

“All Things Are Yours”
A Suggested List of Books, Hymns, and Prayers

Gerald L. Sittser

The Catechumenate

Over the past few years I developed a two-year catechumenate to adapt the ancient catechumenate to a modern, post-Christendom, setting. As you will learn from the link below, it is a two-year process. It consists of 32 short videos (each is about 30 minutes long), which I delivered before a live audience. I think you will find them clear, though perhaps not dazzling! Each video is accompanied by a study guide that includes small group questions, a homework assignment (a modest amount), a spiritual practice, and an application to ordinary life. The goal is formation, not simply information. It is quite different from Practicing the Way, as you will see. If you wish to learn more and discuss it with me, please contact me at gsittser@whitworth.edu.

Click on this link, which will send you to a site with basic info and samples. Webpage: www.whitworth.edu/catechumenate . There you will find two sample lectures, two sample study guides, a detailed overview of the two years of content, and information for next steps.

Books

It took me many years to burrow into the literature of the history of Christian spirituality. The number of books is massive, though that should not intimidate readers, whether new to the field or well-read veterans, for the pleasure comes from the reading itself, which will never end. The following reading list is organized by chapter. I chose to provide one or two introductory books on the subject, if good ones are available, and then to suggest several good primary sources. It is always best, after all, to read the original writers rather than to read those of us who write about them.

NOTE: Please don't be overwhelmed by the list!!! Read the books or chapters that have a plus (+) by them first. They are short and take priority.

Secondary Sources: (sources written *about* the period of history)

+Gerald L. Sittser, *Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008).

+ _____, *Resilient Faith: How the Early Christian “Third Way” Changed the World* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2021). (NOTE: I might appear to be self-aggrandizing here by suggesting my own books first. But they do introduce you to the basic field and its literature in an accessible manner.)

John R. Tyson, *Invitation to Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Anthology* (New York: Oxford, 1999). A superb collection of spiritual writings, from early Christianity to the twentieth century.

Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). An absolutely superb exploration of the theology of the Church Fathers.

John Chryssavgis, *In the Heart of the Desert: The Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, Inc., 2003). An accessible and winsome introduction to the spirituality of the Desert Saints.

Kathleen Norris, *The Cloister Walk* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1997). A best-selling book on contemporary monasticism, written by a Protestant oblate.

Jean Leclercq, OSB, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982). A classic book on the difference between purely “academic” learning and “monastic” learning.

Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (New York: Penguin, 1997). The best introduction to this fascinating tradition.

Primary Sources: (sources written *during* the period of history)

History

Eusebius, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine* (New York: Penguin, 1965). An early history of Christianity that contains many martyr stories, written by a bishop and friend of Constantine.

Theology

Cyril C. Richardson, ed., *Early Christian Fathers* (New York: Touchstone, 1996). A primary source collection of early Christian writers. In this collection of primary sources you will find:

- +“The So-Called Letter to Diognetus” (first apologetic work)
- +“The Martyrdom of Polycarp” (an early martyr account)
- +“I Clement” (one of the first letters written after the apostolic period)

Irenaeus of Lyon, *On the Apostolic Preaching* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997). The first example of doing “biblical theology,” that is, understanding the Bible as a theological story.

+Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1993). The most important early defense of the Incarnation, written in the fourth century as the Arian controversy was erupting.

+Augustine, *The Confessions* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1997). One of the most readable of the many editions of this spiritual classic. Read it slowly. It is not hard; but it is deep.

George Barrois, ed., *The Fathers Speak: St. Basil the Great. St. Gregory Nazianzus, St. Gregory of Nyssa* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1986). A selection of the correspondence among the three great Cappadocian Fathers. It makes them come alive as real people. They complain about the weather one moment, and then address big pastoral and theological issues the next.

An Early Christian Manual

Hippolytus, *On the Apostolic Tradition* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001). An invaluable source, written in AD 215, on early Christian church life.

Early Saints and Desert Fathers and Mothers

Carolinne White, ed., *Early Christian Lives* (New York: Penguin, 1998). A collection of six early biographies of saints, including St. Antony of Egypt and St. Benedict. Fascinating, wild, and edifying.

+Athanasius, *The Life of Antony* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980). The most famous spiritual biography of the greatest of the Desert Saints, written by the tenacious fourth-century bishop of Alexandria.

+Thomas Merton, ed., *The Wisdom of the Desert* (New York: New Directions, 1960). This collection of some of the most famous of the “Sayings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers” is still in print. This book is short and very much worth reading.

Benedicta Ward, ed., *The Lives of the Desert Fathers* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cisterican Publications, 1980). A collection of the early stories about the Desert Fathers.

John Cassian, *The Institutes* (New York: The Newman Press, 2000). John Cassian spent many years in the Egyptian desert, learning from the last great generation of the desert fathers. He had to flee for his life around the year 400 and eventually landed in Gaul (modern day France). A bishop requested that he write a book on the movement. This book, the first of two and by far the shorter, explores the “Eight Deadly Thoughts” (Seven Deadly Sins), as explained by the desert fathers.

Owen Chadwick, ed., *Western Asceticism* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958). An excellent collection of the “Sayings” of the Desert Saints, as well as the complete text of *The Rule of St. Benedict* and excerpts from John Cassian’s *Conferences*.

Laura Swan, ed., *The Forgotten Desert Mothers* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001). A collection of the “Sayings” of the greatest of the Desert Mothers.

Short Collections of 4th-Century Sermons

John Chrysostom, *On Marriage and Family Life* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1986) and *On Living Simply* (Liguori, MO:

Liguori Publications, 1996). The former is a collection of Chrysostom sermons, the latter a collection of sermon quotes.

John Chrysostom, *On Wealth and Poverty* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981).

+Basil of Caesarea, *On Social Justice* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009).

An Early Christian Travelogue

John Wilkinson, ed., *Egeria's Travels* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1999). This most unusual book contains a journal written by a 4th-century nun, Egeria, who records her observations and reflections on a tour of Holy Land sites. It includes a detailed description of the Desert Fathers, the summiting of Mt. Sinai, a visit to Constantinople, and the experience of Holy Week in and around Jerusalem. Simply amazing.

Medieval Spiritual Writings

Ewart Cousins, ed. and trans., *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978). Three important works from a major figure in medieval mysticism, combining the best of Augustine, Francis, and the Pseudo-Dionysius.

G. R. Evans, ed., *Bernard of Clairvaux: Selected Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987). An excellent collection from this magnificent—and flawed—mystic, abbot, preacher, and poet.

+Edmund Colledge, OSA, and James Walsh, SJ, eds., *Julian of Norwich: Showings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978). The first book, written by a woman to be published in the English language, and surely one of the greatest books.

G. K. Chesterton, *St. Francis of Assisi* (Garden City, NY: Image, 1957). A lively and entertaining portrait of the great saint.

Regis J. Armstrong, OFM, J. A. Wayne Hellman, OFM, and William J. Short, OFM, eds., *The Francis Trilogy of Thomas of Celano* (Hyde Park, NY:

New City Press, 2004). A delightful account of Francis' life through the eyes of his close friend and first biographer.

+Thomas a' Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1989). The fourteenth-century classic that still exercises wide influence.

E. Allison Peters, ed., *John of the Cross: Dark Night of the Soul* (New York: Doubleday, 1959). An often cited classic written during the period of the Spanish Reformation of the sixteenth century.

Reformation Theology

Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955). Luther at his pastoral best.

Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950). One of the best religious biographies ever written.

+Martin Luther, *The Freedom of the Christian*.

+John Calvin, *Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1952). A section from Calvin's Institutes that addresses how Christians should practice faith in ordinary life.

Post-Reformation, Pietist, and Evangelical Spiritual Writing

Jean-Pierre DeCaussade, *The Sacrament of the Present Moment* (San Francisco: Harper, 1966). A brilliant exploration of what it means to live for God right where you are. Written to nuns, but apply to us all.

+Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Present of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967). A classic on the dailyness of living for God.

+Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, or My Pious Desires (Fortress, 1964). An early Lutheran leader of the pietist movement who anticipated the evangelical awakenings. Knowledge of doctrine is not enough!

John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (New York: Penguin, 1987).

+_____, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (New York: Penguin, 1964). The first, his autobiography, the second, a classic allegory, from the hand of the Baptist Puritan master.

John E. Smith, Harry S. Stout, and Kenneth P. Minkema, eds., *Jonathan Edwards Readers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). A useful collection of Edwards sources.

Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996). His ground-breaking work on conversion.

Frank Whaling, ed., *John and Charles Wesley: Selected Prayers, Hymns, Journal Notes, Sermons, Letters and Treatises* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981). A collection of diverse Wesley writings.

William Wilberforce, *Real Christianity: Discerning True Faith from False Beliefs* (Colorado Springs: Victor, 2005). The great evangelical social reformer, member of Parliament for 45 years, and leading opponent of slavery in England, explores the true meaning of Christian discipleship.

Modern Classics of the Spiritual Life

+Evelyn Underhill, *The Spiritual Life* (Harrisburg: Morehouse, 1955). One of the great modern mystics.

+Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 1961). Profound reflections on the Christian life from a modern Catholic mystic.

Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1952). An excellent autobiography from the woman who converted from Communism to Catholicism.

Desmond Tutu, *Crying in the Wilderness: The Struggle for Justice in South Africa* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982). A moving account of Tutu's grueling ministry in South Africa.

+Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*.

Missionary Biographies

Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 1983). An accessible biographical history of Christian missions.

Anthony Mottola, trans., *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (New York: Image, 1964). Ignatius' manual to prepare Christians for a life of rigorous discipleship.

Courtney Anderson, *To the Golden Shore: The Life of Adironam Judson* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1956). A biography of the first great American foreign missionary who inspired many to follow in his wake.

Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor, *J. Hudson, Taylor: God's Man in China* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965). A moving biography of this great pioneer and founder of the China Inland Mission.

Norman P. Grubb, *C. T. Studd: Athlete and Pioneer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1933). An unusual biography about an unusual man.

W. P. Livingston, *Mary Slessor of Calabar: Pioneer Missionary* (New York: George H. Doran Company, n.d.). A fascinating account of this courageous woman.

Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life & Mission of William Carey* (New Hope, 1991). A recent biography of this intrepid missionary to India.

Elisabeth Elliot, *Shadow of the Almighty: The Life & Testament of Jim Elliot* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1958). A biography of Elisabeth Elliot's husband, Jim, who was martyred in South America in 1956.

Hymns

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

Of the Father's Love Begotten (Prudentius)
O Splendor of God's Glory Bright (Ambrose)
Lord Jesus, Think on Me (Synesius of Cyrene)
Father, We Praise Thee (Gregory the Great)
Christ is Made the Sure Foundation (7th century Latin)
All Glory, Laud, and Honor (Theodulph of Orleans)
Be Thou My Vision (Ancient Irish)
O Sacred Head Now Wounded (Bernard of Clairvaux)
Come, O Come Emmanuel (12th century)
All Creatures of Our God and King (Francis of Assisi)
A Mighty Fortress is Our God (Martin Luther)
Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty (Joachim Neander)
Amazing Grace (John Newton)
Joy to the World (Isaac Watts)
Jesus, Love of My Soul (Charles Wesley)
Come Thou Font (Robert Robinson)
Holy, Holy, Holy (Reginald Heber)
Great is Thy Faithfulness (Thomas Obediah Chisholm)
Bless Assurance (Fanny Crosby)
For the Beauty of the Earth
Take My Life and Let It Be (Frances Ridley Havergal)

Prayers

God, the origin of creation, open our eyes to know you and place our hope in you, the highest and the holiest. You put down the insolence of the proud, and scatter the plotting of the nations; you lift up the humble and lay low the mighty; you make some rich and make others poor, kill some and bring others to life; the God of the spiritual and the material worlds; you see everything that happens; you are the helper of those who are in trouble and the Savior of those in despair; creator and overseer of every spirit; you cause nations to grow, and you have chosen from all the world those who love you through Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, through whom you taught us, made us holy and honored us. Lord and Master, help us and rescue all those who are in trouble; have mercy on the lowly; lift up those who have fallen; reveal yourself to the needy; heal the ungodly; convert those of your people who have gone astray; feed the hungry; release those of our number who are in prison; give power to the weak; encourage the faint-hearted. Let all the

nations know that you are God alone, and Jesus Christ is your Son, and we are your people and the sheep of your pasture. (Clement of Rome)

