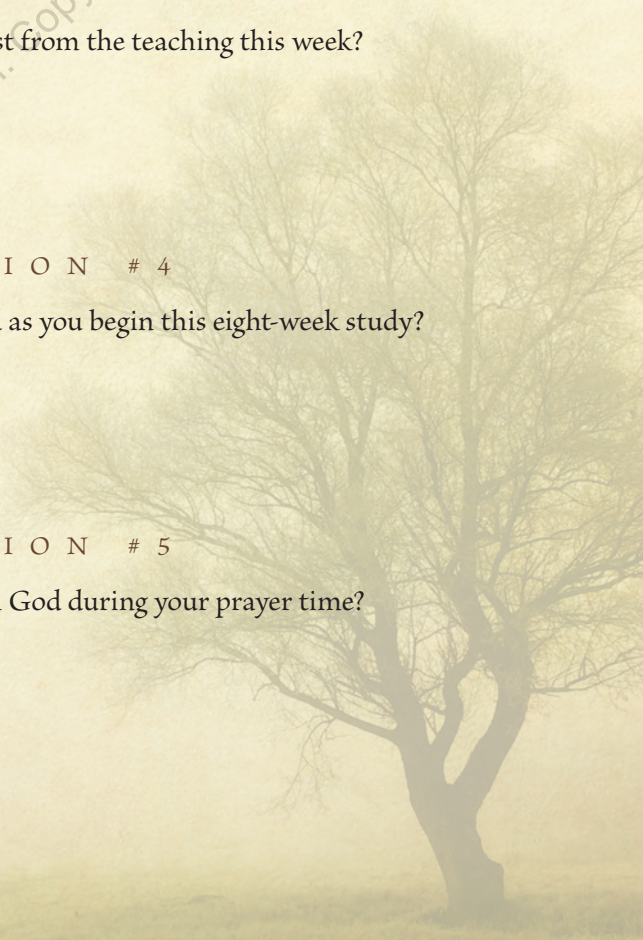
QUESTION # 4

What do you desire most from God as you begin this eight-week study?

QUESTION # 5

What do you desire most from God during your prayer time?

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DAY 1

WEEK # 1

FOR YOUR PRAYER

JEREMIAH 29:11-14

Read the passage once to become familiar with the text.

Slowly read the passage a second time.

Very, very slowly read the passage a third time.

Pay attention to which word, words, or phrases captures your attention or tugs at your heart.

Talk to God about what is on your heart ... and listen.

JOURNAL

The "strongest" thought or feeling during my prayer was ...

My heart "rested" when ...

I sense the Lord was telling me ...

I ended the prayer wanting ...

DAY 2

WEEK # 1

FOR YOUR PRAYER

JOHN 15:1-17

Read the passage once to become familiar with the text.

Slowly read the passage a second time.

Very, very slowly read the passage a third time.

Pay attention to which word, words, or phrases captures your attention or tugs at your heart.

Talk to God about what is on your heart ... and listen.

JOURNAL

The "strongest" thought or feeling during my prayer was ...

My heart "rested" when ...

I sense the Lord was telling me ...

I ended the prayer wanting ...

DAY 3

WEEK # 1

FOR YOUR PRAYER

PSALMS 139:1-18

Read the passage once to become familiar with the text.

Slowly read the passage a second time.

Very, very slowly read the passage a third time.

Pay attention to which word, words, or phrases captures your attention or tugs at your heart.

Talk to God about what is on your heart ... and listen.

JOURNAL

The "strongest" thought or feeling during my prayer was ...

My heart "rested" when ...

I sense the Lord was telling me ...

I ended the prayer wanting ...

DAY 4

WEEK # 1

FOR YOUR PRAYER

ROMANS 8:22-27

Read the passage once to become familiar with the text.

Slowly read the passage a second time.

Very, very slowly read the passage a third time.

Pay attention to which word, words, or phrases captures your attention or tugs at your heart.

Talk to God about what is on your heart ... and listen.

JOURNAL

The "strongest" thought or feeling during my prayer was ...

My heart "rested" when ...

I sense the Lord was telling me ...

I ended the prayer wanting ...

DAY 5

WEEK # 1

FOR YOUR PRAYER

ROMANS 8:31-39

Read the passage once to become familiar with the text.

Slowly read the passage a second time.

Very, very slowly read the passage a third time.

Pay attention to which word, words, or phrases captures your attention or tugs at your heart.

Talk to God about what is on your heart ... and listen.

JOURNAL

The "strongest" thought or feeling during my prayer was ...

My heart "rested" when ...

I sense the Lord was telling me ...

I ended the prayer wanting ...

DAY 6

WEEK # 1

F O R Y O U R P R A Y E R

PSALM 63

Read the passage once to become familiar with the text.

Slowly read the passage a second time.

Very, very slowly read the passage a third time.

Pay attention to which word, words, or phrases captures your attention or tugs at your heart.

Talk to God about what is on your heart ... and listen.

JOURNAL

The "strongest" thought or feeling during my prayer was ...

My heart "rested" when ...

I sense the Lord was telling me ...

I ended the prayer wanting ...

DAY 7

WEEK # 1

FOR YOUR PRAYER

Return to the Scripture passage that spoke to you the most this week.

Read the passage once to become familiar with the text.

Slowly read the passage a second time.

Very, very slowly read the passage a third time.

Pay attention to which word, words, or phrases captures your attention or tugs at your heart.

Talk to God about what is on your heart ... and listen.

JOURNAL

The "strongest" thought or feeling during my prayer was ...

My heart "rested" when ...

I sense the Lord was telling me ...

I ended the prayer wanting ...
