



Reflections to accompany us during this time of challenge.

Introduction

Community is not bricks and mortar; it doesn't depend on geography or proximity. Real community is built on the bonds that tie us together because of who we are, what we believe and what we dream of together. For Christians, community is always about love because we believe that God is love.

Each week, we will include resources which are expressly designed for your own personal use, whether you are a teacher, a principal, a parent or a student. They may be of particular help to senior students. Our care for them extends to a deep desire to care for them spiritually. We want to help ease their burdens at this time, to help them know that they we 'have their backs' and that God is there for them too.

As you pray these prayers, and as you share them, please be assured of our prayers here in CEIST. None of us is alone; we belong to God and we belong to one another and to a network of great schools all doing their very best for our students at this time.

As well as praying together, we encourage you to reach out to anyone who can help you in these challenging times. You don't have to feel alone. We may all need to keep our physical distance but that does not mean we can't be united spiritually through the bonds of real community and communion that we all share.

Structure of the prayers

Each prayer is a simple prayer and it begins and ends the same way.

At the start, you are called to centre yourself as you begin to pray. Then there is piece (a prayer or a poem or a picture) to reflect on. Each prayer also includes a line or two from scripture. At the end, you are called to reach out in faith, hope and love to all those you love and care about. In each prayer, there's also a moment or two of gratitude. This is important to have because even in the darkest of days, we need to see through the gloom and be grateful for what we have.

Each prayer will take about five to seven minutes of your time. If you want to extend your prayer time, you can use some reflective music at the start to help quieten you down. Some of the prayers also have a suggested hymn or song. These can be used or not. The link to the YouTube clip for each hymn or piece of music is also provided. But don't allow yourself to get distracted by YouTube! (To avoid distraction, it might be better to have the music lined up before you start especially if there are ads. at the start of the music!)

The structure is repeated to allow you to become familiar with it and for you to be at ease with it. These prayers are designed to build up your sense of confidence in God and to lead to a deep sense of peace and wellbeing.

Prayer 1: Our mother Mary

To begin

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Centre yourself now in silence. Take five deep breaths in and out. Allow your mind to become a little quieter. Put everything except this prayer away from you. Give yourself a few minutes of stillness to calm yourself before you begin. Become aware of God's Spirit with you inspiring you in your prayer.

My prayer today

Yesterday was Mother's Day – a very important day in Irish culture where we honour and celebrate our mams. This year was very strange in that many of us didn't get to physically hug/kiss/embrace/touch our mothers. However, our love for them is no less deep, no less profound. In the Catholic tradition, we understand that Mary is not just Jesus' mother, she is our spiritual mother too.

Here is a picture of Mary for you to meditate on for a moment;



Spend some time with this image. What do you see? What jumps out at you? What feelings are evoked from looking at this image. Take some time to imagine yourself as the baby in this image (as strange as that might seem at first!). Imagine yourself being held in love by Mary, our mother. Imagine the care she lavishes on you and the sense of security and contentment you feel. You have no words and so are just surrender to this feeling of being held and protected.

And so we pray the words of Pope Francis

Mary, you always shine on our path as a sign of salvation and of hope.
We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick,
who at the cross took part in Jesus' pain, keeping your faith firm.
You know what we need and we are sure you will provide
so that, as in Cana of Galilee, we may return to joy and to feasting after this time of trial.
Help us, Mother of Divine Love, to conform to the will of the Father and to do as we are told by
Jesus, who has taken upon himself our sufferings and carried our sorrows to lead us, through the
cross, to the joy of the resurrection. Amen.

A word from scripture

Luke 2:19 And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.

To conclude

Pray these or words of your own in response to today's prayer.

- Mary teaches us how to make wise decisions, discerning your will and living out her decisions with great faithfulness. Help us Lord, to make wise decisions too in these troubling times and then to have the courage to live our lives full of grace too.
- Mary teaches us how to love, loving your son and loving us too. Help us Lord, to love others as you love us.
- Mary teaches us how to stand in solidarity with those who suffer, standing as she did at the foot of your cross. Help us Lord, to stand in prayerful solidarity with those in our world who cry out for help and compassion.

Conclude by saying slowly firstly the Hail Mary and then the Our Father.... .. and by blessing yourself, In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN

