

## **Training Title**

*Prayerful Voice: How to Remain a Movement Attentive to the Spirit*

## **Indianapolis Facilitator**

*Aimee Carevich Hariramani (Boston, MA)*

## **Goals**

- Learn how to integrate prayer into your meetings and work as an affiliate
- Experience prayer and ritual that can be taken back to your affiliates
- Acquire some resources to create your own prayerful experiences with your affiliate

## **Agenda**

Welcome, Opening Prayer and Ritual, Overview of Goals/Agenda	(10 min.)
Centrality of Prayer in VOTF: Our Beginnings	(5 min)
What Has Worked/What are the Challenges	(5 min)
To Do's and How To's	(5 min)
Lectio Divina	(10 min)
Institutionalizing Prayer: An Affiliate Example	(5 min)
Additional Resources	(5 min)
Evaluation, Closing Prayer and Ritual	(5 min)

## **Supplies**

Easel, flip chart paper, markers, tape, candle, matches, colorful cloth, mustard seeds, flower pot filled with soil

## **Handouts**

VOTF MANY Hands, MANY Hearts Reflection and Prayer Book

## **Facilitator's Notes**

### **Welcome, Opening Prayer and Ritual (10 min)**

(Circle around a candle, introductions to your left and right (forms little trinities!), opening statement and prayer)

#### **Opening Statement**

VOTF is a "Movement of the Spirit." This is a foundational statement. We are about faith. Faith moved us to form VOTF. Faith keeps us involved, and will bring others to join us. We must articulate this faith, name this faith, act out of this faith, and discern our progress based on this faith. Without this, we are just another reform group, not a movement of the Spirit. GROUNDING OURSELVES IN OUR FAITH, AND ACTING OUT OF IT, IS THE "SPIRITUALITY" OF VOTF. Just as in the early days of the Church, those of us who were there in the earliest days of VOTF, testify to the almost palpable presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst. We prayed for courage and wisdom, Gifts of the Spirit. We committed to being a "prayerful voice, attentive to the Spirit." This is at the heart of VOTF. The question that always needs to be asked is, "How are we being attentive to the Spirit?" We will succeed only if we are grounded in this prayerful discernment of the Spirit. This lit candle represents the Spirit among us today. We will keep the flame burning to remind us throughout our gathering that the Spirit is indeed with us and working through us today.

#### **Opening Prayer**

(spontaneous prayer)

### **Overview Goals, Agenda (5 min)**

#### **Centrality of Prayer in VOTF: Our Beginnings (Mary Ann Keyes and Svea Fraser) (5 min)**

It is no surprise (in hindsight) that the VOTF movement had its roots in the Eucharist! It was during Mass that Fr. Tom challenged the laity to use their voices, and immediately after being sent (ite missa est) we began to speak in ways many of us had never spoken before outside of very close friends: "Our hearts were burning" and we spoke from the flames: People spoke about what their faith meant to them, and their desire to do something on behalf of the children who suffered so terribly. As more and more people came to listen and to speak, we knew, deep down, that "something greater than Solomon" was here. Something was happening to us that could only have been the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We had energy and motivation: we met for hours throughout the week. We changed our calendars and our priorities. We gathered 4,500 people in the middle of summer for a Pentecost event at the first VOTF national meeting! Look what happened when Arthur Austin joined us for Mass, and so many people walked to the Cathedral with him...He yelled "hallelujah!" His soul was touched deeply--and he was one who had been deeply wounded by abuse.

And we always prayed--What was happening was bigger than the sum parts of each individual together. As we articulated our mission statement, the words came easily--and PRAYERFUL was the jewel in the crown. Not only did prayer center us (a responsive prayer was written and spoken at every VOTF gathering for at least the next year), but it calmed us (it took courage to speak truth to power) and reminded us that we were not alone. People started offering their own prayers, and favorite prayers that helped them. We wrote a prayer to be said at noon every day--in communio with others, although unseen, together in spirit. We knew that by doing so we would keep on the path and not get sidetracked. It was not always easy (did God ever say it would be?). We started quoting Scripture more frequently, and it was an amazing thing that everyday of the week, the Scripture passages used during liturgy resonated with exactly where we felt we were on our journey.

