

Church Bulletin, Prayer Book & The Bible

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[0 : 00] We're in the midst of a series on the catechism. The catechism is found in the 540s of your prayer book, which I think you'll find available to you today.

This is one Sunday in the almost 50 years of the life of this parish.

I can't talk about the pew Bibles or your pew leaflets because there aren't any pews. However, I hope that you have made and will continue to make the adjustment and that next Sunday we will be restored to them and they to us.

That's not a promise. That's just the way we hope it will go and pray. Okay, three documents I want you to look at today.

One is your prayer book, one is your Bible, and one is that most amazing document, the Sunday Bulletin. First, I want you to look at document number one, the Sunday Bulletin.

[1 : 07] Now, if you have read it carefully, which I trust all of you have, you will know that it wants to remind you that there's a move coming up to the church, that we have a relationship to St. Chad's, that we have a senior's tea, that a Bible study is starting in South Burnaby, that there's a coffee pause being run by Dr. Kathy Nickel, that there's a young couples group meeting, that there's a membership class on Wednesday, there's Feed and Frenzy coming up very soon, there's Music for Brass and Organ on the 13th of December, Wednesday night Bible study groups, there's a Bible Society luncheon, you can bake cookies for the evening service, you can be a partner with a church in West Africa, you can be one of St. John's missionaries, you can consider the children's choir, join a small group Bible study, have tapes for shut-ins, join in the art exhibit in the hall, the youth group service tonight, the coffee house at Regent next Saturday night, or Stephen James concert on November the 29th, without mentioning the Learner's Exchange and one or two other things that are going on.

We'll pause for breath, and either that all means that we have a dynamic and active parish, or else we're on the point of breaking down into total chaos.

And I don't know how to read it. There is so much leadership and so much going on that it's a bit confusing, and I wonder about it all.

But there it is. There are many in this congregation to which none of the above applies. You know, that they're not involved in any of that long list of things, and furthermore, don't intend to be.

And they are as welcome as the birds in spring. That's not what's involved in being a member of this congregation, is to be heavily involved in the program.

[3 : 16] The program is there for you, but it's not, you're not there to keep the program going. There are many who already have a whole lot of priorities, even before they picked up their bulletin this morning.

You may be planning a wedding, seeking a friendship, giving birth to a baby, studying for exams, arranging a divorce, building a family, burying the dead, dealing with addiction, planning a baptism, or you may not be well.

And that will fill your agenda before you ever read the bulletin. And so, I give that to you as a kind of kaleidoscopic picture of this parish at the moment.

And I guess some of the problems that pertain to leadership in a parish that has so many things going on in so many directions, and whether we need to sort out some priorities.

So, in order to sort out our priorities, I want you to turn to the second document, which is page 549 of the prayer book.

[4 : 40] Page 549 is that section of the catechism which deals with prayer. Now, it refers to what has preceded it in the catechism, but I would like it to refer to what I have just read to you about the programming and activities of this parish, and to say to you, as the catechist does on page 549,

And so, it tells you that all of the above that I've mentioned in document number one is quite meaningless, except the Lord, know that you are not able to do these things of yourself, nor to walk in the commandments and to serve him without his grace and help, which you must learn at all times to call for by diligent prayer.

And so, it tells you that all of the above that I've mentioned in document number one is quite meaningless, except the Lord builds the program.

Their labor is but vain that slave away at it. And that we have to be very careful to remember that. And that unless there is prayer, the whole thing comes apart.

It doesn't go anywhere. It doesn't lead to anything. It's just a mass consumption of useless energy. Unless, as the catechism says, you recognize that you're not able to do these things, that we recognize we're not able to do these things of ourselves, as we learn at all times, to call for God's help by diligent prayer.

What is prayer, then? Now, prayer is, and it's described right under the Lord's Prayer, what do you desire of God?

[6 : 31] Now, that's what prayer is. Expressed or unexpressed, articulated or unarticulated, in your heart or on your lips.

It is a desire of God. A desire that in all that we do, all the program that we have, all the circumstances we live in, in every dimension of our life, individually and together, it is focused in a strong desire of God for His blessing and His involvement in our lives.

That's what prayer is. There's a lovely thing that makes this even clearer at the end of the section, which describes it.

You see there in the italics at the end of the thing? The desire may be said by all kneeling. So that at the heart of prayer is this desire.

And it's called here, the desire. The common desire we have to see God's purposes worked out in our homes, in our program, in our parish, in our life, in our activities, in our baking cookies, in our seniors' tea, in our meetings, in our planning, and all those things.

[7 : 53] They are to be, the thrust of them is the desire for God to work among us and in us. And in order to do that, we're to pray.

But you say, well, how do we pray? And Jesus gives us this wonderful plan for prayer, which we call the Lord's Prayer. And I'm not assuming that you're not familiar with it, but I do want to tell you what the five petitions of the Lord's Prayer are so as to remind you, lest the Lord's Prayer has simply become a kind of mumble which we all go through without anything ever engaging our minds.

