

## **Catholic Prayer**

**'I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will be safe: he will go freely in and out and be sure of finding pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.**

**I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full. I am the Good Shepherd: The Good Shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep. I know my own and my own know me.'** (John 10: 9-11, 14)

## **Catholic Prayer**

1. Conversations with God in the Old and the New Testament.  
Prayer through the ages.
2. Jesus at the heart of the Rosary.  
The Rosary : Prayer and Meditation.
3. God's gift to the world: Divine Mercy.  
Our Lord's appearances to Sister Faustina.
4. Devotions and Novenas.  
Prayers to Jesus, Mary, and the Saints.
5. Mary's role in our lives.  
Marian prayers, and her appearances at Lourdes and Fatima.
6. Five Forms of Prayer.  
Adoration, Petition, Intercession, Thanksgiving, and Praise.
7. The Eucharist: the Heart of the Catholic Faith.  
Mass, Adoration, Benediction.
8. Family Prayer: Making your home a holy place.  
Prayers for the family.
9. Jesus teaches us how to pray.  
The Lord's Prayer.
10. Making a personal plan for daily prayer.
11. Treasures in Heaven: Indulgences.

## 1. Conversations and Covenants in the Old and New Testament

A **Covenant** is a solemn agreement, initiated by God, with mankind, whereby God binds his people to himself, in love and mercy, for all time and eternity. God continues the covenant down through the ages by calling leaders from among the people who will renew the people's faithfulness to Himself. In essence God is saying to all people, for all time, that :

*'I will be your God and you will be my people.'*

**Prayer** keeps the Covenants between God and mankind alive. These solemn agreements are the **basis** of our Prayer Life.

**The Church** is the guardian of the **New and Everlasting Covenant** established by Jesus at the Last Supper.

### Conversations and Covenants in the Old Testament.

1. **Adam and Eve** speak to God in the Garden of Eden. The Natural Law is written on their hearts. They know good from evil.
2. **Noah:** God establishes the seasons and renews His promises to Noah's descendants.
3. **Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob:** God begins to gather a nation whom he will make great. The sign of their Covenant will be circumcision.
4. **Moses:** The Natural Law is written on stone when Moses receives the Ten Commandments. He is asked to build a Just Society.
5. **David, Shepherd and King:** God promises David Eternal Kingship through his line of descendants.

After the time of the Kings was over the Covenant between God and His chosen people was kept alive by the **Prophets** who spoke God's words to the people.

### Conversations and Covenants in the New Testament

1. **John the Baptist** is asked by God to prepare the hearts and minds of the people of Israel for the coming of the long awaited Messiah. "*Prepare the way of the Lord.*"
2. **Mary, the Mother of God:** The Angel Gabriel asked Mary to be the Mother of Jesus.

Her words, "May it be done unto me according to Thy word," brought Jesus into human history.

3. **Jesus:** Jesus came not to end but to fulfill the promise of the Covenant made with the Jewish People throughout the ages. He taught the Law of Love of God and Neighbour. He redeemed mankind by taking on Himself the sins of everyone in the world. His own blood shed at His crucifixion is the Sign of the New and Everlasting Covenant.

#### **4. The Church --- The mystery of Union with God:**

The Holy Spirit comes down on the Apostles on Pentecost Sunday, and the Church is born. We enter into God's Covenant when we are baptized. The Holy Spirit keeps us united with God, through the saving action of Jesus in the sacraments of His Church.

### **What is Prayer?**

*Prayer is the raising of the mind and heart to God in : Adoration, Thanksgiving, Reparation, and Petition. Prayer which is always mental because it always involves thought and love of God, may be vocal, meditative, private, or communal. In short Prayer is a heart to heart conversation with God.*

**The Bible** contains the written record of all God's conversations and covenants from the time of Adam and Eve to the writings of the Apostles. God continues to call us to Himself today through the Church which was established by Jesus to care for all our Spiritual needs. In the Church we continue to keep alive the New and Everlasting Covenant given to us by Jesus at the Last Supper.

*"Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my body which will be given up for you. Take this, all of you and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the New and Everlasting Covenant which will be shed for you and for many so that sins may be forgiven." Then He said to them, "Do this in memory of me."  
(Matthew 26: 26-29)*

In Acts of the Apostles 2: 1-4, an account is given of the dramatic and sanctifying action of God's grace, when, on the day of Pentecost, the Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit. On this day the Church celebrates her birth. Jesus promised to be with his church until the end of time and that the gates of Hell would not prevail against it. He gave to Peter the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. (Matthew 16: 13-20)

We know with certainty that in the Church, following the precepts taught to us by Jesus, we will find salvation for our souls and entry into Heaven. Prayer is our response to the action of the Holy Spirit who calls us continually to faithfulness. So let us, with the Church, pray always, as Jesus asked us to do.

