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# INTRODUCTION

**O**ut in the workaday world many of us spend (too much!) time in meetings. When we gather at church meetings, we hope that our time there will not feel like more of the same. In these meetings, at least, we dare to believe that we are clearly contributing to a greater good—the prayer that gathers us into God’s presence and gives us focus for the tasks that lie ahead can help us remember whose work we are doing and whose mission we serve.

In my work as a pastoral associate, I have seen how prayer can make or break the focus and effectiveness of a meeting. For that reason, it’s important to tailor prayers to the needs of the group. I have assembled here a number of blessings geared to specific purposes, committees, or ministries, as well as longer prayer services (though even these should take no more than ten minutes of your meeting time). The majority of these prayer services follow the church year (including some for Summer Ordinary Time, for those committees that don’t take summer off), as well as prayers for gatherings that aren’t tied to specific seasons. I encourage you to feel free to adapt these services to suit your particular situation or gathering. I’ve tried to keep them flexible to serve the greatest variety of groups.

Many of these prayers have grown directly from meetings at St. Mary Star of the Sea, where we have a myriad of ministries and ministers who serve tirelessly. For this fertile ground of inspiration, I want to thank Rev. Robert Washabaugh, pastor, and the entire St. Mary’s parish family, to whom this book is dedicated. As always, deep gratitude goes to my husband, Dan Connors, and my son, Michael Connors, who continually inspire my faith in God’s goodness.

I hope you enjoy these prayers and find them useful in your ministry. May we all continue to work always at building the kingdom.

# Evangelization

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*This blessing can be used at the beginning of the year with the parish council or any parish group. If you use it with the catechumens, adjust the language appropriately to refer to their future baptism. Gather the people by the baptismal font.*

**LEADER** We gather here to remember all that our baptism calls us to do and to be, and to gain hope for our journey in its saving waters. Our baptism calls us to spread the good news of Christ. Our baptism calls us to be signs of hope and promise for all. Our baptism calls us to do justice and show mercy in all that we do. Hear the words of the prophet Isaiah:

## **READING: ISAIAH 35:4-7A**

Thus says the Lord: Say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not! Here is your God, He comes with vindication; with divine recompense he comes to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; then the lame will leap like a stag, then the tongue of the mute will sing. Streams will burst forth in the desert, and rivers in the steppe. The burning sands will become pools, and the thirsty ground, springs of water. *(silent reflection)*

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## BLESSING

**LEADER** Give us courage, Lord, to speak your word to others.

**ALL** Bless us, O Lord.

**LEADER** When our own hearts are frightened, give us confidence and hope.

**ALL** Bless us, O Lord.

**LEADER** When our hearts grow weary, fill us with the fire of faith.

**ALL** Bless us, O Lord.

**LEADER** When our spirits sing, give us the words to share your joy.

**ALL** Bless us, O Lord.

**LEADER** In all we do, Lord, we turn to you. Be our guide, guard our steps, and grant us always the power of conviction, that we may be blessings to others as we bring them your good news. Make us worthy heralds. Fill us with your love that our lives may sing your praise. From our rising to our setting, keep us holy in your sight.

**ALL** Amen.

**LEADER** As a sign of our embrace of our baptismal call, let us bless ourselves in this water, and go forth filled with confidence, hope, and joy, to share the good news of Christ with all we meet.

**ALL** Thanks be to God.

# Stewardship

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*This blessing may be used by the stewardship committee, or at a gathering to launch the parish stewardship initiative.*

**LEADER** Our God is generous, gracious, slow to anger, and rich in kindness. Our God is continually doing new things for us, and with us, and in us—in our hearts and minds, in our spirits. Let us respond joyfully to this call as we meet the needs of our parish and community through our gifts of time, talents, and treasure. Listen to these words from Mark's gospel:

## **READING: MARK 4:26–29**

Jesus said: The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow. He does not know how the earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come. *(silent reflection)*

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## BLESSING

**LEADER** We do not know what will come of the seeds we plant—the difference we make when we take part in the great enterprise of building up the kingdom. But let us pray for wisdom and insight that our God will use our gifts well. Help us find spare minutes and hours to devote to your service.

**ALL** **Guide us, O Lord.**

**LEADER** Help us see where our gifts lie, that we may use them to give you honor and glory.

**ALL** **Guide us, O Lord.**

**LEADER** Help us to be as generous with our prosperity as you are with your gifts of life and health and love.

**ALL** **Guide us, O Lord.**

**LEADER** Give us clearer eyes to see those in need, sharper ears to hear their cries, and richer hearts to respond to them in justice and joy.

**ALL** **Guide us, O Lord.**

**LEADER** Bless us as we do your work, and strengthen us when we doubt.

**ALL** **Guide us, O Lord.**

**LEADER** Help us see all that we have and all that we are as gifts from you to be shared. Help us share those gifts wisely and well, and in confidence and trust. In all that we do, may we give you praise.

**ALL** **Amen.**



# A Blessing for a New Parish Endeavor

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*This blessing may be used at the start of any new parish activity or initiative. It would also serve as a blessing for the beginning of a new year in a school parent association or board.*

**LEADER** God calls us to new beginnings. Let us pray to answer that call with joy and enthusiasm, and ask God's blessing on our work.

