

## Praying with the Holy Spirit.

Hello, I'm Jeanne Fehskens. I'm going to start with a disclaimer: I am a follower of Jesus Christ, probably a bad one at that, and I'm here today to merely share my thoughts and ideas about my prayer life and the actions of the Holy Spirit that encourage me to continue to pray.

During this year of the pandemic, have you been asking yourself: "Why is all this happening? why here? why now, why me?" Can you imagine God answering you " Why not this, why not here, why not now, and why not YOU?" If God the father did not spare his own son from struggle and pain, why shouldn't we all be challenged with similar experiences in our own lives? Jesus came into the world at the precise time for God's plan for salvation to be revealed. He placed Mary in the world at the precise time and prepared her in a specific way for her purpose of bringing Jesus into the world. Can you imagine that you too are here for "such a time as this"?....you are here specifically to reveal Jesus's life giving presence in this time and this place. How can this be? Well, THAT was the exact question Mary asked Gabriel when he posed the question of her willingness to birth the savior of the world. I'm sure she thought, "who ME?!" What is the difference between Mary and you and me? Well, a LOT, but also nothing. She was human just like us. She lived an ordinary life just like us. What is the defining thing that empowered Mary's life? I'm sure she prayed – constantly. (pause)

During these days of the pandemic, prayer has been an ever present need and has been sometimes the most difficult thing to do because the needs are so great and the feelings of helplessness in the face of something so completely out of our control are overwhelming. Even though the shut down offered me a lot more time to pray, I have felt stuck like a boat run aground, without the power of wind to push me in any particular direction. I know the "wind" that powers prayer is the Holy Spirit but getting in touch with the Spirit sometimes seems difficult even though it is the key to praying constantly.

How did you learn how to pray? What exactly is prayer? For me, I can only define it by telling you what my experience of attempting to pray has been. My earliest childhood memories growing up in a Byzantine Rite church are of liturgy and high rituals, beautiful paintings on the walls, incense burning and processions that marked my soul with imagery, sensations, sights and sounds that invoke remembrances of holy days and holy gestures that were supposed to communicate a desire to know and see and hear and touch God.

As a child, I felt like I was dragged to all these church things, but they did indeed make an impression on me. I remember the Easter vigil procession around the church and climbing the stairs and the priest knocking on the church door, like we were asking God to allow us entrance into heaven; and then, seeing that same gesture of knocking on the church door at my grand parent's funeral.

In the Byzantine Rite, part of the first communion ritual is to renew your baptismal promises. I don't remember my own first communion, but I do remember witnessing the repetition of these rituals, within that community, year after year...children holding their unlit baptismal candles with their backs turned away from the altar to renounce Satan, sin and darkness. Then turning toward the altar, lighting the candles, they recite their baptismal vows pronouncing the creed and saying "I believe in God".

I remember my childish boredom of praying the rosary, but it did imbed the words into my memory. Mary, the blessed queen mother was supposed to have the ear of Jesus in Heaven in order to whisper the needs of the children of God to Him.

These sacred rituals helped me make a connection to God. With all these memories, I learned that **rituals help me pray.**

As an adult, coming to the crisis of my marriage falling apart, was a turning point in my life. It was a crisis of faith and an opportunity for me to let go of the life I was living and surrender to God's will for my life. I turned to the Blessed Mother. I sat in tears, praying for the intercession of Our Lady of Czestochowa, whose shrine was on a hill behind our house. I asked "how do I go on?" I thought I was asking how do I go on by myself, with my 2yr old and 4 yr old sons. This is probably the first time in my life I ever asked God what His will was for me. I did not audibly hear Mary say, "do whatever Jesus tells you", but at this lowest point in my life, I knew I was ready to do just that. God did not give me a way to move on by myself, but He wanted me to give my marriage another chance. The next weekend I saw a notice about Retrouvaille in the church bulletin. We gave our marriage one last effort by attending that program. It felt as though Jesus had reached out his hand and picked us up, out of the mess we had made of our lives. He had answered my prayer by leading us to Retrouvaille where other hurting couples shared their stories of brokenness in their relationships and by so doing, helped us heal our own marriage. I had to be willing to make my fears and weakness visible. I had to let go of my shame of feeling like a failure in my marriage. I had to learn to ask for forgiveness and I had to forgive my husband too. We both needed to learn that forgiveness, love and trust are not just feelings, but are decisions we choose to make, in order to receive forgiveness, love and trust in return. Out of gratitude for being given a second chance, and given tools and the grace to repair our marriage, we decided to share our story, which led us to get involved in the Retrouvaille ministry. Being involved in that ministry helped us restore our marriage and grow in faith. Our testimony of how God interceded in our lives led some of those who heard our story to believe that God would do the same for them and were able to find healing in their marriages. God answers prayer within community and **participating in a community helps me pray.**