*If you love me keep my commandments, says the Lord. The Father will send you the Holy Spirit, to be with you forever. (John 14: 15-16)*

In order to love God we must know all we can about Him. Reading, studying, and using the Scriptures as a source for prayer help us to know God. To learn the God's plan for the salvation of the Human Race there is no better place to start reading than the first book of the Bible, Genesis. Next read Exodus, which is one of the world's greatest dramatic stories. Also read from the New Testament to learn about Jesus. Start with the first Gospel which is Matthew's Gospel. Set aside some time for prayer every day. Say the Apostles' Creed to begin Your Prayer. It is our act of faith by which we enter into God's Presence. Plan a reasonable amount of time each day so that you can progress without overloading yourself.

### **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.***

Read Genesis chapter 1, in the Old Testament and Matthew's Gospel in the New Testament. Continue to read and learn for 10-15 minutes every day until you are ready to spend a longer time. Keeping yourself recollected take time to have a conversation with God, talk to Him and tell Him all that is on your mind and all of your needs both spiritual and temporal. Talk to Him with confidence. Talk to Him as you would to a dear friend for he has waited for you to turn to him. He alone can answer the prayers from your heart. To end your prayer, thank God for all that He has given you for your use in this very beautiful world and thank Him for all the good people you know.

***Know and fix it in your heart, that the Lord is God in the heavens above and on earth below, and that there is no other. You must keep his statutes and commandments which I enjoin on you today. (Deuteronomy 4: 39-40a)***

## **The Covenants**

**Adam the first man, and Eve the first women,** had a unique relationship with God, their Creator. God met with them and talked with them face to face. They were made by God in His own image, 'male and female he created them.' (**Gen. 1: 27**) 'It was the sixth day of creation,' God saw all he had made, and indeed it was very good.' (**Gen. 1: 31**) God put mankind in charge of the whole Earth. They were to eat seed-bearing plants, and seed-bearing fruit only

The whole world was given to our first parents. The Natural Law was written in their hearts so that their stewardship of the Earth would begin immediately. In the second account of creation we are told that God settled Adam and Eve in one part of the Earth called Eden. In the first covenant between God and mankind they were given a beautiful

land of peace and plenty. God asked them to keep only one commandment. They must not eat the fruit of a certain tree in the middle of the garden because they would bring death into Eden. God warned them that they *"must not eat it, nor touch it, under pain of death."*

The temptation to eat the fruit was too strong for Eve when she was tempted by the 'serpent'. Adam, who was with her at the time accepted some of the fruit from Eve and ate it as well.

As a consequence of their act, they became aware of their nakedness, and in shame they hid from God, because they had disobeyed Him.

*"I heard the sound of you in the garden,"* Adam said to God, when he hid from him, because of his awareness of his nakedness.

*"Who told you that you were naked? Have you been eating of the tree I forbade you to eat?"* God asked Adam.

Adam immediately blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent! God gave each one, starting with the serpent the consequences of their actions. Their relationship with God, their covenant with Him was broken but not ended. God told them of a **Woman** who would be the enemy of evil, represented by the serpent, and her **Offspring** who would crush its head. (**Gen.3: 14-24**)

When we think of Jesus' last words on the cross, *"It is accomplished."* We know that the power of the Evil one was crushed. Jesus the offspring of the Woman Mary, rose again from the dead, destroying death itself. We pray for the coming of the Kingdom and God's Will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The Book of Genesis is about the creation of the world, the breaking of the **first covenant** by our first parents Adam and Eve, the promise of a Redeemer, and God's mercy to His people.

*Almighty Father, strong is your justice and great is your mercy.*

*Protect us in the burdens and challenges of life.*

*Shield our minds from the distortion of pride*

*and enfold our desire with the beauty of truth.*

*Help us to become more aware of your loving design*

*so that we may more willingly give our lives in service to all.*

*We ask this through Christ our Lord.( Psalter, week iv, 32 Sunday in Ordinary Time)*

## **God's Covenant with Noah and his family**

Noah, a good man, was told by God of a great chastisement which was to come. Since the whole earth was full of corruption God was going to cleanse and renew it.

God established a Covenant with Noah. There would come a flood in which everything

on earth would perish, except Noah, his family, and the animals they took with them. Noah was to build an Ark in preparation for the coming flood. ***'Noah did all that God ordered.'***

The flood came, and the Ark floated away on the waters for one hundred and fifty days. When the flood receded Noah was told by God to leave the Ark. The Covenant with Noah was to be the beginning of A New World Order.

