Columns
Horizons
Spirituality



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I recently read that more Americans pray in their car than in a place of worship. My initial reaction was "that tracks." Then it got me thinking about my own prayer journey … and yes, much of it was by car.

When I began discerning with the Dominican Order, I did not know how to pray at all. I had been a non-practicing Catholic for more than 25 years and was largely unaware of my spirituality. Thank God, I was still able to hear the call — and to respond — despite myself.

My subsequent experience with the sisters has been one of rapid growth and deep probing. With the guidance and support of wise companions, I've explored the divine presence in this world, witnessed it at work through my sisters and the church, and searched for it within myself.

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The breadth and depth of approaches to prayer that the Catholic tradition offers is something I relish. Perhaps most familiar are the devotionals committed to memory and shared by Catholics across the globe. But there is a stunning range of ways to worship, to center, to engage with the sacraments, to sing praise, to lament and to seek intercession.

As my prayer life has deepened over the years, I've stumbled upon a prayer formula that has become one of my central tools of resilience and accountability. Sharing it feels vulnerable — like opening my inner room to the public — but gifts are meant to be shared and it's been a gift for me. It is a tried-and-true personal prayer about God's call for me and how I respond. And, yes, I often pray it in the car!

> **The Personal Prayer**
>
> I forgive, revoke, release and repent of all the contracts and agreements, the vows and promises, any programs, prisons, permissions and strongholds

that distort my Divine Image in this world, distract me from my true path, diminish my connection with the Spirit, or dull my imagination or inhibit my gifts from being fully brought to bear in this world.

Whether I've made them collectively or individually, allowed them to take hold willingly or unwillingly, or cling to them consciously or unconsciously,

I forgive them now and send them back to where they came from.

So shall this be thought, having been said, make it so.



(Pixabay/Dorothe)

This first part is about "clearing the deck" so that I'm praying from a true and attentive place — it breaks through the noise and sets an intention to ditch my baggage. Usually, my prayers alone are silent and only spoken out loud when I'm reading or reciting in a communal setting. Speaking this particular prayer out loud, by myself, keeps me focused and present in a way that feels like a first baby step toward manifesting it.

The second part, below, is an invocation for help attracting what I need and being my truest self in challenging times when truth can feel hard to discern. In my Trinitarian view, God provides circumstances and encounters to respond to; Jesus helps me contend with my brokenness and human failings (hence his is the longest!); and the Spirit inspires and guides me.

God

Gracious God, bring me insights, graces and protections.

Bring information to guide my thoughts, my words, my attention, my choices and my next right steps on my true path.

Bring filters of protection to shield me from information that doesn't serve me and from distractions that would lead me astray from God's call for me.

Thank you, God, for what I don't know: for mystery, for possibility and for the movement of the Holy Spirit in this world.

Help me to always be humble: mindful of how much I don't know and aware of how little I control.

Help me to always be hopeful: trusting that the Divine Advocate is always at work on our behalf, sustaining that faith in others, and emboldened by the power of my imagination and my gifts when I fully bring them to bear.

Speaking this particular prayer out loud, by myself, keeps me focused and present in a way that feels like a first baby step toward manifesting it.

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Jesus Christ

Sweet Jesus, bring me healing, freedom and wholeness.

Bring healing from the wounds and the hurts, healing from my brokenness, healing from the blindness that prevents me from seeing more clearly, healing for my strained and broken relationships.

Thank you, Jesus, for your model of healing, of reconciliation, of mercy, forgiveness and non-violence.

Bring freedom from any worldviews, systems, dogmas or narratives that limit my Divine Image from shining forth. Liberate me from any self-made prisons and self-imposed smallness. Free me from the fears and anxieties that plague me and from the judgements that are put upon me, those that I put upon others and those that I put upon myself.

Thank you, Jesus, for your model of courageous freedom to recognize, speak and live in truth.

Help me to become whole: to reclaim those aspects of myself that I have distorted, hidden, rejected or lost. To reclaim and integrate them as the blessings originally bestowed to me. Align how I act and speak with how I want to be. Help me to live with integrity, in right relationship with God, with others and with Creation.

Thank you, Jesus, for your model of unity and wholeness.

And thank you, Jesus, for your freedom to sacrifice, thus revealing the Paschal Mystery always at work in the world to make things whole.

Help me to be a friend to that Mystery: to accept, cherish, honor and salvage all that is falling away and the deaths to come. Help me to recognize, to nourish, to share and to manifest the life that is seeking to be born in its place.

Sweet Jesus, help me to walk your way with integrity and grace and to be your disciple at work in this world.



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Holy Spirit

Divine Advocate, bring me a new and discerning heart.

Bring wisdom and courage so that I can know and do God's will for me.

Thank you for your presence in my life, for your invitations, for your inspiration, for your guidance and for your steadfast companionship.

Help me to be a wise discerner — always looking to you for my next right step.

Help me to be patient — waiting for your guidance and holding my ego at bay from prematurely driving forward.

> Help me to be bold and creative — fully bringing to bear my imagination and my gifts to follow your guidance.
>
> Help me to be a steadfast companion to you — always open to your guidance, attentive to your stirrings, ready for surprises, and responsive to your call.

I developed this prayer over the past decade; it grew in iterations from prayers that spoke to me. It takes about 20 minutes to recite thoughtfully. Since it reflects my theology, such as it is in 2023, I hope it will continue to develop and deepen over the decades to come. It's written on my heart and I offer it up here. Take what you like, leave the rest, and feel free to fine tune it for your own image(s) of God.