Be kind, dear Teacher, to us your children. You are our Father, Defender of Israel; God the Son and God the Father, united as one Lord. Grant to us who obey your commands that we may become more perfectly like you, and know you to the utmost of our ability as a good God and a tolerant judge. Keep us all in your peace, citizens of heaven, having sailed calmly over the stormy waters of sin, wafted smoothly along by the wind of your Holy Spirit, your Wisdom beyond words. Night and day, until the last day; may we praise you with thanksgiving to the only Father and the Son, Son and Father; the Son, our Teacher, together with the Holy Spirit. You are the one, in whom and for whom all things exist in unity, who has given us a share in eternal glory. All things exist for the one God, who is all goodness, all loveliness, all wise and all just. To God be glory, now and for ever and ever. Amen. (From *The Tutor*, Clement of Alexandria, 150-215)

O Lord God almighty, the Father of your beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have our knowledge of you, the God of the angels and all the heavenly powers and of all creation and of all those righteous people who live in your presence; I bless you for giving me this day and this hour, so that I might inherit a place among the martyrs who have shared Christ's cup of suffering to bring them resurrection to imperishable and eternal life of soul and body in the Holy Spirit. Receive me into your presence today, as a valuable and acceptable sacrifice, as you have already told me I would be, dependable and true God. For this and everything I praise you, I thank you, I glorify you, through the eternal and heavenly high-priest Jesus Christ, your beloved Son. Through him and with him and the Holy Spirit be glory both now and ever and for the ages to come. Amen. (Polycarp at the stake)

Let us pray to the Lord without duplicity, in tune with one another, entreating him with sighs and tears, as befits people in our position—placed as we are between the many, lamenting that they have fallen away, and the faithful remnant that fears it may do the same itself; between the weak, laid low in large numbers, and the few still standing firm. Let us pray that peace may very soon be restored to us, help reach

us in our dangers, to draw us from our dark retreats, and God's gracious promises to his servants find fulfillment. May we see the Church restored and our salvation secured; after the rain, fair weather; after the darkness, light; after these storms and tempests, a gentle calm. Let us ask him to help us, because he loves us as a Father loves his children, and to give us the tokens of his divine power that are usual with him. So will our persecutors be stopped from blaspheming, those who have fallen away repent to some purpose, and the firm, unwavering faith of the steadfast be crowned with glory. (Cyprian, d. 258)

Late have I love you, O Beauty so ancient and so new; late have I loved you; for you were within me, and I was outside; I sought you outside and my ugliness fell on those lovely things that you had made. You were with me, and I was not with you. I was kept from you by those things, yet had they not been in you, they would not have been at all. You called and cried to me to unstop my deaf ears: you sent forth the beams of your love to shine on me and heal my blindness: you wafted perfumes on me; I breathed them in and now I long for you: I tasted you, and now I hunger and thirst for you: you touched me, and now I burn for your peace. (Augustine of Hippo)

O God, from whom to be turned is to fall, to whom to be turned is to rise, and in whom to stand is to abide for ever: grant us in all our duties your help, in all our perplexities your guidance, in all our dangers your protection, and in all our sorrows your peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Augustine of Hippo, 356-430)

O Lord, you have freed us from the fear of death. You have made the end of our life here into the beginning of true life for us. You give rest to our bodies for a time in sleep, and then you awaken them again with the sound of the last trumpet. Our earthly body, formed by your hands, you consign in trust to the earth, and then once more you reclaim it, transfiguring with immortality and grace whatever in us is mortal or deformed. You have opened for us the way to resurrection, and given to those that fear you the sign of the holy cross as their emblem, to destroy the enemy and to save our life. Eternal God, on you have I depended from my mother's womb, you have I loved with all the strength of my soul, to you have I dedicated my flesh and my soul from my youth until now. Set by my side an angel of light, to guide me to the place of repose, where are the waters of rest, among the holy Fathers. You have broken

the fiery sword and restored to Paradise the thief who was crucified with you and implored your mercy: remember me also in your kingdom, for I too have been crucified with you. . . . Forgive me and accept my soul into your hands, spotless and undefiled, as incense in your sight.
(Macrina the Younger: 327-379)

Dear God, here on earth you are constantly seeking to change us. At times we wish to flee into the wilderness to avoid you. But let us learn to love the lasting things of heaven, rather than the dying things of earth. We must accept that time always brings; and we pray that by heavenly kingdom, where all time will cease. (Alcuin of York, 735-804)