***"See I establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you; also with every living creature to be found with you---everything that lives on earth. God said , here is the sign of the covenant I make between myself and you and every living creature with you for all generations."***

A sign was given which is still a universal sign of God's agreement with Noah. This sign is the rainbow. ***"I set my bow in the clouds and it shall be a sign of the Covenant between me and the earth."*** God promised Noah that the earth would never again be totally destroyed by flood and the laws of nature would be established again. **(Gen.9:1-17)**

Although mankind had been re-consecrated to God through the faithfulness of Noah, the tranquillity of Eden, which was lost with Adam and Eve, was promised for a time later on in history. In the covenant between God and Noah, all people on earth were asked to remember that they are made in God's image and likeness and to act responsibly towards each other.

#### **Psalm 24.**

***To Yahweh belong all the earth and all it holds,  
the world and all who live in it;  
He himself founded it on the ocean,  
based it firmly on the nether sea.***

#### **The Priestly Prayer of Christ.**

***Father,  
I want those you have given me to be with me where I am,  
so that they may always see the glory you have given me  
because you loved me before the foundation of the world.***

#### **Revelations 4-5.**

***-----Come up here and I will show you what is to come in the future. With that-----I saw a throne standing in heaven, and the One who was sitting on the throne,----- . There was a rainbow encircling the throne-----. Is there anyone worthy to open the scroll and break the seals of it? But there was no one.-----I wept bitterly because there was nobody fit to open the scroll and read it, but one of the elders said to me,"There is no need to cry: the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the root of David, has triumphed, and he will open the scroll and the seven seals of it."-----Then I heard all living things in creation--everything that lives in the air, and on the ground,***

*and under the ground, and in the sea, crying, " To the One who is sitting on the throne and to the Lamb, be all praise, honour, glory and power, for ever and ever."*

**Revelations 21: 1--8.**

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, and the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, as beautiful as a bride all dressed for her husband. Then I heard a loud voice call from the throne, " You see this city? Here God lives among men. He will make his home among them; they shall be his people, and he will be their God; his name is God with them. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes; there will be no more death, and no more mourning or sadness. The world of the past has gone."*

*Then the One sitting on the throne spoke: " Now I am making the whole of creation new-----what I am saying is sure and will come true.-----It is already done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.*

## **God's Covenant with Abraham**

Abraham lived around 1800 B.C. in the city called Ur of Chaldees, situated in the south of modern day Iraq. It was in this city that cuneiform writing was invented some 2200 yrs. before Abraham's time. Abraham belonged to a tribe of nomads called the Amorites.

Like Noah his ancestor, Abraham was close to God in his thoughts and prayers. One day, in his conversion with God, Abraham was asked by God to, *'Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's house, for the land I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name so famous that it will be used as a blessing.'*

Abraham was 75 yrs. old when he departed for the promised land called Canaan. One night God took Abraham outside and promised him descendants more numerous than the stars in the sky. At that time Abraham had no children. God said, *'Fear not, Abram! I am your shield: your reward shall be very great. Your own son shall be your heir.'*

After 10 yrs. there was still no child. Sarah, Abraham's wife, resigning herself to the prospect of never having a child, asked Abraham to have a child by Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian servant. Hagar did have a child by Abraham whom he named Ishmael. God made a promise that Ishmael would also be the founder of a great nation. Ishmael is the ancestor of the Arab people.

Meanwhile God asked Abraham to have every male child (and male adult as well) circumcised as a sign of the covenant between them. This sign of circumcision meant that they belonged to Yahweh, a name which means *God with us*. Abraham was reassured by God's Angels that Sarah, would indeed have a son, who was to be named Isaac.

When God sets up a covenant He requires total commitment of the heart and mind. Making this commitment is not easy for anyone, and it was certainly not easy for Abraham! The question in God's mind was whether the Human Race as a whole could give Him the loyalty required to send His own Son to Earth as our Redeemer. If ten just men had been found in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in the time of Abraham, God would have spared those cities. But there were not even the ten that Abraham asked for. Now God tested the depths of the human races' ability to remain loyal to God by asking Abraham, who was to be the father of many nations to sacrifice his long-awaited son, Isaac.

The story of the sacrifice of Isaac is told in ch.22 of Genesis. At the last moment God stops Abraham by providing a ram for the sacrifice. God had tested Abraham so that down through the generations we would all understand that when we enter a solemn relationship with God, we must be prepared for a total commitment.

In the account of Abraham's obedience, even to sacrificing his only son, we are given a parallel between Abraham's sacrifice of his son and the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary. God the Father offered his only begotten son on Calvary, so that we would be saved from the consequences of our sins.

Jesus is called, the Lamb of God, who took away the sins of the World. Without the sacrifice of the cross it is highly unlikely that anyone would pay any attention to God and His Covenant of Mercy!

