

INTRODUCTION



THIS SMALL BOOKLET CONTAINS MANY WORDS OF WISDOM FROM ONE OF THE GREATEST SPIRITUAL LEADERS OF OUR TIME. Saint John Paul II challenges, invites, coaxes, and encourages us to give ourselves to Jesus Christ completely. Nothing else will make us happy, he says; nothing else will last.

Each of the pope's daily reflections centers on one of the Christian virtues and is meant to be prayerfully read, reread, and pondered until it takes root in our hearts. These reflections are warm, tender, and heartfelt, so much so that the pope's love for Christ shines through on every page. Each daily reflection is accompanied by a Scripture passage (for further reflection), a prayer, and a suggested practice.

May these thirty days with Saint John Paul II inspire you to embrace the Christian life more fully so that the light of Christ can shine brightly through you in all your words and deeds.

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1 | LIGHT

Because Jesus is the Light, you too become light when you proclaim him. You are called to make the light of Christ shine brightly in our world.

SCRIPTURE

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness. *John 8:12*

PRAYER

Loving Savior, I want to be that bright light that makes your presence known to all those around me, and I want to generously share your light with everyone I encounter. Light my way and enlarge my heart that I might never betray this trust. Remind me often through my day that you are calling me to *be* your light. Amen.

PRACTICE

I will try to be conscious of the needs of those around me today—family members, coworkers, friends, and neighbors—and I will offer a little bit of light to someone I might otherwise ignore.

2 | HAPPINESS

Jesus alone will fulfill your desire to be happy. He is waiting for you when nothing else satisfies you. He is the beauty you seek; he stirs in you the desire to do something great with your life.

SCRIPTURE

Strive first for the kingdom of heaven, and all that you need will be given to you. *Matthew 6:33*

PRAYER

Loving and holy God, I do want to find true happiness in my life. I do want to strive first for the kingdom of God of which your Son, Jesus spoke so often and so lovingly. May I trust that your grace is truly all I need as I seek to be whole and holy. I open my heart to your gift of happiness, believing that nothing else will satisfy me. Amen.

PRACTICE

Today, as a first step on my road to “greatness,” I will actively try to make someone else happy.

3 | PEACE

Peace is a gift from Jesus, but to receive it you have to prepare your heart through acts of humility and generosity. Then, when conflicts arise, you are able to offer peace.

SCRIPTURE

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give it to you as the world gives. *John 14:27*

PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, when I look into my heart for the kind of humility and generosity it takes to be a peacemaker, I recognize that I am not really a person of peace. I find it difficult to yield when disagreements arise in my family or at work, and I need your grace to do the right thing in times of conflict. Fill my heart with your peace. Amen.

PRACTICE

Today I will, with “humility and generosity,” take the first step in making peace with someone I have offended, putting aside anger and resentment.

4 | COURAGE

As a Christian, you learn commitment to the love and service of God by imitating Jesus. To live a gospel life, and thus buck the trends of our times, you must have great courage.

SCRIPTURE

Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.

1 Corinthians 16:13-14

PRAYER

Jesus, beloved Savior, teach me how to live according to your gospel, as Saint John Paul encourages me to do. And please give me the courage to do this even when I am pressured on all sides to do otherwise. I want to be a true believer, one who is fully committed to loving and serving my Father and yours. Amen.

PRACTICE

I will try today to follow Jesus in some small way: sharing more fully, forgiving someone, being a peacemaker, giving light to others.

5 | FAITH

My faith, like yours, is essentially the work of the Holy Spirit, a gift of grace. God gives us the Spirit who sends us out to bear witness to Jesus and his teachings.

SCRIPTURE

If you have faith and do not doubt...you can say to this mountain, "Go, throw yourself into the sea," and it will be done. *Matthew 21:21*

PRAYER

Holy Spirit, I do believe that faith can do great things, but I let everything distract me from the one thing that matters: Jesus' presence and grace within me. Deepen my faith that I might truly say to any "mountain" in my life, "I can do this because Jesus walks beside me." Amen.