Christ on the cross cries:
My people, what wrong have I done to you?
What good have I not done for you?
Listen to me. Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?
Look and see if there is any sorrow like to my sorrow.
We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Soul of Christ, be my sanctification;
Body of Christ be my salvation;
Blood of Christ fill my veins;
Water from Christ's side, wash out my stains;
Passion of Christ, my comfort be;
O good Jesus, listen to me;
In your wounds I fain would hide,
Ne'er to be parted from your side;
Guard me should the foe assail me;
Call me when my life shall fail me;
Bid me come to you above,
With your saints to sing my love
(The Anima Christi)

O God, be all my love, all my hope, all my striving; let my thoughts and words flow from you, my daily life be in you, and every breath I take be for you. Amen. (John Cassian, 360-435)

Gracious and holy Father, give us wisdom to perceive you, intelligence to understand you, diligence to seek you, patience to wait for you, eyes to behold you, a heart to meditate on you, and a life to proclaim you; through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Benedict of Nursia, 480-540)

Lo, fainter now lie spread the shades of night,
and upward spread the trembling gleams of morn;
Suppliant we bend before the Lord of light,
And pray at early dawn,
That this sweet charity may all our sin
Forgive, and make our miseries to cease;
May grant us health, grant us the gift divine
Of everlasting peace.
Father supreme, this grace on us confer;
And thou, O Son by an eternal birth!
With thee, coequal Spirit, comforter!
Whose glory fills the earth.

(Gregory the Great (540-604)

Jesus, how sweet is the very thought of you! You fill my heart with joy. The sweetness of your love surpasses the sweetness of honey. Nothing sweeter than you can be described; no words can express the joy of your love. Only those who have tasted your love for themselves can comprehend it. In your love you listen to all my prayers, even when my wishes are childish, my words confused, and my thoughts foolish. And you answer my prayers, not according to my own misdirected desires, which would bring only bitter misery; but according to my real needs, which brings me sweet joy. Thanks you, Jesus, for giving yourself to me.

You taught us, Lord, that the greatest love a man can show is to lay down his life for his friends. But your love was greater still, because you laid down your life for your enemies. It was while we were still enemies that you reconciled us to yourself by your death. What other love has ever been, or could ever be, like yours? You suffered unjustly for the sake of the unjust. You died at the hands of sinners for the sake of the sinful. You became a slave to tyrants, to set the oppressed free.

(Bernard of Clairvaux, 1090-1153)

Lord, I sometimes wander away from you. But this is not because I am deliberately turning my back on you. It is because of the inconstancy of my mind. I weaken in my intention to give my whole soul to you. I fall back into thinking of myself as my own master. But when I wander from you, my life becomes a burden, and within me I find nothing but darkness and wretchedness, fear and anxiety. So I come back to you, and confess that I have sinned against you. And I know you will forgive me.

O Good Shepherd Jesus, good, gentle, tender Shepherd, behold a shepherd, poor and pitiful, a shepherd of your sheep indeed, but weak and clumsy and of little use, cries out to you. To you, I say, Good Shepherd, this shepherd, who is not good, makes his prayer. He cries to you, troubled on his own account, and troubled for your sheep. My God, you know what a fool I am, my weakness is not hidden from your sight. Therefore, sweet Lord, I ask you not for gold, I ask you not for silver, nor for jewels, but only that you would give me wisdom, that I may know to rule your people well. (Aelred of Rievaulx, 1109-1167)

Almighty and tender Lord Jesus Christ, just as I have asked you to love my friends so I ask the same for my enemies. You alone, Lord, are mighty. You alone are merciful. Whatever you make me desire for my enemies, give it to them. And give the same back to me. If I ever ask for them anything which is outside your perfect rule of love, whether through weakness, ignorance or malice, good Lord, do not give it to them and do not give it back to me. You who are the true light, lighten their darkness. You who are the whole truth, correct their errors. You who are the incarnate word, give life to their souls. Tender Lord Jesus, let me not be a stumbling block to them nor a rock of offense. My sin is sufficient to me, without harming others. I, a slave to sin, beg your mercy on my fellow slaves. Let them be reconciled with you, and through you reconciled to me.

(Anselm of Canterbury, 1033-1109)

Jesus Christ, the love that gives love, You are higher than the highest star;
You are deeper than the deepest sea; You cherish us as your own family;
You embrace us as your own spouse; You rule over us as your own subjects;

You welcome us as your dearest friend. Let all the world worship you.

Holy Spirit, the life that gives life. You are the cause of all movement;

You are the breath of all creatures; You are the salve that purifies our souls;

You are the ointment that heals our wounds, the fire that warms our hearts;

You are the light that guides our feet. Let all the world praise you.