The song "The Rose", made famous by Bette Midler, has become a spiritual theme song for me. That song helps me to see life has both thorns and beauty; life has both crosses and resurrection and each of us has the ability to plant seeds of love even in the darkest times in our lives. By allowing myself to be vulnerable, and letting others see my weakness, Christ is present and He reveals Himself through my sharing of my life story. I learned to ask for God's will in my life. I learned **admitting my brokenness and surrendering to God's will helps me pray.**

When my husband and I went on our Retrouvaille weekend, we received prayer letters from complete strangers who had committed to pray for us while we going through the weekend. It blew me away that a stranger would care enough to pray for us, for an entire weekend, while we struggled to repair our broken relationship. That made a big impact on me. Now, I sometimes I write prayer letters. I sit and I ask God what He wants me to say to the person I am praying for, to plant a seed of Jesus' love in their heart. I hope and trust that the Holy Spirit will give me the right words to touch the heart of the recipient. Sometimes I anoint the letter with holy water or oil. Some people pray novenas, I guess I prefer letters. I learned that *my life, as it says in 2 Corinthians 3:3, can be a letter as if Christ has written it, not with ink but God's living Spirit, not chiseled into stone but carved into human hearts.*" I wrote a lot of letters during the pandemic. I learned **simply writing letters helps me pray.**

When my children were young, I learned a lot about prayer by praying with a group called Moms in Touch; mostly protestant women who really knew how to pour their hearts out to God. We prayed for our children, their schools and teachers. We reflected on the Names of God and how they reveal God's character which helped me better understand Who God is and what I could expect God to do and be in my life. Using a verse or two of scripture we crafted the words into personal prayers by inserting our children's names into the verse and asked God to manifest that scripture promise into that child's life. We added our needs and intensions between the lines. We asked for God's Word to come alive in our children. I learned that **speaking God's word helps me pray.**

Another crisis moment in my life was the day of the Columbine shootings. I was distraught and fearful for my children's future. Near that time, I had begun going to daily mass. The day after Columbine, I went to mass and talked to Fr. Knute. He gave me a rosary. Praying the rosary was still a struggle for me. The Moms in Touch moms decided to walk the halls at the schools at lunch time and silently pray for the safety of our children. I couldn't stop thinking about the moms of the boys that committed those murders. I couldn't help feeling "what if that were me?" Are my children capable of such a thing? Clutching my rosary I muttered the words of memorized prayers and I walked the halls. I attempted to pray the rosary, but mostly I walked, asking God for security and begging for peace. **Memorized prayers enable me to pray** when I cannot find words from my own broken heart. I learned that **simply walking helps me pray.**

At hearing about the mass shooting in the Oregon district in Dayton, I was stunned by my own calm acceptance of the fact, how common place these violent acts have become. I later realized my son and daughter-in-law had been downtown earlier that same day and that the shooter had lived just a few blocks from our former home in Bellbrook. My heart ached for that mother, her two children, one a victim, one the killer. Then, through the pandemic, so much outrage boiling over from injustices that persist in our country; things that are easier to ignore rather than confront, especially when those issues have not impacted me personally. Our county professes equality for all. As a Christian I profess to love my neighbors. But did I really know what my neighbors are going through? Can I begin to empathize with the heavy burdens that so many people are suffering? Do I truly understand the brokenness within our society? Then the events in our nation's capital on Jan. 6! What was I to do? I prayed "there but for the grace of God, go I" ...taking to heart the words of Jesus when he said in *John 16:33* "*In this godless world you will experience difficulties, but take heart, I have conquered the world.*" The best thing I can do is pray and trust that Jesus will, and already has, conquered all that I may worry about. I pray for the armor of God to shield me as I fight the spiritual battles facing the world. By the grace of God, I am here in this time and place, at such a time as this, challenged and charged with carrying on Jesus' mission.

