

WELL-KNOWN CATHOLIC PRAYERS

*For your songs and proverbs and parables,
and for your interpretations, the countries
marveled at you. ~ Sirach 47:17*

SIGN OF THE CROSS

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

OUR FATHER

Our Father, who art in Heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy Kingdom come;
thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread:
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

HAIL MARY

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

CONFITEOR

I confess to almighty God,
and to you, my brothers and sisters,
that I have sinned through my own fault,
They strike their breast:
in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done
and what I have failed to do;
and I ask blessed Mary, ever virgin,
all the angels and saints,
and you, my brothers and sisters,
to pray for me to the Lord our God.



A rosary from Ireland

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, Heavenly King,
Almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sins
of the world, have mercy on us.
You are seated at the right hand of the Father,
receive our prayer.
For You alone are the Holy One, You alone
are the Lord, You alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Fa-
ther. Amen.

DOXOLOGY

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the
Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and
will be forever. Amen.

ACT OF FAITH

O my God, I firmly believe that you are one God in three divine persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; I believe that your divine Son became man and died for our sins, and that he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths that the holy Catholic Church teaches, because you revealed them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. In this faith I intend to live and die.

ACT OF HOPE

O my God, relying on your infinite goodness and promises, I hope to obtain pardon of my sins, the help of your grace, and life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer. In this hope I intend to live and die.

ACT OF LOVE

O my God, I love you above all things, with my whole heart and soul, because you are all-good and worthy of all love. I love my neighbor as myself for the love of you. I forgive all who have injured me, and I ask pardon of all whom I have injured. In this love I intend to live and die.

ACT OF CONTRITION

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you, and I detest all my sins, because of your just punishments, but most of all because they offend you, my God, who are all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of your grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin.

THE DIVINE PRAISES

Blessed be God.
Blessed be his holy name.
Blessed be Jesus Christ,
true God and true man.
Blessed be the name of Jesus.
Blessed be his most sacred heart.
Blessed be his most precious blood.
Blessed be Jesus in the
most holy sacrament of the altar.
Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.
Blessed be the great Mother of God,
Mary most holy.

Blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception.
Blessed be her glorious Assumption.
Blessed be the name of Mary, virgin and mother.
Blessed be St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse.
Blessed be God in his angels and in his saints.
Amen.

PRAYER TO ONE'S GUARDIAN ANGEL

Angel of God, my guardian dear,
To whom God's love commits me here,
Ever this day, be at my side,
To light, to guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

COME, HOLY SPIRIT

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of
your faithful
and enkindle in them the fire of
your love.

Leader: Send forth your Spirit and
they shall be created.

Response: And you shall renew the
face of the earth.

Let us pray.

O God, who by the light of the
Holy Spirit instructs the hearts
of the faithful, grant that in the
same Spirit we may be truly wise,
and ever rejoice in his consolation,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE ANGELUS

The angel of the Lord
declared unto Mary.
And she conceived
by the Holy Spirit.
Hail Mary, full of grace...
Behold the handmaid of the Lord.
Be it done unto me according to thy word.
Hail Mary, full of grace...
And the Word was made flesh.
And dwelt among us.
Hail Mary, full of grace...
Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.
That we may be made worthy
of the promises of Christ.
Let us pray.

Pour forth, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy grace
into our hearts, that we to whom the Incarnation
of Christ, thy Son, was made known by the mes-
sage of an angel, may, by his Passion and cross, be
brought to the glory of his Resurrection, through
the same Christ our Lord. Amen.



DAVID CHARLES PHOTOGRAPHY

**HAIL, HOLY
QUEEN**

Hail, holy Queen,
Mother of mercy!
Our life, our sweetness, and our hope!
To you do we cry,
poor banished children of Eve.
To you do we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.
Turn then, most gracious advocate,
your eyes of mercy toward us;
and after this, our exile,
show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb,
Jesus.
O clement . O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!
Amen.

MEMORARE

Remember, O most gracious
Virgin Mary that never was it
known that anyone who fled
to your protection, implored
your help, or sought your
intercession was left un-
aided.
Inspired by this confi-
dence,
I fly to you O Virgin of vir-
gins, my mother.
To you I come, before you I
stand, sinful and sorrowful.
O mother of the Word Incarnate,
despise not my petitions,
but in your mercy, hear and answer me.
Amen.

**PRAYER TO ST. MICHAEL, THE
ARCHANGEL**

St. Michael, the archangel,
defend us in battle,
be our defense against the wickedness
and the snares of the devil.
May God rebuke him we humbly pray,
and do thou,
O Prince of the Heavenly host,
by the power of God,
cast into Hell Satan and all the evil spirits,
prowling throughout the world,
seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

*“Whoever has God wants for nothing.
God alone is enough.”*

**THE PRAYER OF
ST. FRANCIS OF
ASSISI**

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love,
Where there is injury, pardon,
Where there is doubt, faith,
Where there is despair, hope,
Where there is darkness, light,
Where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And it is in dying that we are born to
eternal life. Amen.

**PRAYER OF ST. TERESA
OF AVILA**

Let nothing trouble you.
Let nothing frighten you.
Everything passes.
God never changes.
Patience obtains all.
Whoever has God wants
for nothing.
God alone is enough.

Amen.

PRAYER BEFORE MEALS

Bless us O Lord,
and these thy gifts,
which we are about to receive
from thy bounty,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

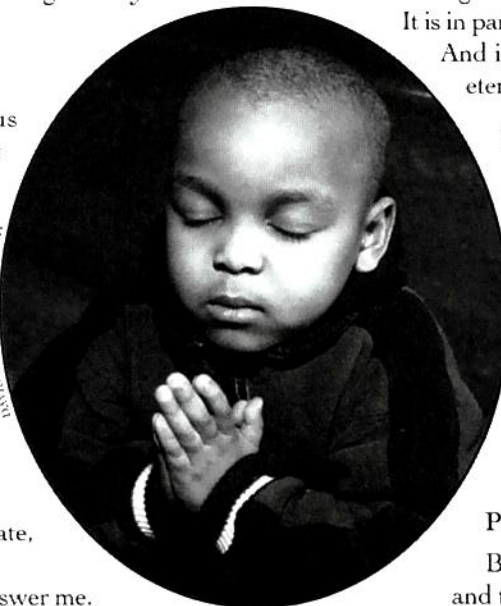
PRAYER AFTER MEALS

We give you thanks for all your benefits,
O almighty God, who lives and reigns forever;
and may the souls of the faithful departed,
through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

PRAYERS BEFORE HOLY COMMUNION

YOUR SACRED TABLE

(by St. Francis de Sales)
Divine Savior, we come to your sacred table to
nourish ourselves, not with bread but with your-



DAVID CHARLES PHOTOGRAPHY

self, true Bread of eternal life. Help us daily to make a good and perfect meal of this divine food. Let us be continually refreshed by the perfume of your kindness and goodness. May the Holy Spirit fill us with his love. Meanwhile, let us prepare a place for this holy food by emptying our hearts. Amen.