PRACTICE

I will try, all through this day, to be aware of God's Holy Spirit within me by simply praying: "I do believe, O God; help my unbelief."

6 | HOPE

*Although I have lived through much darkness,
I'm convinced that no fear or difficulty can
completely dim or suffocate the hope that springs
eternal in your heart. Do not let that hope die!*

SCRIPTURE

Rejoice in hope. Be patient in suffering. Persevere in prayer. *Romans 12:12*

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I trust you with all my heart, and I hope to please you in all that I do. Through whatever difficulties I might have to face in my life, may I rejoice in hope, face sufferings with courage, and persevere in prayer. Help me to remember that you are with me always, and may I never let the spirit of hope diminish or die within me. Amen.

PRACTICE

Today I will think about God's plan for me and measure how my own hopes and dreams are part of that plan. How can I better practice the virtue of hope?

7 | LOVE

The ability to love as God loves is offered to all of us. Indeed God loves you as he loved Christ, seeing his image in you and inviting you to love all others with the same generosity.

SCRIPTURE

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. *John 13:34*

PRAYER

O beloved God, thank you for loving me so much, in spite of my sin and weakness. It's difficult to comprehend that you love me as you loved Jesus, your Son, and even harder to practice this self-giving love. Help me to live up to your expectations of me and to give witness to the great and amazing gift of your love. Amen.

PRACTICE

I will look for an opportunity today to share with others how much God loves and watches over them. I will try to be motivated by that love in all I do.

8 | PATIENCE

Christ is calling you and awakening in you a desire to make your life something magnificent and beautiful. Keep your commitment to Christ with patience and perseverance.

SCRIPTURE

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful. *1 Corinthians 13:4*

PRAYER

Loving Savior, thank you for choosing me and reminding me that you want my life to be “magnificent and beautiful.” I know for certain that I need your gifts of patience and perseverance to be what you are calling me to be. Give me these gifts in abundance, that I might become more like Jesus and thus share your love more generously with others. Amen.

PRACTICE

I will spend time today thinking about how important patience is and how it can help me in my halting efforts to make my life better or even “magnificent and beautiful.”

9 | COMPASSION

In loving the poor, you imitate the attitude of Jesus, who during his earthly life devoted himself with special compassion to all those in both spiritual and material need.

SCRIPTURE

Seeing the people, Jesus felt compassion for them, because they were dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. *Mark 6:34*

PRAYER

Loving God, help me to imitate the compassion of Jesus toward the poor and needy. It's so easy to pass them by. May I carry as Jesus did the suffering of those who experience poverty, hunger, homelessness, and abuse. May I not only carry their sufferings in my heart but also try to do something about the issues that lead to such suffering. Amen.

PRACTICE

I will try to offer compassion today in some specific way to a family member, coworker, friend, or neighbor.

10 | GENEROSITY

God has given you a heart open to the widest horizons: Don't be afraid to commit your life generously to the service of Christ and the gospel. Listen to Christ and follow him.

SCRIPTURE

Like good stewards of the abundant grace of God, serve one another with whatever gifts each of you has received. *1 Peter 4:10*

PRAYER

Great and loving God, I want to open my heart to the “widest horizons,” but I’m afraid that I will have to give up too much if I give my life completely to the service of Jesus and his gospel. Help me to trust that you will never ask more of me than I can give, but also open my heart that I might generously share what I *can* give. Amen.

PRACTICE

I will try to generously use my God-given gifts to help someone in need today.

11 | JOY

You are made for happiness, and Christ has the answer to this desire of yours. Remember, he will be with you in the long and difficult struggle to live the gospel. He is always there.

SCRIPTURE

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. Christ is near. *Philippians 4:4-5*

PRAYER

Loving God, I rejoice that Jesus is with me always. Though it's hard to be happy when difficulties come my way, I want to take Saint John Paul's words to heart about true joy being "a long and difficult struggle." But I believe that with your grace all things are possible and that Jesus walks with me always. Amen.

PRACTICE

Today I will try to give joy to someone who is suffering, to lighten with a heartfelt smile the burden he or she is carrying.