I learned that **my prayers must be trusting and persistent.**

When I couldn't attend daily mass, I read the daily scriptures and tried to figure out what God was saying to me personally each day. Writing in my journal has been the practice that keeps me connected to God, allows me to reflect on what He says to me and helps me remember how he has answered my prayers. I often begin pouring out my thoughts and worries and then I stop and ASK "what do you want me to know today, Lord?" and record how I Imagine God would respond to me. My journal has been a record of God's trustworthiness and reminds me in whom I place my trust. I learned God communicates through His word each day. I learned **Prayer is taking the time to listen and remember what I hear.**

Sometimes just being with someone is a prayer. Like when my mother was dying, just sitting beside her, I prayed a rosary, but mostly I watched her breathing and hoping that I could live up to her simple devotion and prayer life, as she kept repeating “Jesus I trust in you”. I recorded in my journal things she said she was seeing, like visions of my dad and little weird things that happened, as if I was trying to freeze time and not have happen what I knew was immanent. But just sitting there in the quiet of the wee hours of the morning I could feel the closeness of the veil between our world and heaven where the saints and angels were waiting on the threshold for mom to step over. That felt like holiness. I learned that **prayer is stillness and resting in God’s presence.**

On April 15, 2019, Notre Dame Cathedral, in Paris, burned. It was horrific to see the spire fall engulfed in flames. In the aftermath, we saw, amid the charred and gutted interior of the church a simple image of a golden cross. I think our church needs a new “fire” from the Holy Spirit which can only come through the cross. That golden cross reminded me of God’s message to St. Francis when he prayed before the San Damiano cross, “Rebuild my church which has fallen into ruin”. It seemed like a dire plea from God when this fire happened during Holy Week. This beautiful building, its art and relics are some of the church’s “treasures”. But are they the treasures that really matter? What are the stories behind them? What healing from brokenness and restoration do they represent?

A month later, I was on pilgrimage in Italy. The moment of that trip, that was the most moving and meaningful to me, was kneeling and praying in front of the relics of the actual manger. A friend asked me, “How do they know it was the actual manger?” Does it matter? The incarnation of Jesus is what mattered. Hope and salvation came into the world because Jesus was born. The story told through scripture is what carries the story through the ages. It really didn’t matter to me if there was documented or scientific evidence that those boards were actually the ones that held the infant Jesus. It was my belief in His life story. Kneeling there in prayer I was overwhelmed with an all consuming sense of the Presence of the Holy Spirit. Just knowing the story of Jesus’ birth and pondering it on my knees in that church filled me with humility and a desire for a deeper relationship with Jesus and the Blessed Mother. That kind of experience puts “fire” in my heart and fuels my desire to rebuild MY church, the temple of MY heart and to be a part of a community with a fire of the Holy Spirit. Living my life with the aim of continuing Jesus’ story by claiming the anointing of my Baptism by taking on the challenge to build a better world Isaiah predicted by” preaching good news to the poor, healing the broken hearted, proclaiming freedom to those held captive.” *Isaiah 61: Verse 11* says: *As “a garden makes its seeds spring up, so will the Lord God make justice spring up, and praise before all the nations .* **Prayer is planting seeds of hope.**

My prayer life is always changing and growing in response to my commitment to prayer and what’s going on in my life. The more time I spend with God, in prayer, the more intimate my relationship with Him will be. If I remember to ASK for God’s will in my life; if I Trust Him ; and take time to be still and wait for the Holy Spirit to instruct me, then I feel more at peace, I know I am blessed and loved and all is well with my soul. I learned **prayer is a lifetime of experiences shared with God.**

Now that I’ve shared some ideas about prayer, I’d like to tell you about some things I’ve thought about in the past year.

On March 8, the day before Ohio's shut down began, I was reading a book by Sue Monk Kidd called "God's Joyful Surprise". She described her pondering of a bible story told in John chapter 5 about the pool in Jerusalem called Bethesda, where the sick, blind and lame would gather. Verse 4 describes: "For [from time to time] an angel of the Lord used to come down into the pool; and the water was stirred up, so the first one to get in [after the stirring of the water] was healed of whatever disease afflicted him."

Ms. Kidd contemplated the mystery of healing that is needed at certain seasons of life. She writes: "If we are attentive to what's happening in our own soul, we may see the inner pool of Bethesda troubled by wind and angels readying us for something wondrous and healing." She goes on to say "**If we do not ignore our own "troubling" events, but listen to them**, if we step down into our experience like the trusting ones who waded into the pool at Bethesda, who knows what (miraculous things) can happen. **For we do not find wholeness until we are willing to enter the broken, empty places in our lives and confront them honestly**. We do not find God's presence without first wading through His absence. Wholeness comes to those who are willing **to risk entering deep into their own experience**."