The Lord's Prayer begins by saying, our Father. The only way we can approach God as Father is through Jesus Christ. You can call him a tyrant, you can call him unjust, you can call him anything you want, but in order to call him Father, two things are necessary. Jesus has to have shown you that he is your Father and the Spirit of Jesus in your heart has to acknowledge that for you he is your Father.

So it is a very great honour done to you when God in his grace, by Jesus Christ, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, allows you to kneel and say, our Father, it is an immense privilege that we as a congregation have this morning that we can turn to God and corporately say, our Father. Five things then that we say to our Father is, hallowed be your name. And that's because we have a very strong tendency to hallow other things in our lives and make them more important.

[9 : 55] And we have to come back again and again to the hallowed thing is the name of God, the person of our God and Father.

And so we pray that his name may be hallowed in our lives. So ask yourself, what is the holy thing in your life? And then enter more fully into the prayer that the holy thing might be the name of God. The second thing is, thy kingdom come. What this means is, the function of our life is not to gain control, but to come under control.

Under the control of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Under the control of Jesus who came to establish his kingdom in our hearts.

And as that kingdom has come, so we pray that it will come more fully when we say, thy kingdom come. Hallow the name, seek the kingdom.

[11 : 02] The third thing we ask for is daily bread. And that is simply to acknowledge that the most fundamental needs of our lives derive from the grace and goodness of God.

They're not of our own contriving or of our own provision. We have to say, give us this day that which is appropriate to us, our circumstances, our daily bread.

It's a celebration of our dependence upon God to pray that and pray it and pray it. The fourth thing is to forgive.

Remember that when they first talked about nuclear bombs, they thought they might set up a nuclear explosion which would start going and going and going and going and going and it would never come to an end until everything had blown up.

So, God, by his forgiveness of us, through Christ's death on the cross, has established a chain reaction. He has forgiven us in order that we may forgive others.

[12:05] And the power of this is the Holy Spirit helping us to know that we are forgiven and giving us the grace to forgive those around us so that this spiritual chain reaction may consume the whole world.

And that's what we pray for. And finally, we pray that we will not be led into temptation, that evil is a reality, that evil can take over our lives, and that taking over our lives, we can use, our life can just be a dry husk without meaning because it has been desiccated by evil and there's nothing left of it. So, that's document number two. Our bulletin, the catechism containing the Lord's Prayer and document number three, is Romans 12, three to eight.

And, I want us to explain this to you very quickly. I'd like you to have the text in front of you because it has enormous relevance for us.

first, it applies to everyone when Paul says, as he writes, the grace given to me, I bid everyone among you.

[13:32] This applies to each of us so we can each take this personally. Paul is getting at you, everyone among you. And then he says, this is the danger, the great danger for every one of you.

The thing that will cripple you completely and cripple this congregation totally is as people think more highly of themselves than they ought to think.

So, let yourself down a notch or two this morning, will you? Start moving towards some reality and break away from the kind of defensiveness that we all have in thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think.

That's the danger. And then you are called upon to make a sober assessment of yourself that God may have given to this person great faith and to you very little.

But he holds you responsible for the faith that you have. You don't live under the shadow of somebody else's faith. Having done that, he then goes on to say how we are related to one another.

[14:48] The problem you create as an individual and I create as an individual, not making a sober assessment of my faith, thinking more highly than I ought about myself. But then he says the reason that you have to deal with that is because you need to recognize that you are one body with many members and you have your function and others have their function.

And the church limps along if it doesn't have you functioning in the way that Christ intended you to function. You may not be involved in any one of the program items but you nevertheless have an important function and ministry within the body of Christ.

And you have to submit to that. Not out of fear and formality but in love and by the Spirit. You say, well what am I supposed to do?

Verse 6 gives you a number of options and you should reach out and take hold of one of them and grip it strongly at this moment as I read again this list of things which belong to you.

You have differing gifts. It could be prophecy, it could be service, it could be teaching, it could be exhorting, it could be contributing, it could be giving aid, it could be acts of mercy, it could be any of these.

[16:28] And you should probably underline the one that you want to deal with right now as something that God has given to you as a, in His grace and in His mercy.

His grace is a blessing. And I want to conclude by telling you about the honey which the children have and I brought, I brought with me this morning, I must confess that I bought it this morning too, but I bought it and brought it.

I, some honey. Hard as a rock and completely impenetrable it is. And that's like the congregation. Sometimes, that's, that's, that's what happens when you put the whole structure of a congregation together. When you have a vast program and it gets stiffer and stiffer and stiffer and harder and harder and harder until it's impossible to move.

Then when, and so it's all there, but you can't do anything with it because it's too hard. But then you see, when a congregation starts to pray, it starts to melt and to run and becomes very sweet and very sticky.