God showed us the totality of His commitment through the suffering and death of His only Son on the cross. We too must give God, our Father, our whole life, not just a few carefully selected parts of our life. Before we can give ourselves completely to God we are required to know Him. Knowledge of God leads to love of God, and love of God leads to constant conversation with Him, Our conversation with God is our prayer life which keeps both our spiritual and temporal journey in his constant care.

### **Abraham's Son Isaac**

When Isaac grew up he married Rebekah and had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Although Jacob was the younger of the two, he became the heir to his father's property. Jacob remained faithful to the covenant; God became known as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Jacob married Rachel who came from the place called Haran, where Abraham's family had come from originally. He had a strange encounter with an Angel of God on his way home with Rachel. In this encounter he said he had seen God face to face.. God told him that he would now be known by the name *Israel*.

Jacob and Rachel had twelve sons, the youngest of whom was Joseph, who was much loved by his father. Joseph was a mystic, having dreams which showed his brothers

bowing to him. His brothers, who were jealous of him, conspired together to get rid of Joseph. They did not kill him as they planned, choosing instead to sell him as a slave to merchants, carrying goods to Egypt.

After a number of years of mis-adventure in Egypt, including time in prison, Joseph was called on to interpret the Egyptian Pharaoh's dreams. The dreams were early warnings of a seven year famine which would be felt not only in Egypt but across the entire region. As a result, Egypt was prepared for a famine long before it happened, and Joseph, because of his unique talent of interpreting dreams accurately, was promoted to chancellor!

When the famine eventually happened, Joseph's family came to Egypt to buy food. The brothers who had sold him into slavery did not recognise Joseph but he knew them! The drama of this story continued to unfold until the whole family including Jacob their father was established in Egypt at the invitation of the Pharaoh!

Joseph's descendants stayed in Egypt for nearly four hundred years until a Pharaoh (probably Rameses II ) grew concerned for the country's security and decided to enslave all the Israelites. Since Egypt had in the past been invaded and conquered by foreigners, Pharaoh decreed that all Israelite boys should be thrown into the river.

One Israelite baby was hidden in a pitch-sealed basket, then hidden in the reeds by his mother in order to try to save the child. Pharaoh's daughter found the baby when she came to bathe in the river, and took pity on him. The child's sister who was watching nearby asked if she could help find a Hebrew woman to nurse the baby. The Pharaoh's daughter gave permission for a woman to be found to suckle the child and the sister brought their mother, who was paid as a hired servant to look after her own child. When the child grew up he was brought to the Palace and treated as a son. It was Pharaoh's daughter who named him Moses because she drew him out of the water.

**Exodus:** the second book of the bible records one of the greatest events in Old Testament Salvation History. It is the story of Moses and the freeing of the Israelite slaves. This action of freeing the enslaved Israelites from their Egyptian captors, and the dramatic Covenant on Mt. Sinai, changed not only the Israelites, but also in time, the laws of the whole world! God's call to Pharaoh through Moses, "*Let my people go,*" has become a cry for justice for oppressed people down through the centuries.

*Yahweh, you are the God who chose Abram,  
brought him out from the Ur of Chaldaea,  
and gave him the name of Abraham.  
Finding him faithful of heart before you,  
You made a covenant with him,  
To give him the land of the Canaanite,  
And you kept your promise  
because you are just.*

*You saw the distress of our fathers in Egypt,*

*You heard their cry by the Sea of Reeds.  
You worked portents and miracles against Pharaoh,  
With a pillar of cloud you led them by day,  
with a pillar of fire by night:  
to light the way ahead of them  
by which they should go.  
-----Nehemiah 9: 7-1*

The story of Moses is a story filled with real-life drama which begins with the murder of an Egyptian slave overseer. After hiding his body Moses flees for his life and lives with a nomadic tribe. He marries into the tribe and settles to work with them. He dare not go back to Egypt.

One day, while looking after the flocks on Mt. Sinai, God appeared to Moses in a burning bush that was not consumed by the fire. *"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt. I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave-drivers. Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that land to a land flowing with milk and honey, the home of the Canaanites. I send you to Pharaoh to bring the sons of Israel, my people, out of Egypt."*

Moses did not want to return to Egypt even when God asked him to. After pleading his case as to why he was most unsuitable for this task, God allowed Aaron to accompany him and be his mouthpiece. Moses would be given God's own powers to perform miracles to convince the Pharaoh to free the Israelite slaves.

Slave labour is cheap labour. So it was not going to be an easy task to convince Pharaoh to end this particular nation's slavery. It took many signs and then ten plagues to loosen Pharaoh's grip on the Israelites. The final plague, the death of the first-born, was so overwhelming that Pharaoh and the people of Egypt begged Moses to leave with the Israelites.