We knew that St. Catherine of Sienna was right when she proclaimed, "Speak the truth with a million voices: It's silence that kills the world." In fact, it felt as if our patron saints--St. Francis ("First do what is necessary, then what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible!") and St. Catherine ("Be a man...and come back to Rome" she wrote to the pope in Avignon) were interceding on our behalf.

The Mass of Healing was one of the most moving liturgies of any of our lives: even our wise retired pastor said the same thing: Written by VOTF and celebrated at St. John's, it brought together laity, survivors and (some) clergy. The blessing after mass under a clear moonlit sky was so profound that no one moved after the benediction. Truly a God-filled moment. Ask anybody from those early weeks and months--the amount of work and the zeal with which it was done could not have happened without the Holy Spirit--And we kept reminding ourselves that if the movement endured, it would surely be a sign of God's hand in it. And here we are! As St. Ignatius reminds us, we "work as if everything depends on us; and pray as if everything depends on God."

### HIGHLIGHTS:

The movement began at Mass!

"Prayerful" the first and most important word in the mission statement.

At all our gatherings, we always begin and end with prayer.

A prayer was written to say at noon each day.

July 20, 2002 (first national meeting) was a Pentecost event in the genesis of VOTF

Masses of Healing were written and celebrated across the country.

People speak about their faith and are encouraged to lead in prayer/Favorite prayers are shared.

Different forms of prayer are offered, and encouraged.

Scripture passages at Mass are relevant to our journey. (this year, Acts of the Apostles during Easter season).

We know the action of the Spirit by the fruits: We're still here!

## **What Has Worked/What are the Challenges (from the participants) (5 min.)**

### **What has worked**

Abbreviated vespers service at start of all meetings

Language, images, songs carefully chosen

Lay led prayer services

Readings around themes

Follow seasons or liturgical calendar with your themes

Song – "Sing a new Church"

Anniversary mass with lay preaching

Thread that leads through beginning, middle and end

Begin and end in prayer

Spend at least 15 min in prayer at one time

Create an environment for prayer

Use rituals to reflect themes such as water, light, oil

Prepare a meditation with time to comment

Pray for healing

Maintain personal prayer life

Create an environment (lighting, cloth, etc.)

Emphasize reconciliation and healing

Stop and pray

Find opportunities in every day life that can be turned into prayers/reflections

Not ashamed of prayer in personal life (say grace, even at the restaurant)

Plan to have prayer interjected in the middle of the meeting (one person is asked in advance to call for "re-consecration" prayer at a time of their choosing)

One person/group is responsible for planning prayer time well in advance to include themes, etc.

### **The Challenges**

one person offers opening prayer, one offers closing prayer and they are about different things – feels disjointed

difficult to create a prayerful atmosphere

Difficulty setting aside the time

## **To Do's and How To's (5 min)**

### **To Do's**

Create the space, the time, the expectation

Create the relationships to build the trust so people feel comfortable

We are all pray-ers/so much within each of us already

No one way to pray/as many ways as people in the world

### **How To's**

1) Pray at the beginning and end of every meeting

2) Before making all decisions, make time for prayer, reflection and/or discernment

3) Create prayer focused opportunities (retreats, spirituality night, lay led prayer services)

4) Integrate lectio divina/bible study into meetings/trainings

5) Create a prayerful voice working group responsible for keeping prayer at the center

6) Develop your own personal prayer practice (silence, walk in woods, journaling)

*NOTE: When Survivors are Present...*

*talk with them about it and find out what aspects of prayer/ritual/etc. they are comfortable with or not (location, types of prayer, symbols, etc.)*

## Model Lectio Divina (15 min)

(return to the circle around the candle, read grounding statement, read passage, minute of silence, re-read passage, people share what they heard)

### Grounding Statement

We return to the Acts of the Apostles and the reading with which we began our day. We believe that God is continually revealed to us in the passages of Scripture. Our brothers and sisters in faith recorded their experiences of God in their midst, preserving it for us. Each time we read a passage, we allow their experience to come forward, their wisdom to resonate in our lives in the modern world. Take a moment to prepare yourselves for this encounter.