## **READING: PHILIPPIANS 4:6-9**

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. *(silent reflection)*

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## BLESSING

**LEADER** As we pray, please respond, *Bless us, O Lord*. Change can be challenging. May God bless us as we grow.

**ALL** Bless us, O Lord.

**LEADER** New beginnings can be exciting. May God fill us with hope.

**ALL** Bless us, O Lord.

**LEADER** Prayer will sustain us. May God hear our prayers.

**ALL** Bless us, O Lord.

**LEADER** May we fix our eyes on God in all that we do, and learn to see God's face in everyone we meet.

**ALL** Bless us, O Lord.

**LEADER** May all of our work be holy and blameless in God's sight, full of compassion and mercy.

**ALL** Bless us, O Lord.

**LEADER** May our ideas, decisions, and actions benefit our parish and the Kingdom of God.

**ALL** Bless us, O Lord.

**LEADER** May God who blesses us in so many ways always look on our work with favor. May everything we do bring God glory.

**ALL** Amen.

# Be with Us, Lord

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*Song Leader: Lead the singing of “We Gather Together,”  
“The Church’s One Foundation,” or “City of God.”*

**LEADER** We gather in joy and hope. Let us praise our God for the opportunity to serve him with our minds and hearts.

## **READING: JAMES 3:16—4:3**

Where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace. Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures.

*(silent reflection)*

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## INTERCESSIONS

**LEADER** Dear Lord, as we gather, we pray for your Spirit to descend and keep us true to the message of your good news. Hear us as we pray, *Be with us, Lord.*

**ALL** Be with us, Lord.

**LEADER** Lord, keep us free from jealousy and selfish ambition, that all our work may proclaim your glory. Hear us as we pray,

**ALL** Be with us, Lord.

**LEADER** Lord, gift us with wisdom from above, that we may discern your will and do it. Hear us as we pray,

**ALL** Be with us, Lord.

**LEADER** Lord, guard us against inconstancy and insincerity, that all who see us will see you. Hear us as we pray,

**ALL** Be with us, Lord.

**LEADER** Lord, help us to cultivate peace among ourselves, within our parish, and in our homes and families and communities, that all will know your goodness and light. Hear us as we pray,

**ALL** Be with us, Lord.

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**LEADER** Lord, make us passionate to hear your word and do your work,  
that we may build the kingdom instead of walls.  
Hear us as we pray,

**ALL** Be with us, Lord.

**LEADER** Lord, keep us from envy and covetousness, that our work  
may be pure and full of praise. Hear us as we pray,

**ALL** Be with us, Lord.

**LEADER** Lord, show us the way to the strength that comes from gentleness  
and mercy, that we may always do your work with good hearts  
and peaceful spirits. Hear us as we pray,

**ALL** Be with us, Lord.

## CONCLUSION

**LEADER** Lord, keep our eyes on you as we begin our new year  
of work. Keep us focused on the greater good, and never let us be  
sidetracked by idle gossip and pettiness. Help us keep  
the kingdom in sight in all that we do.

**ALL** Amen.

**LEADER** Let us share a sign of peace as a gesture of our desire  
to let God work in and through us.

# Help Us to Follow You, Lord

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*Song Leader: Lead the singing of “God, Be in My Head” (Brown).*

**LEADER** We gather in hope and promise to do the work of the Lord. Let us reflect on anger and its dangers, and mercy and its blessings as we covenant to work together.

## **READING: SIRACH 27:30—28:7**

Anger and wrath, these are abominations, yet a sinner holds on to them. The vengeful will face the Lord’s vengeance, for he keeps a strict account of their sins. Forgive your neighbor the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray. Does anyone harbor anger against another, and expect healing from the Lord? If one has no mercy toward another like himself, can he then seek pardon for his own sins? If a mere mortal harbors wrath, who will make an atoning sacrifice for his sins? Remember the end of your life, and set enmity aside; remember corruption and death, and be true to the commandments. Remember the commandments, and do not be angry with your neighbor; remember the covenant of the Most High, and overlook faults. (*silent reflection*)

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## INTERCESSIONS

**LEADER** God of all mercy, we pray to be fearless followers of your will for us. We ask for your guidance. Hear us as we pray, *Help us to follow you, Lord.*

**ALL** Help us to follow you, Lord.

**LEADER** Open our minds to the message of your church. Hear us as we pray,

**ALL** Help us to follow you, Lord.

**LEADER** Open our ears to the words of your prophets. Hear us as we pray,

**ALL** Help us to follow you, Lord.

**LEADER** Open our eyes to the needs of your children. Hear us as we pray,

**ALL** Help us to follow you, Lord.

**LEADER** Open our hearts to the call of your gospel. Hear us as we pray,

**ALL** Help us to follow you, Lord.

**LEADER** Open our arms to the stranger and the visitor. Hear us as we pray,

**ALL** Help us to follow you, Lord.

**LEADER** Open our lips to proclaim your justice. Hear us as we pray,

**ALL** Help us to follow you, Lord.

**LEADER** Open our hands to be generous to all. Hear us as we pray,

**ALL** Help us to follow you, Lord.

**LEADER** Lord, help us to serve you well. Hear us as we pray,

**ALL** Help us to follow you, Lord.

**LEADER** Lord, help us to ask before telling and to listen before speaking.  
Hear us as we pray,

**ALL** Help us to follow you, Lord.

**LEADER** Lord, help us to see your face in every face. Hear us as we pray,

**ALL** Help us to follow you, Lord.

## CONCLUSION

**LEADER** God of all goodness, we raise our voices in praise and gratitude  
at your trust in us. Work through us that your name may be  
glorified.

**ALL** Amen.

**LEADER** Let us share a sign of peace as a gesture of our commitment to be  
God's tools and implements of change, mercy, comfort, and love.