Before this final plague, the Israelites were instructed by God, through Moses and Aaron, how to prepare for **the Passover** of the Angel carrying death to Egypt. An unblemished male sheep or goat was to be prepared. Some of the blood was to be sprinkled on the doorposts and the lintel of the each house of the Israelites. The animal was to be roasted and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They must eat the Passover Meal in haste, standing, not sitting, and dressed ready for flight. For seven days they were to eat unleavened bread and keep this day each year as a feast day of remembrance.

After the death of the firstborn throughout the land of Egypt, Pharaoh allowed Moses and the enslaved people to leave. The journey into the desert soon became a race for their lives when the Egyptian army was sent after them by the Pharaoh. Part II of Exodus tells us how God looked after the Israelites by sending them manna and quails when they had no food and giving them water from the rock when the people put God to the test in the

desert.

Throughout the journey Moses and God had an ongoing conversation about the needs of the people and God instructed Moses in the formation of the Israelites into a Just Society. Three months after they came out of Egypt, they had reached Mt. Sinai, the holy mountain where God had come to Moses in the burning bush. Here, God prepared Moses and the people for the Covenant. Moses went up the mountain alone where he was to meet God and be given the laws which would govern the nation. It was an awe-inspiring journey, for God had descended on the whole mountain in the form of fire. If anyone other than Moses stepped onto the mountain they would not survive the ferocity of the storm.

When Moses returned from his meeting with God on the mountain he told the people all the commands of God. In answer, all the people said with one voice, *'We will observe all the commands that Yahweh has decreed.'* Moses put the Covenant into writing and read it to the people who promised to be faithful. *'We will obey,'* they said. Then Moses took the blood which had been held back from the offerings of bullocks as a communion sacrifice, and sprinkled the people saying to them, *'This is the blood of the Covenant that Yahweh has made with you, containing all these rules.'*

### **The Decalogue: The ten Commandments:**

- 1. I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, you shall have no gods except me.**
- 2. You shall not utter the name of Yahweh your God to misuse it, for Yahweh will not leave unpunished the man who utters his name to misuse it.**
- 3. Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. For six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath for Yahweh your God.---For in six days Yahweh made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all these hold, but on the seventh day he rested; that is why Yahweh has blessed the sabbath and made it sacred,**
- 4. Honour your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that Yahweh your God has given to you.**
- 5. You shall not kill.**
- 6. You shall not commit adultery.**
- 7. You shall not steal.**
- 8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.**
- 9. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife.**
- 10. You shall not covet your neighbour's possessions.**

The Covenant that God made on Mt. Sinai with his people is part of our **Sacred Tradition** in the Church and the terms of this Covenant are binding for all time. Just as God formed the twelve tribes of Israel into a cohesive unit who understood his power as well as his mercy, so he was forming the world to accept his New and Everlasting Covenant. Jesus in his teaching confirmed that the Commandments were a law of love.

And, when a Pharisee asked him which was the greatest commandment Jesus answered as follows:

*You must love the Lord your God  
with all your heart, and with all your soul  
and with all your mind.  
This is the greatest and first commandment.  
The second resembles it:  
You must love your neighbour as yourself. ( Matthew 22: 37-40)*

*God our Father says:  
You have seen what I did to the Egyptians,  
And how I bore you on eagle's wings  
and brought you to myself.  
Now therefore,  
if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant,  
you shall be my own possession  
among all the peoples;  
for all the earth is mine,  
and you shall be to me  
a kingdom of priests  
and a holy nation. (Exodus 19: 4-6)*

Moses had all the skilled craftsmen work on planning and building a Sanctuary which would house the Ark of the Covenant; the table for the offertory bread; the seven-branched lamp-stand; the altar of incense; the altar of holocaust; and all that was necessary for the worship of God. The Sanctuary was erected while the Israelites were in the desert. They erected a tent called a Tabernacle, or, as it was called by Moses, **the Tent of Meeting**.

God spoke to Moses giving him detailed instructions on how the Tent of Meeting was to be set up. Moses did exactly as he was directed by God, and on the first day of the first month the Tabernacle was erected. He placed the Covenant inside the Ark and the placement of all that had been made.

When the Tent of Meeting was ready, God took possession of it, coming down on the Sanctuary in a cloud and filling it with his glory. The cloud of Yahweh rested on the Tabernacle by day, and a fire shone within the cloud by night, for everyone to see. From this point on God himself led the Israelite people, going before them in the cloud by day, when they were required to travel. (**Exodus: 36, 37**) Eventually God led them to the Promised Land, Israel today.

### **The Covenant with David**

God chose David while he was still a shepherd boy to become a king of Israel after the reign of Saul. Eventually David became king and continued to be faithful to the Covenant

between the Israelites and God. David was in many battles where he called on God for help. He wrote many of the beautiful Psalms to God which he would sing himself.