NO OTHER TREASURE BESIDES THEE

(by St. Peter Julian Eymard)

I will have no other treasure besides Thee, good Jesus! My heart shall no longer seek its Best-Loved; it has found him. My love shall no more languish far from Thee, now that I know Thy dwelling-place. Oh, draw me now entirely to Thee, Divine Lover, my mind with all its thoughts, my heart with all its desires and affections, my will with all its actions, my body with all its senses, that I may live no longer in myself but in Thee! Amen.

ADORO TE DEVOTE

(by St. Thomas Aquinas)

Godhead here in hiding, whom I do adore
Masked by these bare shadows,
shape and nothing more,
See, Lord, at thy service low lies here a heart
Lost, all lost in wonder at the God Thou art
Seeing, touching, tasting are in Thee deceived;
How says trusty hearing? that shall be believed;
What God's Son has told me, take for truth I do;
Truth himself speaks truly or there's nothing true.
Amen.

OTHER PRAYERS BEFORE COMMUNION

O Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your apostles: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you," regard not my sins but the faith of your Church, and deign to give her peace and unity according to your will: Who live and reign, world without end. Amen.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who, by the will of the Father, with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, have by your death given life to the world, deliver me by this your Most Sacred Body and Blood from all my sins and from every evil. Make me always cling to your commandments, and

never permit me to be separated from you. Who with the same God the Father and the Holy Spirit, live and reign, world without end. Amen.

PRAYERS AFTER HOLY COMMUNION ANIMA CHRISTI (SOUL OF CHRIST)

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.

Body of Christ, save me.

Blood of Christ, inebriate me.

Water from the side of Christ, strengthen me.

O good Jesus, hear me.

Within thy wounds, hide me.

Separated from thee never let me be.

From the malignant enemy, defend me.

At the hour of death, call me,

and bid me to come unto thee.

That I may praise you,

in the company of your saints, for all eternity.
Amen.

OTHER PRAYERS AFTER COMMUNION

May the heart of Jesus, in the Most Blessed Sacrament, be praised, adored, and loved with grateful affection, at every moment, in all the tabernacles of the world, even to the end of time. Amen. What has passed our lips as food, O Lord, may we possess in purity of heart, that what is given to us in time, be our healing for eternity. May your Body, O Lord, which I have eaten, and your Blood which I have drunk, cleave to my very soul, and grant that no trace of sin be found in me, whom these pure and holy mysteries have renewed. Who live and reign, world without end. Amen.

ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION (when the reception of Communion is not possible)

My Jesus, I believe that you are in the Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I long for you in my soul. Since I cannot now receive you in the sacrament, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though you have already come, I embrace you and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me to be separated from you. Amen

(CCC 2676-2677, 2688, 2698, 2701-2704, 2759-2854)

*"What has passed our lips as food, O Lord, may we possess
in purity of heart."*

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm. ~ Song of Songs 8:6

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS IS A CHRISTIAN SIGN; in fact, it is even more correct to say that it is a distinctly Catholic sign (which we share with our separated brethren in the Orthodox churches). Like our love for one another, it could also be said of the Sign of the Cross that "by this all men will know that you are my disciples" (Jn 13:35). By the Sign of the Cross, the world knows that we are Catholic. The Sign of the Cross gives witness to both those who make it and those who see it that faith in Jesus Christ is a force in the world.

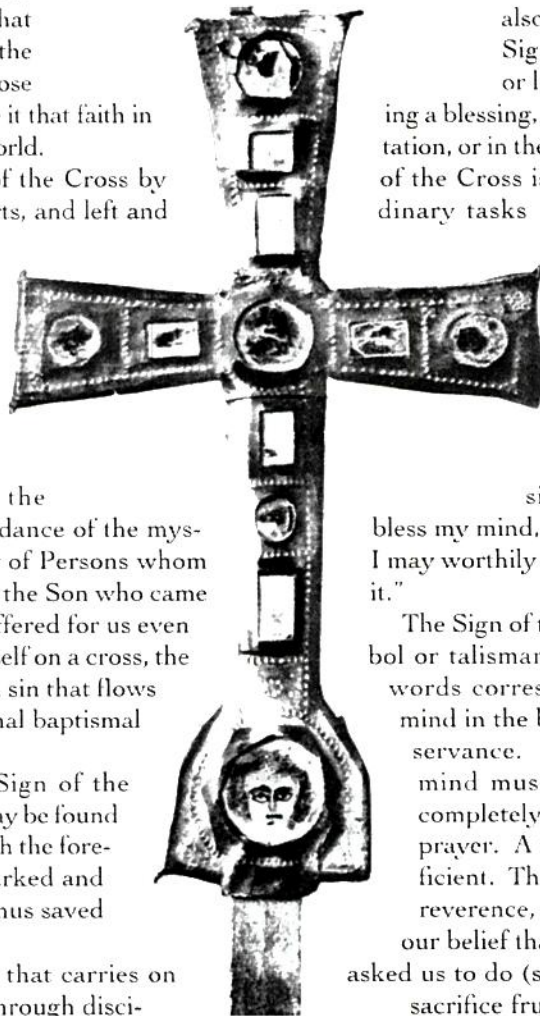
Catholics make the Sign of the Cross by touching their foreheads, hearts, and left and right shoulders with the tips of the fingers while saying, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." When possible, the fingers are dipped in holy water before making the Sign of the Cross.

In making the Sign of the Cross, we proclaim the abundance of the mysteries it signifies: the Trinity of Persons whom we name as the one God, that the Son who came to earth in the Incarnation suffered for us even to the point of sacrificing himself on a cross, the sure hope of redemption from sin that flows from the cross, and our original baptismal promises.

A prefigurement to the Sign of the Cross in the Old Testament may be found in the book of Ezekiel, in which the foreheads of worshipers were marked and each person was sealed and thus saved from death (see Ez 9:4-6).