12 | PRAYER

Our parishes must become genuine “schools” of prayer, where meeting with Christ is not just for petitions but also for thanksgiving, praise, and listening with ardent devotion.

SCRIPTURE

Pray in the Spirit at all times, using every prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert and don't stop trying. *Ephesians 6:18*

PRAYER

Beloved God, teach me how to “pray in the Spirit at all times,” not just for my needs but because I love you, praise you, and thank you. Help me to take away from my parish community all that it teaches me in its “school of prayer,” especially the Eucharist, my meeting time with Christ. May my prayer be ardent and genuine, and may I remember to pray daily. Amen.

PRACTICE

I will try today to make prayer a priority, even if I only have time to say, “Holy Spirit, teach me how to pray.”

13 | UNITY

To create a culture of love and truth you have to be strong and persevering. The world needs a new kind of unity, one that transcends and enlightens by offering the message of Jesus.

SCRIPTURE

The glory you have given me, Father, I have given them, so that they may be one as we are one.
John 17:22

PRAYER

Loving Savior, I would gladly work toward a culture of love and truth, one that leads to unity among all peoples, but I don't know where to start. I'm not very "strong and persevering," but I want to be. Please open my eyes and the eyes of all your followers to ways that we can be "one" as you are with the Father. Amen.

PRACTICE

I will do nothing today to cause division among others, but rather look for ways to unite family members, coworkers, and all who cross my path.

14 | WITNESS

Be a forceful witness of love for life, which is God's gift to you. Be a prophet of life! Then your words and deeds will give hope to those who have no hope.

SCRIPTURE

You are witnesses of all that I have taught. Go into the world and proclaim the good news to all creation. *Luke 24:48; Mark 16:15*

PRAYER

Beloved God, thank you for the gift of life. Help me to use it well, not just for myself but for all those you place in my path. May my words and deeds offer hope, and may I never dampen the spark of hope in others. Give me courage, please, that I might go out and be a witness by sharing the good news that you are a God of love and life. Amen.

PRACTICE

I will reflect today on how I can be a better witness and “prophet for life” in all my words and deeds.

15 | FAITHFULNESS

*Be a faithful witness to Christ,
as difficult as this might be for you.*

SCRIPTURE

May God, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and will keep you holy. *1 Thessalonians 5:23-24*

PRAYER

Holy God and Father, thank you for the gift of your grace. When I open my heart to it, you “sanctify me through and through.” You give me the gift of Jesus and his gospel to guide and strengthen me. As difficult as it can sometimes be to give “faithful witness to Christ,” I want to try to be faithful and holy. Amen.

PRACTICE

Whatever difficulties I face today, I will try to remember that Jesus is my guide and inspiration and that he calls me to love and serve others in all I do.

16 | TRUTH

You are well aware that lies are often presented to you disguised as truth. You have to use your God-given judgment to recognize the truth that comes from God.

SCRIPTURE

I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth. *John 14:16-17*

PRAYER

Loving God, sometimes I do feel bombarded by lies, in commercials especially. They lie about what is most valuable in life and distract me from the goal of searching out the truth. I do believe that you are the source of all that is good and true, and I ask you to open my heart that I might listen more attentively to you. Amen.

PRACTICE

I will try to speak the truth in all that I say to others today, even when it's more convenient or expedient to tell a lie.

17 | GRACE

*God invites you to cooperate with the gift of grace,
to invest all your resources of intelligence
and energy in serving the cause of the Kingdom.*

SCRIPTURE

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need. *Hebrews 4:16*

PRAYER

Dear Creator God, Saint John Paul reminds me that I am invited to “cooperate with the gift of your grace.” I tend to focus only on myself and my needs, but you are calling me to a different way of life, one that is centered on you and your kingdom. May I allow your beloved Son, Jesus to be my guide and inspiration. Amen.

PRACTICE

I will think about the gift of God’s grace today and how I can better let it infuse and transform my life.

18 | TRUST

*You must learn not to be afraid, to rediscover
a spirit of hope and trust, one that is nurtured
in that inner sanctuary of conscience
where you are alone with God.*

SCRIPTURE

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. *1 Corinthians 13:6-7*

PRAYER

Loving Savior, I place my trust in you. Help me to stand firm in my faith and be nurtured in that “inner sanctuary of conscience” where I am alone with God, my loving and forgiving Father. Forgive me for the times I falter, and help me to begin anew to believe in your loving promises, always “trusting, hoping, and persevering.” Amen.

PRACTICE

I will try to spend ten minutes today reflecting on ways I can practice the virtue of trust—with Jesus as my model and guide.

19 | GOODNESS

Help transform the world around you by giving the best of yourself. Teach others the value of faith and prayer and goodness.

SCRIPTURE

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with goodness. *Romans 12:21*

PRAYER

Holy and beloved God, from childhood I have been taught to “be good.” I know now that goodness is much more than following rules; it is a way of life that demands giving the best of myself in spite of the evil that tries to overcome me. Help me rather to “overcome evil with goodness,” and to do this with all those in my circle of life: family members, coworkers, neighbors, and all those in my faith community. Amen.

PRACTICE

Today I will try to be conscious of God’s goodness within me and offer it in some small way to a person I tend to avoid or disparage.

20 | MERCY

*How greatly today's world needs God's mercy!
From the depth of human suffering,
a cry for mercy seems to rise up.*

SCRIPTURE

Grace, mercy, and peace be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, in truth and love. *2 John 1:3*

PRAYER

Loving Savior, son of the living God, have mercy on me a sinner. In a special way I ask you today to also have mercy on all in our world who are suffering. Hear their cries and lift them up. Forgive me for forgetting their needs, which are far greater than my own. Help me to show the same mercy to others that you always extend to me. Amen.

PRACTICE

I will make a deliberate effort to be merciful to others today—my children and spouse, coworkers, friends—in the same way God has mercy on me.

21 | HUMILITY

In order to sing God's praises, you have to relearn the language of humility and of sincere commitment to all that is truly good in the sight of the Lord.

SCRIPTURE

Because you are God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. *Colossians 3:12*

PRAYER

Holy God and Father, thank you for calling me to follow your Son, Jesus, who helps me “re-learn” some of the basic virtues of human living, with humility high among them. I want to be committed to “all that is truly good” in your sight, to all that Jesus taught, and this means beginning anew to practice compassion, kindness, gentleness, patience, and humility. Strengthen me to do this. Amen.

PRACTICE

I will look up the meaning of humility today and do one thing to practice it in my effort to “sing God's praises” more fully.

22 | GRATITUDE

Receive God's love gratefully and be willing to give your life every day for the transformation of history; commit yourself to working for a more just and loving society.

SCRIPTURE

I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service. *1 Timothy 1:12*

PRAYER

Loving God, help me to respond to Saint John Paul's challenge to transform the world. I am overwhelmed by such a prospect, but I believe that "Christ Jesus my Lord" who has "appointed me to his service" will strengthen me and give me the courage I need. Thank you for all the gifts and talents you have given me, and may I use them well, starting today. Amen.

PRACTICE

I will take one small step today to "work for a more just and loving society," and I will thank God often for strengthening me.

23 | GREATNESS

It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your life and the will to commit yourself humbly and patiently to improving yourself and society.

SCRIPTURE

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. *Romans 12:2*

PRAYER

Loving Savior, I believe that true greatness comes from you and that you alone can stir in me the desire to “do something great with my life.” I want to be “good and acceptable” in God’s eyes, but I also need to be transformed, to learn how to discern what is good and acceptable. Help me to respond to this call. Amen.

PRACTICE

I will spend time today reflecting on ways I can begin or renew my journey to greatness.

24 | PURITY OF HEART

*If you look at the world with a pure heart,
you will see the face of God in the lilies of the field,
the birds of the air, the starry night, and the faces
of the poor and humble.*

SCRIPTURE

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
Matthew 5:8

PRAYER

May I learn to see the world as Saint John Paul did, loving God, believing that you are present in all created things and in the “faces of the poor and humble.” By reaching out to them with joy and wonder, I hope to see your face. Thank you for this great privilege, and open my mind and heart to all the ways you are present in my life. Amen.