Today the Psalms are read daily in the Liturgy of the Mass and in the daily prayer of the church said by Priests, Religious, and any of the church members who wish to say them, called the Liturgy of the Hours. Everyone is encouraged to include these beautiful psalms in their daily prayers.

**Psalm 103: God is Love. (David)**

*Bless Yahweh my soul,  
bless his holy name, all that is in me!  
Bless Yahweh, my soul,  
and remember all his kindnesses:*

*in forgiving all your offences,  
in curing all your diseases,  
in redeeming your life from the Pit,  
in crowning you with love and tenderness,  
in filling your years with prosperity,  
in renewing your youth like an eagle's.*

*Yahweh, who does what is right,  
is always on the side of the oppressed;  
He revealed his intentions to Moses,  
his prowess to the sons of Israel.*

*Yahweh is tender and compassionate,  
slow to anger, most loving;  
his indignation does not last forever,  
his resentment exists a short time only;  
he never treats, never punishes us,  
as our guilt and our sins deserve.*

*As tenderly as a father treats his children,  
so Yahweh treats those who fear him;  
he knows what we are made of,  
he remembers we are dust.  
Bless Yahweh, my soul.*

David inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the first prophet of Jewish and Christian prayer. God's words to David, spoken by the prophet Nathan, "***I will preserve the offspring of your body after you and make his sovereignty secure.***" --- "***I will preserve him for ever in my house and in my kingdom; and his throne shall be established forever,***" are the words of promise of a Messianic Kingdom to be established at a future unknown date.

## **God's Covenant in the New Testament**

### **John the Baptist**

When the Angel Gabriel asked Mary to be the Mother of Jesus, he told her that her cousin Elizabeth was also pregnant. Mary travelled to visit her cousin, to help her. It was thought up to this time that Elizabeth was unable to have a child. Now in their old age, she and her husband Zechariah were to have a son.

As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, "***Of all women you are most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.***" Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months.

Elizabeth and Zachariah's child was to be called John, the name given by the Angel. John's work from God was to prepare the Israelite Nation for the coming of the Messiah. After a life of hardship and preparation, which he lived out in the desert, he carried out his holy mission fearlessly. He called on the people to repent, and he baptized them in the River Jordan as a sign of their repentance. He baptized Jesus in the River Jordan immediately before Jesus' public ministry began. Soon afterwards John was imprisoned by Herod and beheaded at the palace.  
*'Prepare the way of the Lord!'* is John's famous cry.

**The Benedictus: the prayer of Zechariah, John the Baptist's father.  
(Luke 1:67-79).**

*'Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,  
He has visited his people, and redeemed them.  
He has raised up for us a mighty saviour  
In the house of David, his servant,  
As he promised by the lips of holy men,  
those who were his prophets from ancient times.  
who would free us from our enemies,  
from the hands of all who hate us.  
So his mercy to our ancestors is fulfilled,  
and his holy covenant remembered.  
He swore to Abraham our father to grant us,  
that free from fear and saved from the hands of our foes,  
we might serve him in holiness and justice  
all the days of our life in his presence.  
As for you, little child,  
you shall be called a prophet of God, the Most High.  
You shall go ahead of the Lord  
to prepare his ways before him,*

*to make known to his people their salvation  
through the forgiveness of their sins,  
this by loving mercy of our God  
who visits us like the dawn from on high.  
He will give light to those in darkness,  
those who dwell in the shadow of death,  
and guide us into the way of peace.*

## **Mary, the Mother of God**

When the Angel Gabriel asked Mary if she would be the mother of the long awaited Saviour, God was opening the final chapter of salvation for the whole world.

In the sixth month, we are told in Luke's gospel that the Angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph. The Angel said to her, "***Rejoice, so highly favoured. The Lord is with you.***" Mary always humble did not know what this greeting could mean. The Angel reassured her saying, "***Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.***"

Mary asked the Angel to explain how this would take place because she was a virgin. She was told that the Holy Spirit will come upon her, and the power of the most high will cover her with Its shadow. And because of this, the Angel continued, the child will be holy and will be called Son of God.

***'I am the handmaid of the Lord,'*** said Mary, ***'Let what you have said be done to me.'***

We call this event, which is told with an economy of detail and in which the future of mankind lay in the balance, **the Annunciation**. Mary in her love for God gives her total commitment to the Covenant. The Jewish people had kept alive in their faith, the promise of a Saviour, the Messiah. Mary as well as every Jewish child would be familiar with the writings of the Prophets. Here are the words of Isaiah who lived about four hundred years before Christ.