Christ founded a Church that carries on and promotes his teachings through disciples who reverence his memory and give public evidence of their belief in and love for their crucified Savior. From the earliest

"The Sign of the Cross gives witness to both those who make it and those who see it that faith in Jesus Christ is a force in the world."



Wooden cross set with colored glass, 5th century, Egypt

times of the Catholic Church, the Sign of the Cross has been used in many important ways: at the beginning and end of its prayers, especially the holy sacrifice of the Mass which commemorates what Christ achieved on his holy cross, in administering the sacraments, and in all its blessings. The Sign of the Cross is the customary way to begin any time of prayer. It is also common practice to make the Sign of the Cross when entering or leaving a church, when receiving a blessing, during times of spiritual temptation, or in the presence of danger. The Sign of the Cross is also used to bless many ordinary tasks and make them holy, such as meals, sleep, trips, and meetings. A variation is used just before the Gospel is proclaimed during Mass. Everyone traces small crosses with the right thumb on the brow, the lips, and the heart while silently praying: "Oh Lord, bless my mind, my speech, and my heart that I may worthily hear your Word and proclaim it."

The Sign of the Cross is not a magical symbol or talisman. Unless the action and the words correspond to a devout heart and mind in the believer, they are a useless observance. That does not mean that the mind must necessarily and always be completely attentive to the details of this prayer. A right intention in its use is sufficient. The Sign of the Cross, made with reverence, signifies our belief in God and our belief that, in taking up our cross as he asked us to do (see Lk 9:25), we will make his sacrifice fruitful in our own salvation and enjoyment of eternal happiness with him in Heaven.

(CCC 2157)

THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS

*Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour:
~ Acts 3:1*

IN ORDER TO HAVE ANY KIND OF RELATIONSHIP at all with our Savior, it is necessary to pray. Through the working of grace, we are inspired to turn our hearts to God in prayer, and it is this prayer which will sustain us during our time in this world. Prayer was at the very heart of Jesus' message to humanity. Our Lord encouraged us to ask and seek for all good things in prayer and he promised us that our Heavenly Father would provide for our needs (see Lk 11:5-13). Indeed, Jesus told his followers "that they ought always to pray and not lose heart" (Lk 18:1).

St. Paul gives the whole Church an important mandate. He writes, "Through [Christ] then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God" (I Heb 13:15). In responding to these words, the early Christians developed the custom of praying regularly at

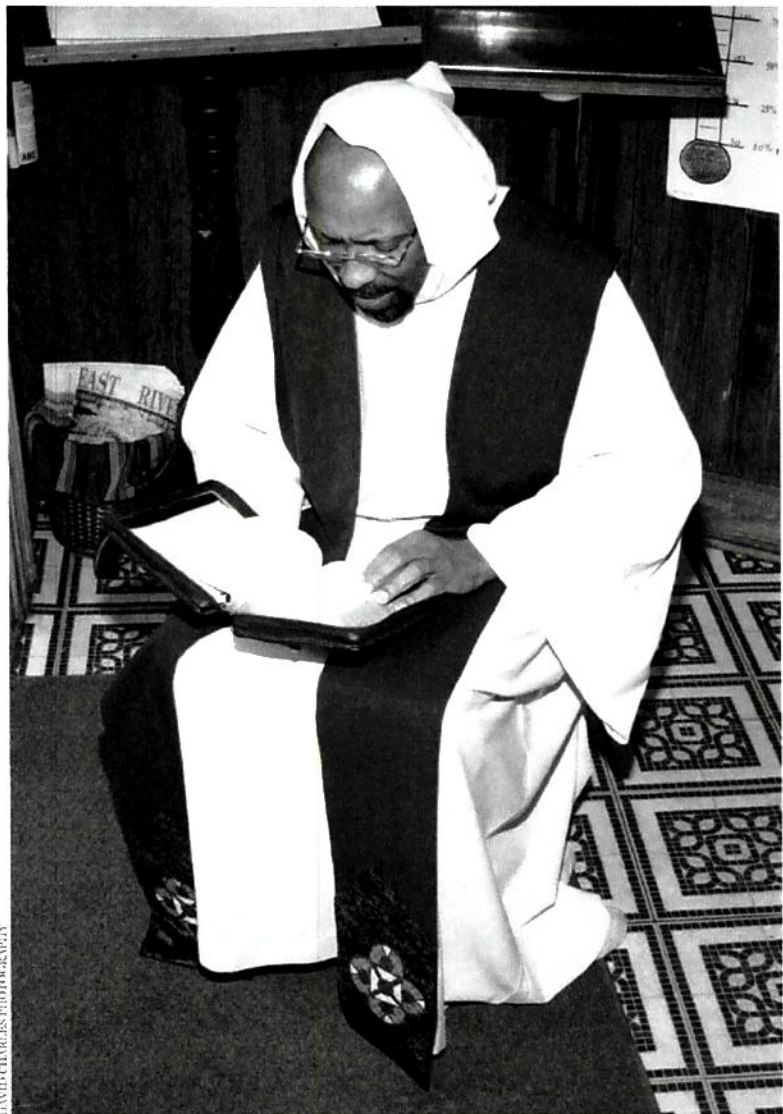
"There is power in the public prayer of the Mystical Body of Christ."

fixed times during the day, so that the Church would be offering an unceasing sacrifice of praise. This practice of constant prayer at certain hours of the day gradually developed into what is now known as the Liturgy of the Hours.

While personal and private prayer is a necessary part of any authentically Christian life, the individual Christian's participation in the public prayer of the community is even more important. Jesus carefully emphasized the importance of praying with others and promised to be present in a particular

way in community prayer. In St. Matthew's Gospel, Christ gave us that wonderful promise: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt 18:20). It is not enough to pray privately — there is power in the *public* prayer of the Mystical Body of Christ.

Why is the public prayer of the Church so power-



DAVID CHAMBERS PHOTOGRAPHY

ful? When we are gathered together in any liturgical action, whether it be at the celebration of Mass, or the Baptism of a child, or at a Liturgy of the Hours service, the people gathered in the church are not the only ones present. In any liturgical prayer of the Church, the whole Mystical Body of Christ is present — the saints in Heaven, the souls in Purgatory, and all the pilgrim faithful still united to the Church on earth. But not only is the Mystical Body of Christ present and prayerfully participating; choirs of angels also surround us in loving adoration of the Trinity. The liturgical prayer of the Church is indeed a celebration of the whole Heavenly Jerusalem. We are not isolated or alone, but united in love in the liturgy. We will only truly begin to understand the power of the liturgy when we are participating in the Heavenly liturgy — an experience that will bring us true joy and fulfillment.