Empty your hands, clear your mind, breath deeply. Settle into silence. I will read this passage aloud. Be mindful of your reactions, your emotions, as this passage is read. What words jump out at you? What thoughts or ideas strike you? Don't worry about which is the "right" interpretation. That does not matter. God, through the Holy Spirit, is speaking to you. Pay close attention to whatever enters this contemplative space. I will then reread the passage, and we will repeat the process.

### Passage (Acts 2:1-13)

*When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong and driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the spirit enabled them to proclaim.*

*Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, "Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his own native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in their own tongues of the mighty acts of God. They were all astounded and bewildered, and said to one another, "What does this mean?" But others said, scoffing, "They have had too much wine."*

## Institutionalizing Prayer: An Affiliate Example (Long Island) (5 min)

**Prayer Committee/Working Group**-Some people are attracted to our prayer committee. The committee organizes prayers for Regional Meetings, and conferences, It reaches out to people to serve as leaders of prayer.

**Quarterly Board Evenings Of Prayer**-Our board meets quarterly for a supervised evening of prayer. We started off in the homes of board members. We now meet at the Dominican Sisters Mother house on Long Island. We believe this unites us, and keeps us focused. It also integrates our activities with bona-fide religious communities.

**Regional Membership Prayer Meeting**- We attract about 200 people to our regular monthly regional membership meetings. They are usually the same people. On July 14, LIVOTF is having a special Prayer Meeting for members at the Dominican Sisters Mother house on Long Island. We believe it will appeal to other members, and to nonmembers alike. We are reaching out to our core community by providing variety to our meeting agendas. We have invited members of religious communities to join and pray with us.

### **Prayer Supporters-**

- In the past, we reached out to all members via mailings and our website to pray for the success of short term initiatives, such as a meeting between dissident priests and the bishop. It really makes them feel useful. And we have been successful. Over 300 signed up in advance of a meeting of priests with the bishop.

- Activate the home bound in a Ministry of Prayer. Some of our members are shut-ins and feel helpless about reforming the Church. We are actively soliciting members who are shut-ins or unable to actively participate in our programs. We will distribute a **prayer regimen**, and encourage them to pray with us from home during our monthly Regional Membership meetings, or at other times. We want VOTF to be inclusive, not exclusive. All who sign up receive a sample prayer card.

## Additional Resources (5 min)

### **Prayerful Voice Web Resources**

[www.votf.org](http://www.votf.org) (Click prayerful voice in the left hand column.)

### **Working Group Project Workbook**

[www.votf.org/handbook/Project\\_Workbook.pdf](http://www.votf.org/handbook/Project_Workbook.pdf)

(Section: "Projects to Fulfill the VOTF Mission Statement", pp. 2-5)

**MANY Hands, MANY Hearts Reflection and Prayer Book** (see handout)

## Evaluation, Closing Ritual & Prayer (5 min)

### Evaluation

What are some aspects of today's training that:

You liked

You thought went well

You would like to see repeated when this training is offered in the future

What are some aspects of today's training that:

Can be improved (how?)

Should be changed when this training is offered in the future

(Return to the Circle, read the scriptural passage, explain the ritual, read closing prayer, conduct the blessing)

### Ritual

*"What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches." (Luke 13:18-19)*

Each person is asked to take the mustard seeds, and when the flower pot comes around, to plant it with his/her hopes and prayers for the movement of VOTF.

### Closing Prayer – Archbishop Oscar Romero

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,

it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.

**We plant the seeds that one day will grow.**

**We water seeds already planted,**

**knowing that they hold future promise.**

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something,

and to do it very well. It may be incomplete,

but it is a beginning, a step along the way,

an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.

Lord, as we go forth in the world, back to our hometowns and home affiliates, we ask that you come with us there. We ask that you inspire and guide us so that we may inspire and guide our VOTF brothers and sisters back to the spiritual center of this movement and of ourselves. We ask that you nurture the seeds that we have planted in our own hearts for the future of this movement and Our Beloved Church. Lord, give us the strength to continue Your work, the wisdom to recognize and follow Your Will, and the love to share with all whom we meet. We ask all of this through Jesus, our Lord and our Brother. Amen.