***The people that walked in darkness  
has seen a great light;  
on those who live in a land of deep shadow  
a light has shone.  
You have made their gladness greater,  
you have made their joy increase;  
they rejoice in your presence  
as men rejoice at harvest time,  
as men are happy when they are dividing the spoils.***

*For the yoke that was weighing on him,  
the bar across his shoulders,  
the rod of the oppressor,  
these you break as on the day of Midian.*

*For all the footgear of battle,  
every cloak rolled in blood,  
is burnt,  
and consumed by fire.*

*For there is a child born for us,  
a son is given to us  
and dominion is laid on his shoulders;  
and this is the name they give him:  
Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Eternal-Father, Prince of Peace.  
Wide is his dominion  
in a peace that has no end,  
for the throne of David  
and for his royal power,  
which he establishes and makes secure  
in justice and integrity.  
From this time onwards and for ever,  
the jealous love of Yahweh Saboath will do this. (Isaiah 9: 1-7)*

Just as Moses fulfilled all the requirements given by God to set up the Ark of the Covenant and the Sanctuary, so too, did Mary meet all the requirements to become the Mother of the Saviour. God called her Blessed and full of Grace. She, who was to be the one who would give birth to Jesus, was born without the stain of Original Sin.

We know her by a number of beautiful titles, which are said in the Litany of Loretto. She is called The Immaculate Conception, Gate of Heaven, Queen of Angels, Mother of Divine Grace, Seat of Wisdom, Cause of our Joy, and because she was the vessel chosen by God to carry His Word, His Son, we call her the **Ark of the Covenant**.

### **Jesus, the Son of God, His Church, and the Covenant**

Jesus began his public ministry in his home town of Nazareth, by attending the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as he usually did. He stood up to read, and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He found and read the following:

*The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me,  
for he has annointed me.  
He has sent me to bring good news to the poor,*

*to proclaim liberty to captives  
and to the blind new sight,  
to set the downtrodden free,  
to proclaim the Lord's year of favour.*

Then he began to speak to them, '*This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen.*'  
When Jesus continued to tell them that no prophet is ever accepted in his own country,  
that they would not see the miracles that had been performed in Capernaum, the people  
became very angry with him. *(Luke 6: 16-30)*

Jesus is the great Teacher. Every word he said, every miracle, every joy and every  
suffering was a journey to the heart of the Covenant. The heart of the Covenant is the  
Love of God for his people. A Love which knows no bounds.

Jesus did not come to abolish the Law, he came to fulfill it in His own person. The heart  
of the Covenant between God and His people is Mercy- God's mercy for sinners, and  
God's thirst for souls.

God reveals himself to those who are humble. Filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit, Jesus  
said to his disciples, '*I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these  
things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Happy the  
eyes that see what you see, for I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see  
what you see, and never saw it; to hear what you hear, and never heard it.*'

A lawyer, attempting to put Jesus to the test asked him, '*Master, what must I do to  
inherit eternal life?*' Jesus asked him, '*What is written in the law? What do you read  
there?*'

The lawyer replied, '*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your  
soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.*'  
'*You have answered right,*' said Jesus, '*do this and life is yours.*'

In order to teach his followers about God's Kingdom, Jesus told many parables which  
illustrated the essence of how the people must understand the Kingdom of God. He also  
preached sermons about those who would be blessed by God in His Kingdom.

Just as Moses received the Ten Commandments from God on Mt. Sinai, so the followers  
of Jesus received the Beatitudes in the sermon, called The Sermon on the Mount. In this  
sermon Jesus explained the heart of the New Covenant. He taught that God will not only  
bless us, but He will also reward us, forgive our sins, look after our needs, and when we  
die bring us to Himself in Heaven. When you listen to the Sermon on the Mount, we gain  
an insight into how Jesus and Mary, St. Joseph and all the Saints lived their lives.

## **The Beatitudes**

*Blessed are the poor in spirit;  
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are the gentle;  
they shall inherit the earth.  
Blessed are those who mourn;  
they shall be comforted.  
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice;  
they shall be filled.  
Blessed are the merciful;  
they shall be shown mercy.  
Blessed are the pure in heart;  
they shall see God.  
Blessed are the peacemakers;  
they shall be called the children of God.  
Blessed are those who are persecuted;  
in the cause of right;  
theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.  
Blessed are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of  
calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great  
in heaven.*

Jesus tells his disciples that they are the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. He warns them to not lose their flavour, nor hide their light of grace from the world. He continued:

*'Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them. I tell you most solemnly, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, one little stroke, shall disappear from the Law until its purpose is achieved.'*

*'You have learned, you must not kill, and if anyone does kill he will answer for it before the court. But I say this to you: anyone who is angry with his brother will answer for it before the court.'* Jesus reviewed the Ten Commandments with all who were present at the Sermon on the Mount. He re-established that, love of God and love of neighbour are at the heart of the Commandments. (*Matthew 5*)

One year before Jesus died he prepared his followers for the New and Everlasting Covenant. The miracles of the multiplication of the loaves and fish, show Jesus laying the foundational teaching necessary, to prepare his followers to accept the Holy Eucharist.