O eternal God, Turn us into the arms and hands, the legs and feet
Of your beloved Son, Jesus. You gave birth to him in heaven
Before the creation of the earth, to become his living body.

Make us worthy to be his limbs, And so worthy to share In his
eternal bliss.

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)

We adore you, most holy Lord Jesus Christ, here, and in all your
churches throughout all the world; and we bless you, because, by your
holy cross, you have redeemed the world. Amen.

God Almighty, eternal, righteous, and merciful, give to us poor sinners to
do for your sake all that we know of your will, and to will always what
pleases you, so that inwardly purified, enlightened, and kindled by the
fire of the Holy Spirit, we may follow in the footprints of your
well-beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. St. Francis
(1181-1226)

I pray you, O most gentle Jesus, having redeemed me by baptism
from original sin, so now by your precious blood, which is offered and
received throughout the world, deliver me from all evils, past, present
and to come. By your most cruel death give me a lively faith, a firm hope
and perfect charity, so that I may love you with all my heart and all my
soul and all my strength. Make me firm and steadfast in good works and
grant me perseverance in your service so that I may be able to please
you always.

St. Clare (1194-1253)

O my God, everlasting love, my final good, my happiness unending,
I love to receive you with as strong a desire and as worthy a reverence as
any of the saints ever had or could have felt, and though I am not worthy

to have all these sentiments of devotion, still I offer you the full affection of my heart as if I alone had all those most pleasing and ardent desires.

Most gracious God, preserve us from the cares of this life, lest we should be too much entangled therein; also from the many necessities of the body, lest we should be ensnared by pleasure; and from whatever is an obstacle to the soul, lest, being broken with troubles, we should be overthrown. Give us strength to resist, patience to endure, and constancy to persevere; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen. Thomas a Kempis (1380-1471)

Behold, Lord, an empty vessel that needs to be filled. My lord, fill it. I am weak in the faith; strengthen me. I am cold in love; warm me and make me fervent that my love may go out to my neighbor. I do not have a strong and firm faith; at times I doubt and am unable to trust you altogether. O Lord, help me. Strengthen my faith and trust in you. In you I have sealed the treasures of all I have. I am poor; you are rich and came to be merciful to the poor. I am a sinner; you are upright. With me there is an abundance of sin; in you is the fullness of righteousness. Therefore, I will remain with you, of whom I can receive, but to whom I may not give. Amen.

(Martin Luther)

O my God, stand by me against all the world's wisdom and reason. Oh, do it! You must do it! You alone must do it! Not mine, but yours, is the cause. For myself, I have nothing to do with these great and earthly lords. I would prefer to have peaceful days, and to be out of this turmoil. But this cause is yours, O Lord; it is righteous and eternal. Stand by me, true and eternal God! I trust in no mortal being. God, O God! Do you not hear me, O my God? Are you dead? No. You cannot die; you are only hiding yourself. Have you chosen me for this work? I ask you how I may be sure whether it is your will; for I would never have thought, in all my life, of undertaking anything against such great lords. Stand by me, O God, in the name of your dear Son, Jesus Christ. Christ shall be my Defence and Shelter, my Mighty Fortress, through the might and strength of your Holy Spirit. God help me. Amen.

(Martin Luther)

My God, Father and Savior, since you have commanded us to work in order to meet our needs, sanctify our labor that it may bring

nourishment to our souls as well as to our bodies. Make us constantly aware that our efforts are worthless unless guided by your light and strengthened by your hand. Make us faithful to the particular tasks for which you have bestowed upon us the necessary gifts, taking from us any envy or jealousy at the vocations of others. Give us a good heart to supply the needs of the poor, saving from any desire to exalt ourselves over those who receive our bounty. And if you call us into greater poverty than we humanly desire, save us from any spirit of defiance or resentment but rather let us graciously and humbly receive the bounty of others. Above all may every temporal grace be matched by spiritual grace that in both body and soul we may live to your glory. Amen.

(John Calvin)

Almighty and most merciful Father; We have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults. Restore thou them that are penitent; According to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake; That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, To the glory of thy holy name. Amen.

