

SESSION 5 / FOR THE GLORY IS YOURS

All that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord (1 Chronicles 29:11)

Theme The doxology, used in our liturgy but not often in personal prayer, is a song of praise to, and a powerful recognition of, Almighty God.

Welcome: We Pray and Share Together (15 mins)

O God,
send forth your Holy Spirit
into our hearts that we might perceive,
into our minds that we might remember,
into our souls that we might meditate.
Inspire us to speak with love, holiness,
tenderness and mercy.
Teach, guide and direct our thoughts and senses
from beginning to end.
May your grace help us to see with your eyes
and to act with your love and light in our hearts.
May we be strengthened with wisdom from on high
for the sake and glory of your kingdom.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

In a period of calm and a space of trust, each one of us is invited to share briefly one thing that has happened in the past week. It could be one thing that has given you cause for concern, something shared during the last time you met as a group or something that has given you cause to celebrate.

In this moment of peace and fellowship, we pray for the good of the group. Each member is invited to offer up any personal intentions. We also pray for the good of the Church, for wisdom in our country and for the common good. Let us also bring to mind the poor, the sick and those who have died.

We join together in praying: Our Father...

Read and Reflect on the Scriptures Hebrews 12:1-3,7,10-17,28-29 (5 mins)

Note: The author of the Letter to the Hebrews describes the perfect priesthood of Jesus. In the face of pressures on belief, the author seeks to strengthen the community to which he writes; encouragements that can help us today.

Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted...

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons... he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Therefore, lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears...

Let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

Meditate on the Word Hebrews 12:1-3,7,10-17,28-29 (20 mins)

Once the Scripture passage has been read you are asked to choose a word or phrase that has struck you. Underline it with a pen or you might wish to simply hold it in mind. You will be invited to share the word or phrase with the group.

Another person will then read the passage. While you listen attentively, repeat the process of holding onto a word or phrase, making a note and sharing it. In doing this, you are invited to consider the following questions:

How have these words or phrases resonated in my heart and in my mind?

What is the Lord saying to me at this very moment in my life?

In what way has my reading of this passage of Holy Scripture changed me?

How has it helped me to resolve to be more Christ-like in the coming days?

You are encouraged to re-read the Holy Scripture during the coming week, revisiting these questions.

Explore and Reflect on the Theme (25 mins)

How do you end a prayer? In the liturgy we have a number of set phrases, such as 'Through Christ our Lord', which not only round off the text and signify to the listener that it is concluding but also remind us that the prayer we offer is done so through Jesus who unites us with him in his prayer to his Father.

How would Jesus have ended a prayer? What we know from scripture is that he would probably said some words of praise of God, a 'doxology', such as these words of King David 'Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all' (1 Chronicles 29:11), and still found in the New Testament letters, for example, 'To him belong glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.' (1 Peter 4:11).

One of the tasks of those who prepare biblical translations is to decide from various manuscripts what the original text was – or at least that for which we have the earliest evidence. The doxology text 'For the kingdom...' had always been included in the Orthodox liturgy. In the 16th century there was a new interest in looking at the sources and the Catholic scholar Erasmus who compiled a Greek text of the New Testament included the doxology and this became the basis of translations such as the King James Bible of 1611. Subsequent scholarship has agreed that it is not found in the earliest extant manuscripts and so in modern translations it is given in a footnote with a phrase like 'some manuscripts add 'For yours...' but also recognise it probably represents an ancient liturgical tradition of praying the text. Following the Second Vatican Council, the doxology is added to the Order of Mass as an ecumenical gesture reflecting the use in both the Orthodox and Protestant liturgies.

It is appropriate we pray these words in every celebration of Mass as they express in words of adoration and thanksgiving a truly Eucharistic attitude; to recognise the gift what we are about to receive and to give thanks to God.

There is an interesting echo of the Gospel we hear on the First Sunday of Lent when Jesus is tempted by the devil to worship him so that he will be given authority over the kingdoms of the world (Luke 4:1-13). In the doxology we acknowledge that the kingdom, the power and the glory truly belong to God. Further, it is worth reflecting on how, in the Gospels, Jesus presents the kingdom which is present now. We reflect on a kingdom characterised by small acts of love and justice, where power is turned upside-down in Jesus' association with the weak and the powerless, and his glory, which culminates in his being lifted up on the Cross.

The Orthodox theologian, Alexander Schmemmann, ends his reflections on the Lord's Prayer:

'While we remember this prayer, while we keep repeating it, our life is opened towards the kingdom, is filled with power, shines with glory, in the face of which darkness, hatred, and evil lie powerless.'

Responding to what has been heard

By committing ourselves to action we are saying that we want to make a difference in our lives and in the lives of others. We are committing to make the words of the Lord's Prayer resonate in our lives. What have you heard today that you find challenging? What do you find affirming? What is your response to God's offer of eternal life? Please share if you feel comfortable. What are you going to do about what you have heard today?

Go in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord (10 mins)

You are invited to close with a time of meditation on Psalm 145 (144). Read it slowly, pause between verses, reflect on its meaning for your life and your journey in faith, hope and love. You may also wish to conclude with the Lord's Prayer, another prayer of your own choosing or a moment of silence.

A: I will extol you, my God and king,
and bless your name forever and ever.

B: I will bless you day after day,
and praise your name forever and ever.

A: Age to age shall proclaim your works,
shall declare your mighty deeds.
They will tell of your great glory and splendour,
and recount your wonderful works.

B: They will speak of your awesome deeds,
recount your greatness and might.

A: The LORD is kind and full of compassion,
slow to anger, abounding in mercy.

B: Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom;
your rule endures for all generations.

All: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

A blessing taken from the Liturgy of the Hours is included here.

May the Lord bless us and keep us from all evil
and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Only the Lord can give us what we need

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, graciously grant peace in our days, that, by the help of your mercy, we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Roman Missal, Embolism after the Lord's Prayer

He who trusts himself is lost. He who trusts in God can do all things.

St Alphonsus Liguori

Such is our Christian life. By desiring heaven we exercise the powers of our soul. Now this exercise will be effective only to the extent that we free ourselves from desires leading to infatuation with this world. Let me return to the example I have already used, of filling an empty container. God means to fill each of you with what is good; so cast out what is bad! If he wishes to fill you with honey and you are full of sour wine, where is the honey to go? The vessel must be emptied of its contents and then be cleansed. Yes, it must be cleansed even if you have to work hard and scour it. It must be made fit for the new thing, whatever it may be.

St Augustine

Blessed the one who observes with spiritual understanding the choirs of stars shining with glory and the beauty of the heavens and longs to contemplate the Maker of all things.

St Ephrem of Syria

[See Catechism 2855-2856, section 'in brief': 2857-2865]



Meditate on Sacred Art: Visio Divina (5)

Describe what you can see, what is happening?

What does this picture say about the glory of God?

What is the impact on those who witness God's power in their lives?

How might I live in this powerful reality in the coming days?

The Transfiguration (1516-20) by Raphael / Vatican Museums