The Liturgy of the Hours (sometimes called the Divine Office) is an integral part of the public prayer of the whole Church. It consists of a four-week cycle of singing Psalms, reading Scripture, and interceding for the needs of the whole Church. The Church gathers at various hours during the day to pray the liturgy. At



A 1910 photograph of a sister of the Dominican Order (Order of Preachers) (OP), founded by St. Dominic in the early 13th century

different times during the history of the Church, the number of times of prayer in a day has varied, but today in general there are five. We pray the *office of readings* in the early morning, *lauds* in the morning, *next* at noontime, *vespers* in the early evening, and *compline* before bedtime. The hinges of the Liturgy of the Hours are lauds, also called morning prayer, and vespers, also called evening prayer. Through the Divine Office, the whole day and night is made holy by lifting our voices to God in praise. Indeed, time itself is made holy, as is the whole of human activity.

The Liturgy of the Hours is the prayer of the whole People of God. While in past centuries the Divine Office was prayed primarily by monks and religious, Vatican Council

II strongly emphasized the fact that the Liturgy of the Hours can be adapted so that all the faithful can participate in it. Because it is the official prayer of the Church, every member of the Church has the right to enter into this profound dialogue between the Church and our Father in Heaven. In fact, we are encouraged to enter into this timeless and beautiful prayer, as it is the liturgical action by which the Church on earth prays for the salvation of the world.

(CCC 1174-1178)

“In any liturgical prayer of the Church, the whole Mystical Body of Christ is present — the saints in Heaven, the souls in Purgatory, and all the pilgrim faithful still united to the Church on earth.”

THE LORD'S PRAYER

He was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray." ~ Luke 11:1

JESUS, THE ETERNAL SON OF THE FATHER and our model of prayer, gave to those who would become the children of God through Baptism a prayer. When the disciples asked Jesus how they should pray, he taught them the prayer we know both as the Lord's Prayer and as the "Our Father" (see Mt 6:9-13; Lk 11:2-4). This prayer, the only one that Jesus taught us, is the fundamental Christian prayer. It summarizes the whole Gospel message, the "Good News."

Throughout his sojourn on earth, Jesus was always in close communion with his Father. He wants us to be just as close to his Father as he himself is. When Jesus gave us the "Our Father," he encouraged us to speak to his Father in the very same way that he himself does.

The "Our Father" establishes us in a familial relationship with the Trinity. Through Jesus' redemptive actions and our Baptism, we become adopted children of God (see Gal 4:5). The Son of God is begotten of the same substance as the Father (see Jn 10:30), but we who are adopted become truly sons and daughters of God and co-heirs with Christ (see Rom 8:15-17). When we pray to the Father, we are praying in communion with Jesus. Jesus also gives us the Holy Spirit so that we can truly call God "Father." St. Paul tells us, *"And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'"* (Gal 4:6).

Because of our adoption by the Father, Jesus is the common brother of us all (see Mt 12:50). Through Baptism we become brothers and sisters, and so we can address the Father as a family, in communion with one another. When we pray the "Our Father," we pray not only for ourselves as individuals but also for all of the family of God. The "our," the "we," and the "us" in this prayer are all-inclusive. The Lord's Prayer thus be-

comes the common prayer of the Church and a prayer for Christian unity.

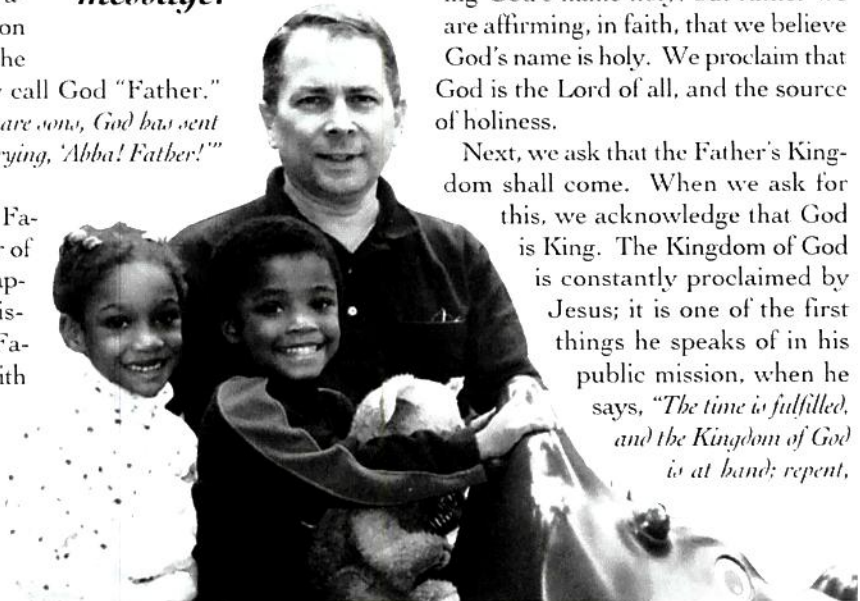
In addressing the Father, we acknowledge his utter transcendence — he is in Heaven, while we live on earth, yearning for our true home with him. By sin we were exiled from the Garden; by Jesus' saving death, we are reconciled with the Father (see Rom 5:10), if we repent of our sins and receive Baptism (see Acts 2:38), love God and one another (see Mk 12:30-31), and believe in Jesus and keep his commandments (see Rv 14:12).

The "Our Father" has seven petitions. The seven petitions, and their order, show us the right order of life and prayer. The first three petitions are centered on the Father himself, without mention of ourselves: God always comes first. The last four petitions are concerned with our needs, which come only after we have praised God for his own sake, and not only for what he can do for us.

We begin our prayer by saying that God's name is holy: we recognize God's holiness. It should be clear that, when we say "hallowed be thy name," it is not we who are making God's name holy, but rather we are affirming, in faith, that we believe God's name is holy. We proclaim that God is the Lord of all, and the source of holiness.

Next, we ask that the Father's Kingdom shall come. When we ask for this, we acknowledge that God is King. The Kingdom of God is constantly proclaimed by Jesus; it is one of the first things he speaks of in his public mission, when he says, *"The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent,*

*"This is the
fundamental
Christian prayer.
It summarizes
the whole Gospel
message."*



Father, daughter and son

and believe in the gospel" (Mk 1:15). Thus, when we ask for his Kingdom to come, we are saying that we are repentant and we believe in the Gospel. The "Kingdom to come" primarily refers to Jesus' Second Coming, when Jesus will come as the just judge. But it is also near to us in the person of Jesus, as St. Paul says, "the Kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17), and in this way it is already present.