### Blessing

We ask now that you turn to the person next you. One at a time, lay hands each other and offer blessings and words of encouragement as they leave the circle and return to the world.



**VOTF**

**MANY Hands  
MANY Hearts**

**Reflection and Prayer  
Book**

## Opening Prayer for VOTF Meetings

### **VOICE OF THE FAITHFUL, together we pray:**

For all victims of sexual abuse by Roman Catholic priests,  
We pray always for you.  
We mean to be agents of your healing.

*Response: We are the Church; we are the Body of Christ.  
Hear us, Christ our strength and salvation,  
Help us all.*

For all our brothers and sisters in faith,  
As we struggle to become the Spirit-filled Church we are called to be,  
Move us to accept the challenges of reform that are demanded by today's injustices.

*Response: We are the Church; we are the Body of Christ.  
Hear us, Christ our truth and salvation,  
Help us all.*

For all bishops of the Roman Catholic Church,  
That their hearts and minds be opened to the Church's call to genuine holiness and truth,  
A call to inclusion and collaboration with the faithful.

*Response: We are the Church; we are the Body of Christ.  
Hear us, Christ our hope and salvation,  
Help us all.*

For all who minister in the name of Jesus Christ,  
and especially for our Roman Catholic priests.  
We pray for your continued faithfulness to the Gospel and to the voice of the faithful.

*Response: We are the Church; we are the Body of Christ.  
Hear us, Christ our strength and salvation,  
Help us all.*

We are the Church; we are the Body of Christ.  
Strengthen us, fill us with wisdom,  
Lead us to holy action in building up your reign.  
Help us to respect our voice and the voices of all the faithful.

*Response: We are your Church; we are the Body of Christ.  
Hear us, Christ our true life and salvation.  
Amen.*

Startle us, O Holy One, into a new mode of being, A letting go of fear and indifference, an embrace of brokenness and otherness.

Free us, O Answer to our Restlessness, from lukewarm spirits, false desires and empty pursuits.

Rouse us, O Breath of Life. Stir up new fire in our hearts, truth and love in our words and clarity in our vision.

Restore us, O Spirit of Intimacy, that we might claim our voice as Your disciples and immerse ourselves in the business of unequivocal loving.

Recreate us, O Creator Spirit. Hover over the chaos of our world, our Church, our souls and call forth from us new daring to be Christ for others. Amen.

✱

If I am not for myself, Who will be for me?  
If I am only for myself, What am I?  
If not now, When?

*-Rabbi Hillel*

✱

May you be steadfast on your journey, powered by the message of love and the command to serve.

May you wear the Gospel on your sleeve so that all who know you may understand the value of justice, the need for kindness, the grace of forgiveness.

As you break bread with all who approach the table, may you be blessed with a song of freedom and a prayer of hope, so that all may come to know deep peace and hear the good news that Jesus is risen and present among us.

*-Father Dennis Cleary & Sister Margaret Cessna*

Lord God, you alone are the Great Healer. When my mind and body are weak, I look to you for strength and reassurance. Surround me each day with the presence of your love and compassion. Quiet my spirit, so I may know your goodness and be filled with your peace. Heal me, Lord, according to your plan for my life. This I pray through Jesus Christ, my Lord.

Amen.

✱

Patience is not waiting passively until someone else does something. Patience asks us to live the moment to the fullest to be completely present to the moment, to taste the here and now, to be where we are. When we are impatient, we try to get away from where we are. We behave as if the real thing will happen tomorrow, later, and somewhere else. Be patient and trust that the treasure you are looking for is hidden in the ground on which you stand.

*-Henri Nouwen*

✱

God, give me ears that I may hear the cries of those that need me near.

God, give me lips that I might speak comfort and peace to all who seek.

God, give me a mind that I might know to help the ones who need me so.

God, give me the hands that I might do some large or simple task for you.