Little did I know what troubling events awaited us in 2020. This has been a troubling and challenging year with political and social unrest, the loss of about 450,000 of our fellow citizens to covid, the isolation and economic hardship that many have suffered. There was so much negativity, blaming and anger going around it was emotionally draining and disheartening. I felt myself sinking deeply into a quagmire of muck going on around me. I just felt stuck; unable to pray. The worry and concern and isolation of the shut down took the wind out of the sail of my daily rituals. My morning journaling became a struggle and infrequent. I felt I was losing touch with God's Presence. Reading seemed to be a good substitute for journaling. I did a little research about the pool at Bethesda. I found out that in 1964 an archeological dig uncovered the remains of two ancient structures: one was Hadrian's Temple of Asclepius, a god of medicine in Greek Mythology and a personification of a Divine Healer or miracle working physician. The second structure found was a 5<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine church of the Probatike (translated as pool of the sheep). Both structures were on this site. Discovery of this site makes the story told in John chapter 5 historically plausible. Jesus came to this pool at Bethesda's Sheep's gate, on the Sabbath; the day of rest. He healed a lame man and thereby fulfilling the Sabbath idea of a sacrifice of praise to the Father, as foretold by Isaiah, by bringing glad tidings to the poor, liberty to the captives, sight to the blind and allowing the oppressed go free. Jesus gave the lame man rest from his affliction. Performing this miracle on the Sabbath demonstrated that He was the divine healer!

Let me read you the story from John 5:

"in Jerusalem at the Sheep [Gate] there is a pool called in Hebrew Bethesda, with five porticoes.<sup>b</sup>

3In these lay a large number of ill, blind, lame, and crippled.:

4:

5One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years.

6When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been ill for a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be well?"

7The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; while I am on my way, someone else gets down there before me."

8Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your mat, and walk."<sup>c</sup>

9Immediately the man became well, took up his mat, and walked.<sup>d</sup>

10So the Jews said to the man who was cured, "It is the sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to carry your mat."<sup>e</sup>

11 He answered them, "The man who made me well told me, 'Take up your mat and walk.'"

12 They asked him, "Who is the man who told you, 'Take it up and walk'?"

13 The man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away, since there was a crowd there.

14 After this Jesus found him in the temple area and said to him, "Look, you are well; do not sin any more, so that nothing worse may happen to you."

15 The man went and told the Jews that Jesus was the one who had made him well.

16 Therefore, the Jews began to persecute Jesus because he did this on a sabbath.

17 But Jesus answered them, **"My Father is at work until now, so I am at work."**

18 For this reason the Jews tried all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but he also called God his own father, making himself equal to God.

I find it interesting in this story that the man had been ill for thirty eight years. Maybe having lost all hope for healing, yet still he sat beside the pool. Shouldn't someone have noticed him and assisted him in getting into the water? He must have felt a longing for wholeness. He must have wanted to "enter deep inside himself" to find the place of a spiritual awakening...where the only one who could actually heal him was the divine healer. Jesus did the Father's work even on the Sabbath. Jesus saw the lame man, and reached out to him with the will to heal him. He saw the man's need and healed him even without the man asking for it. Do we consider that Jesus sees us? Do we think we have to ask? Do we think that Jesus knows our longings? Can we, like Jesus, offer assistance in someone's need? In Isaiah 41:13 *"for I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, do not fear, I will help you."*

We all know the story in John chapter 2 about the wedding feast of Cana. Mary noticed when the bridal couple ran out of wine. Mary noticed their need, without them even asking. She boldly brought that need to Jesus but humbly instructed the waiters to "do whatever He tells you". She followed the prompting of the Holy Spirit. This was the very first example of how we, as disciples of Jesus, should act as the church.... to listen to the internal voice of the spirit nudging us to pay attention, to see someone in need and reach out in prayer and offer assistance if we can...to entrust that need to Jesus' will. Mary acted like the church before the church was even formed. Mary personified the Holy Spirit as she prayed.