PRACTICE

I will try to really see all the miracles in my life today with a pure heart filled with love and gratitude.

25 | FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is first of all a personal choice, a decision of your heart to go against the natural instinct to get revenge, to pay back evil with evil.

SCRIPTURE

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. *Matthew 6:12*

PRAYER

Loving God, forgiveness seems like such a simple thing, but when I examine my heart I find that I really don't want to forgive those who have hurt or offended me. Yet Jesus teaches in the "Our Father" that I will only be forgiven in the same way I forgive others. Help me to make the "personal choice, the decision of the heart" to go against my instinct to nurture hurts and offences, "to pay back evil with evil." Amen.

ACTION

I will focus today on one person to whom I need to offer forgiveness and take a first step toward this goal.

26 | JUSTICE

The shattered order cannot be fully restored except by a response that combines justice with forgiveness. The pillars of true peace are justice and forgiving love.

SCRIPTURE

Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. *Matthew 12:18*

PRAYER

Holy God, Saint John Paul's words make me want to be more just, to restore the right order in the world and among all peoples. It's hard to know how to do this, even in small ways. I want to pray over this and ponder how I can do my small part to make justice happen, to stand beneath "the pillars of true peace and justice" as Jesus did. Amen.

PRACTICE

I will pray three times today: "O God, help me practice the virtue of justice."

27 | FEARLESSNESS

*Have no fear of moving into the unknown.
Simply step out with faith and confidence, believing
that God is with you and all will be very, very well.*

SCRIPTURE

In a race all runners compete, but only one receives the prize. Run in such a way then that you might win an imperishable prize. *1 Corinthians 9:24*

PRAYER

It's very hard, O God, to be brave, to compete well in the race of life. There are so many complicated situations and so many demands on my time. I want to believe that you are always with me, helping me step out "into the unknown." I need deeper faith in you and greater confidence so that I might run toward the imperishable prize of your grace and love fearlessly and well. Amen.

PRACTICE

Today I will try to make my way through my complicated day with the virtue of fearlessness.

28 | RESPECT

In order to get back to the original harmony of creation, you must respect the divine image in all of creation, especially in human life itself.

SCRIPTURE

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was never clothed as well. *Matthew 6:28-29*

PRAYER

O beloved God, open my eyes that I might really and truly “see” all that you have created. Help me to respect life in all its forms, from the tiniest insect to the tallest tree, from a baby in its mother’s womb to the elderly and infirm person in a nursing home. May I both respect and reflect your divine image in all my words and actions this day. Amen.

PRACTICE

I will try to be very conscious of the miracles of people and nature that I see today and offer praise to God.

29 | COMMITMENT

Listen to Jesus, obey his commandments, commit yourself to him. This is the only formula for a truly successful and happy life.

SCRIPTURE

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me...for my yoke is easy and my burden is light. *Matthew 11:29-30*

PRAYER

Saint John Paul reminds me, loving Savior, that you are the way, the truth, and the light. I want to listen to you through your gospel teachings and to learn from you. Help me to believe that when I take on life's burdens with courage and grace, you are with me and make my burdens lighter. I do believe that without you my life will never be truly successful and happy. Help me to lean on you always. Amen.

PRACTICE

I will offer myself to Christ often today, at the same time asking for the strength to be a faithful and committed follower of his teachings.

30 | HOLINESS

*Let Christ strengthen you in virtue
and fill you above all with his charity.
Let him guide you along the path that leads
to holiness. Don't be afraid to be a saint!*

SCRIPTURE

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? *1 Corinthians 3:16*

PRAYER

Holy Spirit, I want to be holy, and I want love for Christ to be at the heart of all my actions. I confess that I *am* afraid to be a saint! Please strengthen me in virtue and above all with love for all my brothers and sisters, that I might stay on the path that leads to holiness. Help me to believe that you dwell within me always. Amen.

PRACTICE

I will try to do everything in the name of Christ today, remembering that he challenges me to walk the path to holiness.