God, give me a prayer, that I may pray for help and guidance every day.

And this think all else above, God, give me a heart that I might love. Amen.

*-Mary Pergamo, Renton, WA*

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.  
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.  
It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.  
We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?  
Actually, who are you not to be?  
You are a child of God.  
Your playing small does not serve the world.  
There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.  
We are all meant to shine, as children do.  
We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.  
It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone.  
And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.  
As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

*-Marianne Williamson*



I will put up with this Church until I see a better one; and it will have to put up with me until I am better.

*-Desiderius Erasmus*



We pray you, Lord, to direct and guide your Church with your unfailing care, that it might be vigilant in times of quiet and daring in times of trouble. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



If you are silent, be silent from love.  
If you accuse, accuse from love.  
If you are correct, correct from love.  
If you spare, spare from love.  
Let love be rooted deep in you,  
And only good can grow from it. Amen.

*-St. Augustine*

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in realizing that. This enables us to do something,

and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.

Amen.

*-Archbishop Oscar Romero*

O, God may our Church become what it is called to be,

Stewards united above all else in seeking you with all our heart,

In serving you and the Gospel with all our energy,

And in living lives of prayer and gratitude for your many gifts and blessings.

Stir up in us the gift of God, which is within us.

For you did not give us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and wisdom.

Inspire us, O God, open our hearts and heal our divisions.

For you did not give us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and wisdom.

May we long continue to be signs of your spirit and witnesses to Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.



**Colossians 2: 6-10: Freedom From Human Regulations Through Life With Christ**

<sup>6</sup>*So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.*

<sup>8</sup>*See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.*

<sup>9</sup>*For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, <sup>10</sup>and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.*

Oh my Jesus,  
you said the kingdom of heaven is like the leaven  
that makes the bread rise,  
light and fluffy.

May we be bearers of that leaven,  
the perfect love that comes down from Heaven  
to share your love and light and hope  
so that wherever we turn,  
we can leaven the dark hardness around us.

May each word we speak,  
each choice we make,  
each life we touch  
be filled with your leaven.

Amen.



Father of all,  
look upon the members of VOTF  
and help them to grow in your love.  
Be pleased with their work and service  
for the people of this community.

Bless this symbol  
and let it always remind us  
of the principles for which we stand.  
Give your peace to all,  
and help us to work together in harmony.

Father,  
we ask this blessing  
through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

## **Blessed Be These Hands: A Litany**

Leader: Blessed be the work of your hands,  
O Holy One.

People: Blessed be these hands that have  
touched life.

Leader: Blessed be these hands that have  
nurtured creativity.

People: Blessed be these hands that have  
held pain.

Leader: Blessed be these hands that have  
embraced with passion.

People: Blessed be these hands that have  
tended gardens.

Leader: Blessed be these hands that have  
closed in anger.

People: Blessed be these hands that have  
planted new seeds.

Leader: Blessed be these hands that have  
harvested ripe fields.

People: Blessed be these hands that have  
cleaned, washed, mopped, scrubbed.

Leader: Blessed be these hands that have  
become knotty with age.

People: Blessed be these hands that are  
wrinkled and scarred from doing justice.

Leader: Blessed be these hands that have  
reached out and have been received.

People: Blessed be these hands that hold  
the promise of the future.

All: Blessed be the works of your hands, O  
Holy One.

*-Diann Neu*

Be still and let God's peace wash over you  
like waves lapping over pebbles.

Be still and let God's peace smooth the  
rough edges of our insurmountable worries.

Be still and let God's peace take away the  
jaggedness of injustice to reveal a smooth  
shining love.

Be still and let the peace of God the Father,  
Son and Holy Spirit be with us all tonight.

*-Adapted from Celtic blessing by Lesley  
Steel*



Let's take a moment to center ourselves in  
the presence of our brother Jesus Christ. As  
two or more, we gather in His name. As He  
promised, so we believe in His presence  
among us. We ask our parent God to send  
us His Spirit to guide our every word and  
action here today toward our Savior's vision  
for the community He left behind, and  
continues to embrace, as we embrace His  
Presence among us. Amen.