1 John 5:14-15 *"this is the confidence which we have before Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked of Him."*

This past year, we've been challenged to reach out to others in caring gestures and prayers, to lift one another up and offer hope. Are we placing our faith in religious or political stances or do we place our faith in God himself, who really sees us and has a purpose for each of us? Valuing God's purpose, and valuing the greater good and people and their service to others is what can bring about healing and hope, and help us rise above the brokenness and darkness of our world. We each need to open our eyes and see our neighbors and offer, as Christ did, an outstretched hand to lift each other up. Faced with the seemingly impossible, are we willing to be like Mary and say "yes" to the invitation to birth hope, and to take notice and pray for "new wine" to flow at such a time as this?

If my greatest longing, as a disciple of Jesus, is to live my life “according to His will” I am attempting to meet Jesus’ longing to be the God within me. When I pray a prayer of spiritual communion I meet Jesus at the threshold of His outstretched hand and my willingness to surrender to His Holy Spirit.

This is my prayer of spiritual communion:

My Jesus, I believe that you are in the Blessed Sacrament.

I love you above all things and I long for you and your Holy Spirit to flow within my soul.

Even when I cannot receive you sacramentally, I know you are already with me because you sit on your throne beside the Father and bestow Your Holy Spirit on all those who welcome You.

I desire to receive your Spirit, to be in communion with the Trinity and hold you within my being. Never permit me to be separated from you. With great Thanksgiving, I give you glory, honor and praise for this precious gift. Amen.

We may pray to be in spiritual communion with God, but I suppose that 2020 revealed we may not be. The past year was a holy moment for us to pause and recognize humanity’s vulnerability and invite us to a spiritual awakening that God’s plans, not our plans, will ultimately prevail. This has been a time for letting go of what was, so that we may begin a hope filled future and rejoice in the promise God has made to those who believe Him.

Jeremiah 29:11 says: *“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

God is with us and is continuously revealing Himself all around us and through us.

In his book Open Mind, open Heart Fr. Thomas Keating writes: “By... secret anointing the Spirit heals the wounds of our fragile human nature at a level beyond our...perception, just as a person who is anesthetized has no idea of how an operation is going until after it is over. ....Divine love has the power to grow and to transform us”.

I think that when we receive the “new wine” of Divine love in the Holy Communion, we are inoculated, so to speak, with divine grace to facilitate the process of our inner transformation. Our little mustard seed of faith is nourished each time we timidly say **amen/yes**, and carry that seedling out into the world. We must first bear the hope of God’s love in our soul before we ever have the courage or ability to boldly proclaim praise to God for what mysterious and miraculous things He has done. When The Blessed Mother said **Amen/Yes** to the invitation to carry Jesus into the world, she already was carrying hope for the savior in her soul. She believed she was just being who God created her to be. She had a purpose and was blessed with all the Gifts of the Holy Spirit: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, Fear of the Lord. She was the Wellspring of these gifts for the human race. What gifts of the Spirit blossomed when people were in Mary’s presence ?:

*Understanding* leaped when Elizabeth and John the Baptist recognize Jesus within Mary at the visitation

*Fear of the Lord* shown brightly in the shepherds’ at the manger

*Knowledge and piety* produced prophecy when Simeon and Anna saw Mary presenting Jesus in the temple

All the gifts of the Holy Spirit newly infused and overflowed in everyone in the upper room when they were praying with Mary at Pentecost.

Even now, Mary prays for us to be who we are created to be: a vessel infused with the Holy Spirit at such a time as this.

Keating also said: having “insight into Christ dwelling in every other person enables (us) to express charity toward others with greater spontaneity. Instead of seeing only someone’s personality, race, nationality, gender, status, or characteristics which we like or do not like, (we) see what is deepest- (a person’s) ...potential union with Christ...and awakens a great sense of compassion...and relationships...that are based on Christ as their center.”

Each one of us, by nature of our baptism, are named and given a purpose. As Christ was anointed priest, prophet and servant leader, so too are we called upon to draw others toward Christ by how we live, helping them recognize the action of the Holy Spirit in their own lives.

Maybe the whole point of the pandemic and the social unrest of the past year was for us to slow down and notice the abundant grace in everything and every moment, to encourage us to see Christ in all our fellow citizens to grow compassion within us for those who are most in need of mercy and justice?