Then we ask that God's will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. With this petition, we put God's will over and above our will. We also ask that our will be in conformity with God's, that his will may be done in us. Jesus has revealed to us God's will, and all that God wills is out of pure love. The will of God was perfectly fulfilled by Jesus, his Son. Jesus was obedient to the Father, and so should we be obedient: "Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered" (Heb 5:8). Further, it is through prayer, and through this prayer especially, that we can come to know and accept the will of God. Jesus tells us that we must love one another as he has loved us (see Jn 13:34); this love should prevail on earth as it does in Heaven, for God's will on earth and in Heaven is the same.

If we are children of God, we should have humble and trusting hearts, relying on the Father to take care of his children's needs. The final four petitions of the "Our Father" are concerned with our own needs. We first ask God to give us our daily bread. By making this petition, we acknowledge that God is the one who provides, and that we rely completely on him. This does not excuse us of the responsibility of working for our daily bread, since this is the primary way in which God provides it. "Our daily bread" refers also to the Eucharist, the Bread of Life that God gives us to nourish our spiritual life. In this petition, then, we ask God to sustain us both materially and spiritually.

In the next petition, we ask the Father to forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. When we ask God to forgive us, we are confessing our sinfulness, for we know God is infinitely loving, merciful, and forgiving. But this forgiveness is conditioned on our forgiveness of others. When we forgive those who have trespassed against us, we show the world that love is stronger than sin. This forgiveness must extend to all, even to our enemies: "And whenever you

stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against any one; so that your Father also who is in Heaven may forgive you your trespasses" (Mk 11:25).

In the final two petitions, we ask that we not be led into temptation, and that we be delivered from evil. We ask that we be given the grace not to yield to temptation: "O Lord, Father and Ruler of my life, do not abandon me to their counsel, and let me not fall because of them!" (Sir 25:1). With these requests we show a desire not to sin, and thus to be more like God. The "evil" referred to is not illness, suffering, and death, but the Evil One, Satan, and all his works. We follow Christ's desire by asking the Father to free us from that most vile and vicious creature, Satan. God knows how cunning and seductive this once-glorious angel can be (see Jn 8:44). We live in a world that Satan has usurped as his realm, and it is in this world that we must live while seeking our salvation. Jesus defeated Satan by his death and Resurrection, and we ask that we might be delivered from his malicious attacks. In asking God to "deliver us from evil" we are begging him to save us from the greatest of evil, which is sin.

"When we forgive those who have trespassed against us, we show the world that love is stronger than sin."

Although not found in the Gospel, in many cases the Lord's Prayer is concluded with a "doxology" (a short prayer of praise) that dates to the

very earliest Christian literature. This doxology varies slightly depending on which Christian communion prays it, and it is found in the Mass following a brief prayer. It has the effect of returning to the first three petitions by acknowledging that the Kingdom, power, and glory are God's alone.

At the end of the "Our Father" we say "Amen!" When we say this we are saying "so be it." We acknowledge that we want all that we have asked for to come to be, and we thus reaffirm what we have prayed, and that we have made the Lord's Prayer our own.

In the earliest Christian times, Christian communities prayed the "Our Father" three times daily. This is still done by those who attend daily Mass and pray the Liturgy of the Hours, and can be done by anyone. Adults approaching Baptism are introduced to the Lord's Prayer as newborns into the family of God. Jesus knew the value of his Father's constant companionship during his lifetime on earth. In giving us this prayer, Jesus gave us the means of establishing and maintaining the closest familial relationship with his Father, identified for us by Jesus as not only his Father but our own as well.

(CCC 2664, 2759-2772, 2777-2796, 2803-2856)

NOVENAS

*All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer,
together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus,
and with his brothers. ~ Acts 1:14*



NOVENA IS A PRAYER that is said for a particular intention for nine consecutive days or once a week for nine consecutive weeks. The tradition of novenas finds its source at the beginning of the Church when the Lord commanded the apostles to return to Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit. From the day of his Ascension until Pentecost,

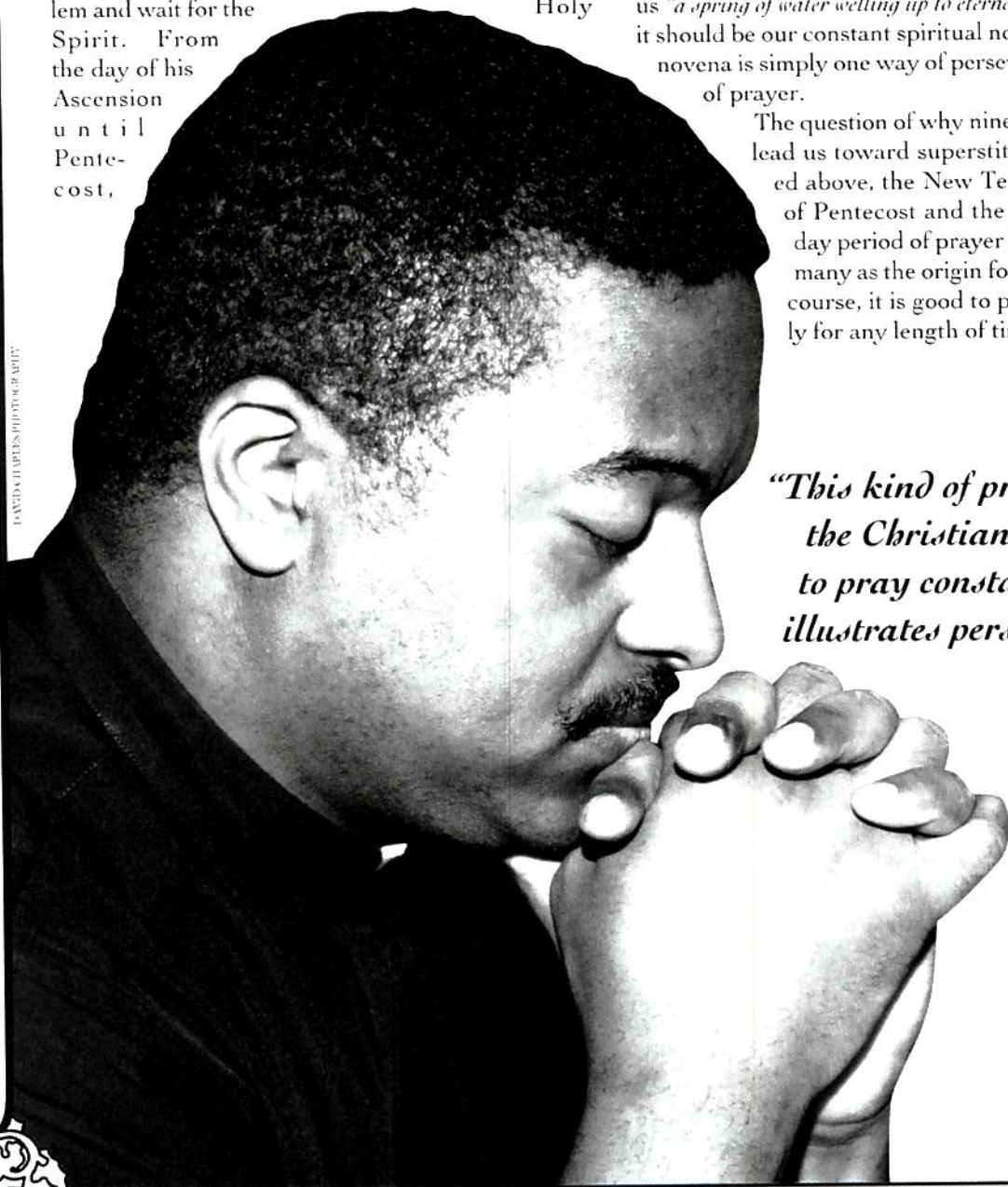
Mary and the apostles, and other disciples waited in prayer for nine days until the Holy Spirit fell on them.