*-IL affiliate member*



## **Laughter, Silence and Shouting**

Dear Lord, We who look ahead  
Behold you coming towards us,  
Proclaiming what is,  
And what shall be.

Strengthen our faith  
You who are,  
Who will be,  
Throughout the times.

Make clear our sight,  
You who are born for,  
What is to come.

Amen.

## The Fruits of the Spirit

*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*

*-Galatians 5:22-23*

Surprising One, coming in ways I least expect, open me to your dynamic presence. Awaken me, Surprising One!

Perceptive Guide, always available to direct my ways, advise me in self-discipline and decision-making. Awaken me, Perceptive Guide!

Freedom Bringer, asking for my willingness to surrender, help me to let go, to let in, to let be. Awaken me, Freedom Bringer!

Source of Power, providing stamina and strength for my soul, support me when I am weak and vulnerable. Awaken me, Source of Power!

Arousing One, stirring up what is dead or stale, urge my stagnant, sleeping gifts into life. Awaken me, Arousing One!

Divine Transformer, encouraging continued growth, grant me both patience and acceptance. Awaken me, Divine Transformer!

Peacemaker, offering forgiveness and understanding, encourage me to communicate with love. Awaken me, Peacemaker!

Bearer of Love, never-ending font of charity and compassion, may I share my goodness generously. Awaken me, Bearer of Love!

Amen.

*-From "Out of the Ordinary" by Joyce Rupp*

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself and in fact that I think I am following Your will does not mean I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please You does in fact please You. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this You will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. I will not fear, for You are ever with me.

*-Thomas Merton*



## BE AT PEACE

DO NOT look forward in fear to the changes of life, rather look to them with full hope that as they arise, God, whose very own you are will lead you safely through all things; and when you cannot stand it, God will carry you in His arms. Do not fear what may happen tomorrow. The same everlasting Father Who cares for you today will take care of you then and every day. He will either shield you from suffering, or will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations.

*-St. Francis de Sales*

## **A Prayer Used before Every Session of the Second Vatican Council**

We stand before you, Holy Spirit,  
Conscious of our sinfulness,  
But aware that we gather in your name.

Come to us, remain with us,  
And enlighten our hearts.

Give us light and strength  
To know your will,  
To make it our own,  
And to live it in our lives.

Guide us by your wisdom,  
Support us by your power  
For you are God,  
Sharing the glory of Father and Son.

You desire justice for all:  
Enable us to uphold the rights of others;  
Do not allow us to be misled by ignorance  
Or corrupted by fear or favor.

Unite us to yourself in the bond of love  
And keep us faithful to all that is true.

As we gather in your name  
May we temper justice with love,  
So that all our decisions  
May be pleasing to you,  
And earn the reward  
Promised to good and faithful servants.

You live and reign with the Father and the  
Son, One God, forever and ever.

Amen.

How much I must criticize you, my Church  
and yet how much I love you!

You have made me suffer more than anyone  
and yet I owe more to you than to anyone. I  
should like to see you destroyed and yet I  
need your presence. You have given me  
much scandal and yet you alone have made  
me understand holiness. Never in this world  
have I seen anything more compromised,  
more false, yet never have I touched  
anything more pure, more generous or more  
beautiful. Countless times I have felt like  
slamming the door of my soul in your face---  
and yet, every night, I have prayed that I  
might die in your sure arms!

No, I cannot be free of you, for I am one with  
you, even if not completely you.

Then too---where would I go? To build  
another Church, it would be my Church, not  
Christ's Church.

No. I am old enough. I know better!

*-from "I Sought and I Found"*  
*by Carlo Carretto*

## A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO BEING CHURCH

We need to smile to ourselves; laugh a little at how well we miss the gospel point, for the point is often painful.

We all want to “follow” Jesus through His teaching, His doctrine, His words, but rarely through His life style, His behavior, His poverty, His values.

Jesus didn’t practice what He preached:  
He preached what He practiced.

The Word came out of His experiences.  
His relationships (who He was, not what He was).

Jesus didn’t practice what He preached;  
He preached what He practiced.