Very large crowds of people were following him, and he took pity on them because they were hungry. He took the only food to be found among the people, five loaves and two fish, said a blessing over the food and asked his disciples to hand out the food to all the thousands of men, women and children who were there. The disciples did as he asked, and when everyone had eaten as much as they wanted, they collected twelve baskets of scraps.

Jesus repeated this same miracle with seven loaves and a few small fish not long after the first miracle of the loaves. When the people realized that Jesus had again performed a

great miracle, they wanted to take him and crown him king. In their minds they thought they would never be hungry again.

*'I tell you most solemnly,  
you are not looking for me  
because you have seen the signs  
but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat.  
Do not work for food that cannot last,  
but work for food that endures to eternal life,  
the kind of food the Son of Man is offering you,  
for on him the Father, God himself, has set his seal.'*

After these words the people asked Jesus for a sign. They asked him for a sign like the manna given to the Israelites in the desert.

**Jesus spoke to them saying:**

*'I tell you most solemnly,  
it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven,  
it is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven,  
the true bread;  
for the bread of God  
is that which comes down from heaven  
and gives life to the world.'*

*'Sir,' they said, 'give us that bread always'.*

**Jesus answered:**

*'I am the bread of life.  
He who comes to me will never be hungry;  
he who believes in me will never thirst.  
But as I have told you,  
you can see me and still you do not believe.'*

Jesus continued but the listeners began to complain about him because he said that he was *'the bread that came down from heaven.'*

Jesus continued his teaching to the unreceptive audience.

*'I am the living bread which has come down from heaven.  
Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever;  
and the bread that I shall give  
is my flesh for the life of the world.'*

An argument broke out among the listeners when they heard Jesus say that they had to eat his flesh. But he continued despite the protests;

*'I tell you most solemnly,*

*if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man  
and drink his blood,  
you will not have life in you.  
Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood  
has eternal life,  
and I shall raise him up on the last day.---*

Many of his followers found this language intolerable and left him. Then Jesus said to the Twelve, *'What about you, do you want to go away too?'* Simon Peter answered, *'Lord who shall we go to? You have the words of eternal life, and we believe; we know that you are the Holy One of God.'* (St. John's Gospel chapter 6)

Jesus gave instructions to Peter and John for the preparations for the celebration of the Passover. This feast had been celebrated each year to commemorate the freeing of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The blood of the sacrificial lamb, sprinkled on the doorposts and lintel was the sign to the Angel to **pass over** the Israelite homes.

At the supper Jesus took the unleavened bread gave thanks, broke it and gave it to the Apostles saying, *'Take it and eat, this is my body.'* Then he took the cup, gave thanks and said, *'Drink all of you from this , for this is my blood, the blood of the New and Everlasting Covenant, which is to be shed for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins.'*

After the supper, Jesus prayed to his Father, saying the beautiful prayer which we name The Priestly Prayer of Christ. This prayer is his last testament to his Father concerning his mission on earth. When he finished his prayer he went out to the Garden of Gethsemane where he suffered his agony. It was here that he took upon himself the sins of the world. So great was his agony that he sweated blood; and it was here in the garden that Judas found him and betrayed him.(St. John's Gospel, chapters 16,17,18.)

He was taken before the Sanhedrin and accused of blasphemy. Jesus was then brought to the Roman Governor, Pilate, who questioned him at length about the charges brought against him. Pilate found no case against Jesus, so he had him scourged and crowned with thorns to appease the leaders of the people.

Those who had brought him for Roman punishment were not satisfied, so Pilate then gave those who demanded crucifixion, their wish. After a torturous journey carrying his cross, Jesus was crucified on the hill of Calvary.

Pilate wrote out a notice giving the reason for Jesus' crucifixion and had it nailed above his head on the cross. It read: *Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews*. The notice was written in Latin, Hebrew, and Greek.

We call the day Jesus died on the cross, Good Friday, because Jesus, the Lamb of God, gave his life as a ransom for the world. He opened Heaven for everyone, and he gave us the means to conquer sin and death.

Easter Sunday morning was a day of unsurpassed joy for all his disciples. Jesus rose from the dead, and stayed with his disciples until his **Ascension** into heaven. He prepared them for the coming of the Holy Spirit on **Pentecost Sunday**.

The Holy Spirit came down on the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire. They were filled with God's Life, and gifts. They lost all fear of those in authority who wanted to imprison and kill them in order to end the influence of Jesus.

Thousands of people from many nations, and speaking a variety of languages, were converted when they each heard and understood the Apostles' teaching about Jesus. On this day, the first Pentecost, the Church was born.

*' Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.'*  
(Matthew 27, 28 )