[17 : 59] The reason I wanted the children to do that this morning was that they would get it on their fingers and they would get it on their clothes and they would get it on their books and they would get it in their hair and it would have so stuck to them that by the time they get home today, they will be completely, you know, stuck with honey.

But, and that is a kind of parable of what I want to happen to you. That you, in coming together and in taking part in the corporate life of this congregation may be stuck and cling to one another having had a very sweet taste of something very good, that you may be stuck together in a mass by, by prayer.

You see, once the honey is melted, things begin to work. And prayer is what changes a congregation from being stiff, congealed, and formal into something which is warm, sticky, and sweet.

You may not think that's a very desirable goal, but in comparison, it is. And it's very hard to do anything.

You know, you have meetings and nothing happens. You go to committees and nothing happens. You go to Sunday school classes and nothing happens. You run into this problem and nothing happens. You run out of money and nothing happens. And it all happens.

[19 : 27] All that congealing takes place in a congregation until somebody starts to pray. Until people, until a congregation starts to pray and to pray earnestly to God.

That by the warmth of his Holy Spirit, we may be melted and begin to stick to one another and that we may become malleable in terms of God's purpose for us.

And that will happen. So, there you are. You need to start to pray. Now, as I said, once in the 50 years of this congregation, you are seated this morning in chairs.

And so, what I want you to do is this. Take your prayer book and turn to page. put your finger in here on page 39.

One finger goes in there. Your thumb goes in one other place. your thumb goes in page 734 and your and then so that what I want you to do is I want you to pray for the church.

[21 : 03] I want you to pray for faithfulness in the use of this world's goods. and then I want you to pray for the parish on page 736.

Now, the unique thing about this is that I want you to form into groups of six by turning every other row around and meeting and forming in little circles of six.

You greet each other in Christ's name. Then you say these prayers together. When that's over, Beth Allen, who's going to lead our intercessions, is going to be here. You stay in that group and Beth will lead the intercessions.

Then I will lead the confession and absolution. And then I will announce the hymn and you can all stand up and get back in rows. Do you understand that? I'm sorry to do this to you, but as I say, it's one opportunity in 50 years.

So will you form into groups of six, and I'll remind you again what you're to do.anner ■■■men.

[22 : 31] I just want you to carry on with the prayers in a couple of minutes when they've had sense to say that. Yes. I just realized that Matt was on prayers today, but when I saw, and you told me if you think this was all right, I was going to get breakfast.

Let me just tell him what to do. So, introduce yourselves, greet one another in Christ's name, and say those prayers together, and then we're going to have Beth lead us in our intercessions.

So, I'm going to preface each of these prayers. It's going to be fairly simple. In section six, you mean?

Yes. Okay. Do you think that's feasible? That's fine, yeah. And I'll start up when you're finished with the others. Okay. Okay. So, I'll just give them a couple minutes.

Let's go. Okay. Okay.

[23 : 54] Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay.

boring. bizi So are you going to give them the page or are you just going to tell them?

I'm just going to give them the page. And I'm going to give them the page. I'm going to give them the page.

Yes, this is all. It's funny you can hear the cadences of prayers.

Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay.

[25 : 27] Okay. Okay. Oh, okay. yo..

Now I want you to be quiet just as Beth leads us in our intercessions together for a moment.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. I will leave some pauses where you can insert your own prayers. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[27 : 19] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. that each one may be a true and faithful servant of Christ.

Let us pray to the Lord. We remember those who are our neighbors, friends, and family, who we recognize are drawing near to the light of faith.

That the Lord will bring them true knowledge of himself. Let us pray to the Lord. In the midst of the busyness of our lives, we remember our families and friends.

[28 : 55] That the Lord will give them joy and satisfaction in all that they do.

Let us pray to the Lord. We remember those who are ill, in need of our prayers at this time, particularly Sybil and Angela.

And any who are known to you. For those who are lonely, sick, hungry, persecuted, or ignored, that the Lord will comfort and sustain them.

Let us pray to the Lord. We think of the concerns that press in on us here in our city, province, and country.

Our unity as a country. Those who have taken the responsibility of public office. For our country.

[30 : 42] We think of the concerns that we are in our city. We think of the concerns that we are in our city. We think of the concerns that we are in our city. Let us pray to the Lord. Amen. We consider our world, and those places which experience violence, famine, and want.

For the whole human family, that we may live together in justice and peace.

Let us pray to the Lord. Lastly, we take a few moments now for ourselves to come before God and our Father with those things which are uppermost in our hearts and minds.

The Lord with those things which look like us on ...

Ascend will we understand the Trinity Pad Zum! O most merciful Father, we humbly thank Thee for all Thy gifts so freely bestowed upon us, for life and health and safety, for power to work and leisure to rest, for all that is beautiful in creation and in the lives of men and women.

[32 : 41] We praise and magnify Thy holy name, but above all we thank Thee for our spiritual mercies in Christ Jesus our Lord, for the means of grace and for the hope of glory.

Fill our hearts with all joy and peace in believing through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.