The Word came out of His experiences, His relationships (who He was, not what He was).

Jesus didn’t think about what He was doing.  
He did what He thought about.

We need to do what Jesus did - not just think what He thought (to become a who, not a what).

If we do what He did, we will come to think as He thought;

He ignored this world’s wisdom, He sought no power, bought no home, praised compassion over worship, need over wealth. He reflected on the lilies of the field, not political favor.

We are on an orthodoxy kick (right doctrine) instead of orthopraxy (right doing).

We too easily affirm His divinity. But deny, in practice, His Incarnation.

We have firm beliefs, but little application, forgetting that faith is a VERB, not a noun.

*-from “To Dance with a Cross on our Back,”  
by Fr. Bill Skeehan*

Gracious God, we offer thanksgiving and praise to you. We give you thanks for all here present, and we thank you for all that our Church has meant to us. We rejoice at the inspiration which has been found here. We acknowledge our gratitude for the continuing ministry and mission of our Church throughout the years, through the preaching of your Word, the singing of hymns to your praise, and the sharing of life-sustaining sacraments. We ask you to sanctify our lives and our work. Help us to preserve the best of our past and be open to new vision. May we long continue to be signs of your spirit and witnesses to Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

★

Breathe into me, Holy Spirit,  
that my thoughts may all be holy.

Move in me, Holy Spirit,  
that my work, too, may be holy.

Attract my heart, Holy Spirit,  
that I may love only what is holy.

Strengthen me, Holy Spirit,  
that I may defend all that is holy.

Protect me, Holy Spirit,  
that I may always be holy.

*- St. Augustine*

★

O God, we come before you asking for light and truth. We are about to engage in the work of planning together. Help us to see with a vision of justice and peace. Give us insights and help us to share openly with each other. Direct our hearts and minds to the path that leads to you and enable us to

plan for the good of our brothers and sisters in this Church and our world Church. May the blessing of God be upon us as we work together for the growth of our Church. In the name of God who created us, Jesus who liberates us, and the Spirit who loves us, Amen.

*-Prayer for a New World Order by Betsy Clark*

## IN SEARCH OF A ROUND TABLE

Concerning the why and how and what and who of ministry, one image keeps surfacing:  
A table that is round.

It will take some sawing  
To be round-tabled.  
Some redefining  
And redesigning,  
Some redoing and rebirthing  
Of narrow long Churching  
Can painful be  
For people and tables.  
It would mean no daising  
And throning,  
For but one king is there  
And he is a foot washer,  
At table no less.

And what of narrow long ministers  
When they confront  
A round table people,  
After years of working up the table  
To finally sit at its head,  
Only to discover  
That the table has been turned round?

They must be loved into roundness,  
For God has called a People  
Not "them and us".  
"them and us" are unable  
to gather round; for at a round table  
there are no sides  
and ALL are invited  
to wholeness and to food.

At one time  
Our narrowing churches  
Were built to resemble the Cross  
But it does no good  
For building to do so,  
If lives do not.

Round tabling means  
No preferred seating,  
No first and last,  
No better, and no corners  
For the "least of these".

Round-table-ing means  
Being with,  
A part of,  
Together and one.  
It means room for the Spirit  
And gifts  
And disturbing profound peace for all.

We can no longer prepare for the past.  
We will and must and are called  
To be Church,  
And if He calls for other than a round  
table  
We are bound to follow.

Leaving the sawdust  
And chips, designs and redesigns  
Behind, in search of and in presence of  
The Kingdom  
That is His and not ours.

Amen.

*-Chuck Lathrop*

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Loving God,  
Captivate our imagination,  
Empower our will,  
Energize our spirit,  
So that we will learn to take our inner  
convictions and live them more fully day by  
day.  
Jesus, Savior and companion,  
Strengthen our determination  
To follow your way of service,  
To open our hearts to forgive,  
To embrace searcher, sinner and saint alike  
So that we will integrate your way, your  
truth, and your life into our lives.  
God our Father and Creator, source of all  
that is,  
Grace us to live your way of love as we  
meet one another on this journey of faith.  
Blessed be your name.

Amen.