The practice of praying novenas is a way of fulfilling the apostles command to “pray constantly” (1 Thes 5:17). The habit of prayer should become in us “a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (Jn 4:14); it should be our constant spiritual nourishment. The novena is simply one way of persevering in this life of prayer.

The question of why nine days should not lead us toward superstition. As indicated above, the New Testament account of Pentecost and the preceding nine-day period of prayer has been seen by many as the origin for the novena. Of course, it is good to pray consecutively for any length of time. It shows the

*“This kind of prayer shows
the Christian’s resolve
to pray constantly and
illustrates perseverance.”*

DAVID CHARLES PHOTOGRAPHY



“Many Catholics make a novena annually before the feast day of their patron saint or of another they find inspiring.”

Christian’s resolve to pray constantly and illustrates perseverance of the kind typified in the Gospel parable of the man asking his neighbor for bread: *“I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him whatever he needs.... For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened”* (Lk 11:8-10).

There is no magic attached to the number nine. In fact, many can attest to receiving the answer to their prayer before the nine days are finished. If this happens, it is good to finish the novena as a way of giving thanks to God.

Many devotional booklets have been printed containing traditional novenas; some examples include the Novena to the Holy Spirit prayed before Pentecost, the Christmas Novena, the Novena to St. Joseph and the Novena to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Also, many Catholics make a novena annually before the feast day of their patron saint or of another they find inspiring. These booklets are meant to aid in the practice of novenas; however, some Christians are more inclined to pray spontaneously and make up their own prayer which they repeat for the novena. This practice is also encouraged.

(CCC 1674-1676)



Icon of Mary and Jesus, c. early 14th century

DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

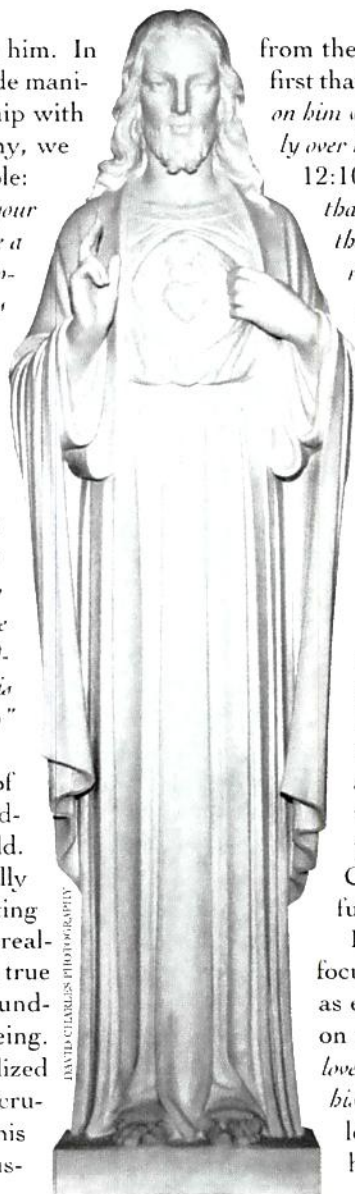
But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. ~ John 19:34

GOD HAS ALWAYS LOVED mankind with a deep and abiding love. In the beginning, when Adam and Eve rejected God and doomed the human race to sin and death, we were not abandoned. God continued to call us back into a relationship with him. In the Old Testament, God's love was made manifest in his unique, covenant relationship with the People of Israel. In Deuteronomy, we read of God's love for his Chosen People:

"For you are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord has set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples; but it is because the Lord loves you, and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations" (Dt 7:6-9).

The greatest act of love on the part of God the Father for humanity is the sending of his Son Jesus Christ into the world. He assumed human nature and physically entered human history. In contemplating the life of Christ, we cannot help but realize how much we are loved. Indeed, as true God and true man, Jesus has a profoundly personal interest in every human being. His love for each of us is ultimately realized in his Passion and death. After he was crucified and died, a spear was thrust into his side, which pierced his very heart, caus-

"The heart of Jesus symbolizes Christ's love for us in a humanly understandable and appealing way."



ing blood and water to flow forth. It is from this sacred event that the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus springs.

The most significant prophecy concerning the Sacred Heart comes to us

from the prophet Zechariah. He prophesied first that the citizens of Jerusalem would "look on him whom they have pierced" and "weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a first-born" (Zec 12:10). Zechariah then continues, "[o]n that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness" (Zec 13:1). This prophecy was fulfilled as Christ's side was opened, his heart was pierced, and the cleansing waters of forgiveness and blood of redemption poured forth.