(Book of Common Prayer)

Wilt Thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which is my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt Thou forgive that sin through which I run,
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done,
For I have more.
Wilt Thou forgive that sin which I have won
Others to sin? And made my sin their door?
Wilt Thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallowed in, a score?
When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done,
For I have more.
I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun

My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
Swear by Thyself, that at my death Thy Son
Shall shine as He shines now and heretofore;
And, having done that, Thou hast done,
I fear no more.
(John Donne)

Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend.
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
I, like an usurp'd town, to another due
Labour to admit you, but O, to no end!
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captiv'd and proved weak or untrue.
Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,
But am betrothed unto your enemy;
Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.
(John Donne)

How is it, my God, that you have given me this hectic busy life when I have so little time to enjoy your presence. Throughout the day people are waiting to speak with me, and even at meals I have to continue talking to people about their needs and problems. During sleep itself I am still thinking and dreaming about the multitude of concerns that surround me. I do all this not for my own sake, but for yours. To me my present pattern of life is a torment; I only hope that for you it is truly a sacrifice of love. I know that you are constantly beside me, yet I am usually so busy that I ignore you. If you want me to remain so busy, please force me to think about and love you even in the midst of such hectic activity. If you do not want me so busy, please release me from it, showing how others can take over my responsibilities.
(Teresa of Avila)

Lord, I know not what I ought to ask of you; you only know what I need; you love me better than I know how to love myself. Father, give to

me, your child, that which I myself know not how to ask. I dare not ask for crosses or consolations. I simply present myself before you, I open up my heart to you. Behold my needs which I know not myself, and see and do according to your tender mercy. Smite, or heal, depress me, or raise me up; I adore all your purposes without knowing them: I am silent: I offer in sacrifice: I yield myself to you. I would have no other desire than to accomplish your will. Teacher me to pray: pray in me, yourself; for Christ's sake. Amen.

(Francois Fenelon)

Enable me, O God, to collect and compose my thoughts before an immediate approach to you in prayer. May I be careful to have my mind in order when I take upon myself the honor to speak to the Sovereign Lord of the universe, remembering that upon the temper of my soul depends, in very great measure, my success. You are infinitely too great to be trifled with, too wise to be imposed on by a mock devotion, and abhor a sacrifice without a heart. Help me to entertain an habitual sense of your perfections, as an admirable help against cold and formal performances. Save me from engaging in rash and precipitate prayers and from abrupt breaking away to follow business or pleasure as though I had never prayed.

(Susanna Wesley)

God, I give you the praise for days well spent. But I am yet unsatisfied, because I do not enjoy enough of you. I apprehend myself at too great a distance from you. I would have my soul more closely united to you by faith and love. You know Lord that I would love you above all things. You made me, you know my desires, my expectations. My joys are center in your and it is you that I desire. It is your favor, your acceptance, the communications of your grace that I earnestly wish for more than anything in the world. I rejoice in your essential glory and blessedness. I rejoice in my relation to you, that you are my Father, my Lord and my God. I thank you that you have brought me so far. I will beware of despairing of your mercy for the time which is yet to come, and will give you the glory of your free grace.

(Susanna Wesley)

Deliver me, O God, from a slothful mind, from all lukewarmness, and all dejection of spirit. I know these cannot but deaden my love to

thee; mercifully free my heart from them, and give me a lively, zealous, active, cheerful spirit; that I may vigorously perform whatever thou commandest, thankfully suffer whatever thou choosest for me, and be ever ardent to obey in all things thy holy love.

Fix thou our steps, O Lord, that we stagger not at the uneven motions of the world, but steadily go on to our glorious home; neither censuring our journey by the weather we meet with, nor turning out of the way for anything that befalls us. The winds are often rough, and our own weight presses us downwards. Reach forth, O Lord, thy hand, thy saving hand, and speedily deliver us. Teach us, O Lord, to use this transitory life as pilgrims returning to their beloved home; that we may take what our journey requires, and not think of settling in a foreign country.

Jesus, poor, unknown and despised, have mercy on us, and let us not be ashamed to follow you. Jesus, accused, and wrongfully condemned, teach us to bear insults patiently, and let us not seek our own glory. Jesus, crowned with thorns and hailed in derision; buffeted, overwhelmed with injuries, griefs and humiliations; Jesus, hanging on the accursed tree, bowing the head, giving up the ghost, have mercy on us, and confirm our whole lives to your spirit. Amen.