Richard Rohr wrote: “Once we know that the entire physical world around us, all creation is both the hiding place and the revelation place of God, this world becomes home, safe, enchanted, offering grace to any who look deeply... that kind of deep and calm seeing is contemplation”

I imagine that the Blessed Mother had that kind of trusting vision, a deep and calm seeing into every situation. I imagine she could see God hiding in and revealing Himself in everything around her. Isn’t contemplation like pondering? It is said of Mary that she pondered events of her life, especially those that must have been troubling and difficult to understand, with belief in the promises made by God through scripture. It was precisely this unfailing faith and unending grace bestowed on her from her conception that gave her the power to live the life she did. I suppose she watched in wonder and treasured the mystery of God’s action in her life and how salvation was unfolding. Do you ponder the mystery of how God is unfolding your own salvation when you pray the rosary? I wonder if Mary felt the Holy Spirit within her from her birth, throughout her childhood, or if she was struck with that fire within, at the moment of the annunciation. We are taught that she was the Immaculate Conception, born without original sin in preparation for her mission as a worthy vessel to carry Christ into the world. Therefore I think she must have felt the Holy Spirit within her, throughout her life, enabling her to accept the angel’s message and proclaim a prayer of thanks and praise from the depths of her soul in her response in the magnificat:

(BE Mary’s Voice)

Luke 1:

*“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;<sup>w</sup>*

*47my spirit rejoices in God my savior.<sup>z</sup>*

During my pilgrimage in Italy, I celebrated Ash Wednesday in St. Peter’s square, with an audience with Pope Francis and tens of thousands of other people from all over the world. In stark contrast, a year later on March 27, 2020, I watched a live stream of Pope Francis walking through a rainy, eerily empty St. Peter’s square where He prayed before the “Salus Populi Romani”, an icon of the Blessed Mother, which normally resides in the Basilica of Mary Major. The very place I had that profound experience of the Holy Spirit’s presence just a year before.

Have you ever had an experience of feeling the presence of the Holy Spirit or being overshadowed of the Holy Spirit? I have been told that I have the gift of tears....a gift of the Holy Spirit. That idea seemed an odd

thing to me at first, but I have found that at times when things have happened in my life where I have been overwhelmed with a flood of tears for no other reason than some amazing coincidence or something happens that can only be explained as God interceding or some scripture is read that fills me with an internal truth, tears flow from the depth of my soul....i can only explain the flood of emotion as the Holy Spirit's presence.

When I was on that pilgrimage in Italy, in the Basilica of Mary Major, I had an overwhelming feeling of my own mother's spirit being with me while I was seated in front of an icon of the Blessed Mother during mass. Then as we toured the church, and I knelt praying before the relics of the actual manger, I was overwhelmed with the idea of the supreme humility that the Blessed Mother had to give birth in such poverty stricken surroundings and place her child in that manger. I just sobbed with tears of my sin of pride. I went to confession to ask forgiveness and have been constantly reminded I need to ask for the grace of humility. It occurred to me that when we pray "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee...." we are acknowledging God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit are always present with the Blessed Mother and thus we are asking God to walk along side us too. If we ask the Blessed Mother to pray for us, she entrusts that prayer to Jesus, to be delivered to the Father, and that the Holy Spirit will be dispensed to meet the prayer need.

One of my favorite prayers is the memorea because of the line that says Mary's intercession is never left unaided! Whenever I want to surrender a prayer request to God, I first give it to Mary in the Memorea.

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,  
never was it known

that anyone who fled to thy protection,

implored thy help,

or sought thy intercession,

was left unaided.

Inspired by this confidence

I fly unto thee,

O Virgin of virgins, my Mother.

To thee I come,

before thee I stand,

sinful and sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word Incarnate,

despise not my petitions,

but in thy mercy hear and answer me.

Amen.

In conclusion:

2021 will be a year of transition for everyone on the planet. Oswald Chambers wrote: "Prayer does not prepare us to do great works; prayer is the greater work". Prayer may be the greatest work we can do as we make the transition to whatever life will be like post Covid 19. We must say goodbye and let go of whatever state of life we were in before this monumental shift, and embrace the new creative future that the Holy Spirit has yet to reveal. Like Mary, We have to make space deep within ourselves to birth something new. We have to notice our neighbors and their struggles and welcome potentially frightening and uncomfortable situations and conversations, personally, politically and socially. Transition has begun, and may never return to life as we knew it. We must decide to accept that as a good thing. Prayer can make

our interactions and conversations holy when we are open to listen to each other, and approach each other with a willingness to see differently and help each other follow the gentle voice of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps we are here right now for such a time as this.

I end with a reading from

1Thes5:16-24

Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophetic utterances. Test everything; retain what is good. Refrain from every kind of evil.

May the God of peace himself make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and He will also accomplish it.