The Church renders constant worship to the pierced heart of Jesus, which is an inexhaustible source of God's love and mercy for mankind. The heart of Jesus symbolizes Christ's love for us in a humanly understandable and appealing way. In the biblical sense, the heart represents the whole domain of our spiritual life. There is a connection between the physical heart and our deepest aspirations and affections. The heart of Christ, then, wonderfully signifies the fullness of his boundless love.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus focuses on the love of Christ for humanity, as evidenced in his sufferings and death on the cross. Jesus himself said, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13). Jesus loved each of us so immeasurably that he suffered and died in order to restore

“The Popes have spoken of devotion to the Sacred Heart as the ‘extraordinary remedy for the extraordinary needs of our time.’”

us back to grace and friendship with God. Devotion to the Sacred Heart is a marvelous way that we sinners can respond to the unfathomable love of Christ.

What are the essential elements of the devotion? We must first offer a generous return of love to Jesus by making wholehearted acts of love to him. Second, the world has responded to the love of God with such indifference and cruelty that it is also important to beg pardon for humanity’s rejection of the Lord. By frequent prayer and acts of penance and charity, we can help redress the harm done by the outrages that have been committed by ourselves and all people against divine love.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart has been lovingly offered by Catholics for almost a thousand years. With the help of divine grace, the devotion developed from its foundations in Scripture and Catholic teaching. The devotion is so intimately united with the Catholic faith that popes have referred to it as “the summary of the whole mystery of redemption” and as “the highest expression of the Catholic religion.” The Feast of the Sacred Heart is celebrated on the Friday after the second Sunday after Pentecost.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart has special primacy over all other devotions. The Church has given it her most exalted seal of approval, referring to it as a divine gift to the Church from the Lord himself. In fact, the devotion so perfectly illustrates the truths of the Catholic faith that it must be cherished by all the Catholic faithful. The Church warns the faithful against indifference toward such a “priceless gift.”

The devotion to the Sacred Heart has enriched and strengthened the faith of many Christians over



DAVID CHEUNG'S PHOTOGRAPH

At prayer: a sister of the Missionary Catechists of St. Thérèse of the Infant Jesus (MIST), founded in the Philippines in 1958

the centuries. But it is clear that humanity has forgotten the suffering love of the Savior and is in danger of losing its very soul. With a sense of urgency, the successors of St. Peter, the popes, have spoken of the devotion to the Sacred Heart as the “extraordinary remedy for the extraordinary needs of our time.” We must turn to Christ and consider once more the fountain of mercy and forgiveness that flows from his Sacred Heart. We must realize again how intensely our Savior loves us. Only then will society be transformed into a civilization of love, resting on the solid foundation of the peace and justice of Christ. The Church heralds the Sacred Heart as the source of the fire of divine love which alone can save the human race and secure the victory of charity.

(CCC 478, 2669)

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

Then the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus.

~ Revelation 12:17

DECEMBER 12 is the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Mother of the Americas. The Virgin of Guadalupe has been loved and honored for over four hundred fifty years by countless people throughout the world, particularly by the Mexican faithful. The miraculous events of 1531 culminated in the conversion of an entire culture that had been enslaved to idolatry and massive human sacrifice.

Before the coming of the Spanish conquistador Cortéz, the Aztecs were under the dominion of Montezuma, a harsh tyrant and deeply superstitious king. In addition to exacting enormous taxes from those living in the outlying tribes of his empire, like his predecessors Montezuma demanded a bloody tribute of human victims to be sacrificed to the gods on the steps of the great stone temples. As many as twenty thousand victims would be brutally sacrificed when a new temple was erected.

With the Spanish conquistadors came Spanish missionaries who intended to bring the saving Gospel to the Aztecs. But the roots of the pagan Aztec culture were deep and their task of evangelizing them was difficult. The cruelty and rapacity of some Spaniards, those interested solely in gold and slaves, was not much improvement on the misery inflicted by the Aztecs. The first bishop in the New World, Bishop Juan Zumárraga, begged the intercession of the Virgin Mary. He secretly asked God for Castilian roses, then unknown in Mexico, as a sign that his prayer had been heard.

On December 9, 1531, Juan Diego, a recent Indian convert to the Church, was on his way to the city for Mass. As he climbed the hill called Tepeyac, he heard a gentle voice calling to him. He soon came face to face with a lady of overpowering beauty, who lovingly revealed her identity and gave him an important task:

"Know for sure, my dearest, littlest, and youngest son, that I am the perfect and ever Virgin Holy Mary, Mother of the God of truth through Whom everything lives, the Lord of all things near us, the

"Am I not here, I, who am your mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Do you need anything more?"



Our Lady of Guadalupe, by Timothy Schmalz

Lord of Heaven and earth. I want very much to have a little house built here for me, in which I will show him. I will exalt him and make him manifest. I will give him to the people in all my personal love, in my compassion, in my help, in my protection: because I am truly your merciful Mother, yours and all the people who live united in this land and of all the other people of different ancestries, my lovers, who love me, those who seek me, those who trust in me. Here I will hear their weeping, their complaints and heal all their sorrows, hardships and sufferings."

Mary instructed Juan Diego to tell the bishop her desire to have a church built on Tepeyac. Juan Diego walked the long miles to Mexico City, joyfully reflecting on the words of this Heavenly visitor.

In the presence of the bishop, he described his vision of Mary and delivered her unusual request. He implored the bishop to grant her request, but the bishop expressed his doubt about Juan Diego's vision. Following a second vision, Juan Diego approached the bishop a second time. Again the bishop listened to all that Juan had to say, but he sent him away, telling him to ask the lady for a sign, so that he might believe the story and grant her request. Returning to Tepeyac, Juan related to the lady the response of the bishop and she tenderly smiled and asked that he return the next morning, for a sign would be provided.