(John Wesley)

From your hand, O Lord, we receive everything. You stretch your powerful hand, and turn worldly wisdom into holy folly. You open your gentle hand, and offer the gift of inward peace. If sometimes it seems that your arm is shortened, then you increase our faith and trust, so that we may reach out to you. And if sometimes it seems that you withdraw your hand from us, then we know that it is only to conceal the eternal blessing which you have promised—that we may yearn even more fervently for that blessing.

Teach us, O God not to torture ourselves, not to make martyrs of ourselves through stifling reflection; but rather teach us to breathe deeply in faith, through Jesus, our Lord.

O Lord Jesus Christ, I love to live in your presence, to see your human form and to watch you walking on earth. I do not want to see you through the darkened glass of tradition, nor through the eyes of today's values and prejudices. I want to see you as you were, as you are, and as you always will be. I want to see you as an offence to human pride,

as a man of humility, walking amongst the lowliest of men, and yet as the savior of the human race.

Lord, give us weak eyes for things which are of no account and clear eyes for all your truth.

God of our heavenly Father, when the thought of you wakes in our hearts let its awakening not be like a startled bird that flies about in fear; let it be like a child waking up from its sleep with a heavenly smile.

(Soren Kierkegaard)

Lord God, who, though unseen by our bodily eyes, art continually about our bed, and about our path, and seest all our ways, in whom we live and move and have our being, who art the Author of all the various comforts, which we here enjoy, and to whom we look for all future benefits, we desire now to bow down before thee. Let thy Holy Spirit, we beseech thee, help our infirmities, that we may worship thee in Spirit and in truth. We approach thee in the name of Jesus Christ, the great Mediator between God and man.

Bless those who labor in thy word and doctrine. May they be the honored instruments of turning from sin to righteousness, that so we may not in this highly-favored land have a name to live while we are dead, and have the form of godliness without the power. We pray to thee for all the dark corners of the earth, for all who are suffering under the evils of slavery, or from injustice or cruelty of any kind . . . Oh, do thou grant that the reign of the Prince of Peace may be more established, that the knowledge of the Lord may cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.

(William Wilberforce)

Lord God, great distress has come upon me;
My cares threaten to crush me, and I do not know what to do.
Give me strength to bear what you send,
and do not let fear rule over me;
Take a father's care of my wife and children.
O merciful God, forgive me all the sins that I have committed
against you and against my fellow men.
I trust in your grace and commit my life wholly into your hands.
Do with me according to your will and as is best for me.
Whether I live or die, I am with you, and you, my God, are with me.
Lord, I wait for your salvation and for your kingdom. Amen.

(Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Who Am I?

Who am I? They often tell me I would step from my cell's
confinement

calmly, cheerfully, firmly, like a squire from his
country-house.

Who am I? They often tell me I would talk to my warders
freely and friendly and clearly, as though it were mine to
command.

Who am I? They also tell me I would bear the days of misfortune
equably, smilingly, proudly, like one accustomed to win.

Am I then really all that which other men tell of?

Or am I only what I know of myself,
restless and longing and sick, like a bird in a cage,
struggling for breath, as though hands were compressing
my throat,
yearning for colors, for flowers, for the voices of birds,
thirsting for words of kindness, for neighborliness,
trembling with anger at despotisms and petty humiliation,
tossing in expectation of great events,
powerlessly trembling for friends at an infinite distance,
weary and empty at praying, at thinking, at making,
faint, and ready to say farewell to it all?

Who am I? This or the other?

Am I one person today, and tomorrow another?

Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others,
and before myself a contemptibly woebegone weakling?

Or is something within me still like a beaten army,
fleeing in disorder from a victory already achieved?

Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.

Whoever I am, thou knowest, O God, I am thine.

(Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

O Lord our God, you know who we are; men with good
consciences and with bad, persons who are content and those who are
discontented, the certain and the uncertain, Christians by conviction and

Christians by convention, those who believe and those who half-believe, those who disbelieve. And you know where we have come from: from the circle of relatives, acquaintances and friends, or from the greatest loneliness; from a life of quiet prosperity, or from manifold confusion and distress; from family relationships that are well ordered or from those disordered, or under stress; from the inner circle of the Christian community or from its outer edge. But now we are stand before you, in all our differences, yet alike in that we are all in the wrong with you and with one another, that we must all one day die, that we would be lost without your grace, but also in that your grace is promised and made available to us all in your dear Son, Jesus Christ. Amen. (Karl Barth)