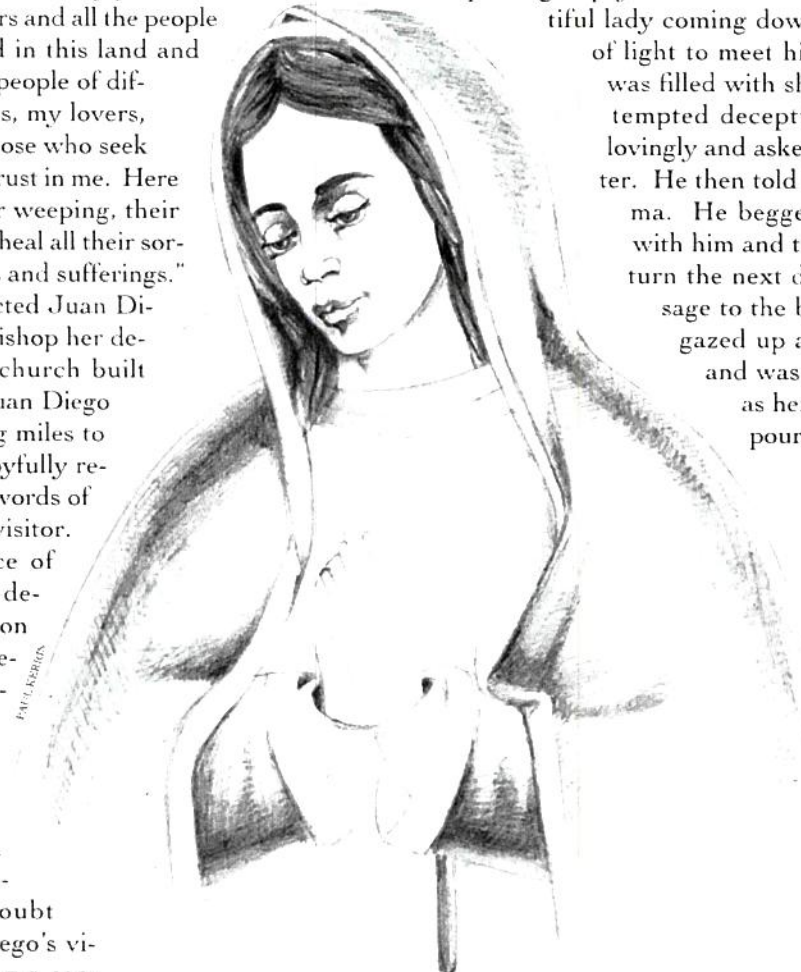
On December 12, Juan awoke to find that his beloved uncle was dying. He needed a priest to give

him the sacraments of the dying. Juan Diego felt that surely the lady would understand if he hurried to the city to bring a priest instead of meeting her as he had promised, so he took a path around the other side of Tepeyac so she wouldn't see him. As he was passing Tepeyac, he was startled to see the beautiful lady coming down the hill in a blaze of light to meet him on the path. He was filled with shame at his small attempted deception, but she smiled lovingly and asked what was the matter. He then told her about his dilemma. He begged her to be patient with him and told her he would return the next day to take her message to the bishop. Juan Diego gazed up at the beautiful lady and was pierced to the heart as her words of sympathy poured down upon him:

Listen, put it into your heart, my youngest and dearest son, that the thing that disturbs you, the thing that afflicts you, is nothing. Do not let your countenance, your heart be disturbed. Do not fear this sickness of your uncle or any other sickness, nor anything that is sharp or hurtful. Am I not

here, I, who am your mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Do you need anything more? Let nothing else worry you, disturb you. Do not let your uncle's illness worry you, because he will not die now. You may be certain that he is already well.

After hearing the lady's words, Juan Diego put his trust in her and realized that he still had a task to complete. She directed him to climb to the top



"Popes have hailed Our Lady of Guadalupe as the Queen and Mother of the Americas."

of Tepeyac hill and gather the roses he found there. Even though it was mid-December, he found beautiful roses blooming on the rocky slopes. He laid them one by one into the fold of his coarsely-woven tunic, known as a tilma, and climbed cautiously down to where the lady awaited him. She carefully arranged them in the tilma and then sent him off to give the bishop his sign.

Once again standing before Bishop Zumárraga, Juan Diego repeated the lady's request that a church be built, then let down his folded tilma. The Castilian roses fell to the floor, the sweet aroma of flowers filled the room, and the bishop fell to his knees. He knew the roses were the special sign that his prayers for the peaceful conversion of the Aztecs had been answered. But, in addition, Juan Diego's tilma had been miraculously transformed. In its very fabric was a perfect image of the lady Juan Diego had seen at Tepeyac, a glorious picture of the Mother of Christ. It was as if the Blessed Virgin were herself within the room. The bishop knew that the Virgin

peyac hill in Mexico City. Millions of pilgrims come to the shrine each year and stand before the sacred image, gazing with loving wonder upon its beauty and holiness. At least twelve popes have expressed love and veneration for the holy image and its tradition, and have hailed Our Lady of Guadalupe as the Queen and Mother of the Americas.

Scientific research has been done on the tilma, and certain details attest to its miraculous nature. For example, within one of Mary's eyes a small inverted image of a bishop kneeling can be seen when examining the image with a microscope. When the image was miraculously imprinted onto the fabric of the tilma, it was as if the image caught sight of what was in front of its eyes, namely the bishop of Mexico kneeling down before Juan Diego. The image in the eyes is upside down because it corresponds to how the human eye functions. (Every image that the eye receives is transmitted into the back of the eye upside down.) In 1531, no one knew this about the eye's physiology or would have been capable of painting it

"Millions of pilgrims come to the shrine each year and stand before the sacred image, gazing with loving wonder upon its beauty and holiness."

Mary had come to Mexico in a uniquely beautiful and personal way to lead the people to her divine Son, Jesus Christ. She had come to the New World to gather her frightened children under the mantle of her love and protection.

As news of this miracle spread, many people flocked to the bishop's residence to gaze in wonder upon the sacred image of Mary that had been imprinted on Juan Diego's tilma. A chapel was immediately built to house this miraculous image until a more beautiful Church could be constructed. Literally millions of Aztecs converted to Christ and were baptized as a result of Mary's apparition and miraculous sign. In less than a decade, virtually the entire Aztec nation of nine million people had been baptized and the practice of human sacrifice had ceased. Never before or since have so many been converted in such a short time.

The miraculous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe can still be seen today. The tilma is encased in glass above the main altar in the basilica located on Te-

microscopically small. In 1945, Pope Pius XII stated that the Virgin of Guadalupe had been painted "by brushes that were not of this world." With a mother's tenderness, Our Lady continues to invite all those who dwell on the American continents to a life of holiness, prayer, and peace by following her divine Son, Jesus Christ.

St. Juan Diego was canonized in July 2002.
(CCC 67)

Note: Our Lady's words were spoken in Juan Diego's native language, Nahuatl, and were written down in that language between 1540 and 1545 by Don Antonio Valeriano, an Aztec nobleman and native speaker of Nahuatl who had become a Christian, a scholar and an administrator. (Juan Diego died in 1548.) The above translation was done by Janet Barber, I.H.M., from a Spanish translation of the Nahuatl original by Fr. Mario Rojas Sánchez. The quotations are taken from the book A Handbook on Guadalupe published by the Academy of the Immaculate, New Bedford, MA: Part Press, Inc., 1997.