

2021 Lenten Prayer Study: I Thirst

Thank you for joining the St. Joseph Lenten Prayer Study. It is our hope that the next six weeks invite you into a deeper relationship with Christ and with others. Be sure that you have communicated with your group leader about your preferences regarding content and meetings (how often, when, remote or in person). If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us. Prayers for you and your group.

St. Joseph, pray for us.
St. Joseph Parish Council
stjoelent@gmail.com

Objectives

1. Provide an opportunity for parishioners to deepen their relationship with Christ through personal prayer.
2. Foster authentic friendship capable of discussing the interior life and spiritual experiences.
3. Create an avenue for hospitality and evangelization.
4. Encourage parish unity.

Materials

1. I Thirst: 40 Days with Mother Teresa
2. Videos (located on parish website)
3. Lenten Prayer Study: Participant's Guide

Procedure

1. Work through the materials throughout the week.
2. Optional: Meet with your group to discuss.
3. Optional: Share thoughts and personal reflection with us via stjoelent@gmail.com (these will be shared with the parish community).

Schedule

2/17 Ash Wednesday.....	Introduction, Prologue
2/21 1st Sunday of Lent.....	I. The Dynamics of Thirst
2/28 2nd Sunday of Lent.....	II. Prayer as Thirst
3/7 3rd Sunday of Lent.....	III. Our Lady's Example
3/14 4th Sunday of Lent.....	IV. Thirst in the Service of God
3/21 5th Sunday of Lent.....	V. Sharing in the Thirst of Christ
3/28 Holy Week.....	VI. Jesus, the Incarnation of God's Thirst
4/4 Easter.....	VII. Satiated Thirst, Epilogue

Lenten Prayer Study: Participant's Guide

This guide should be put to the service of your relationship with Jesus. To account for personal preference and differences in prayer style, there are a variety of options available. Please only utilize what is best for you. During your prayer time, read the daily entry and prioritize speaking directly to Jesus from your heart with honesty and humility. Enjoy spending time with the Lord.

The following includes reflection questions and Scripture passages. If you choose to use the reflection questions, approach them as a tool for depth; answering one question thoroughly and thoughtfully is more beneficial than answering all of them with little insight and purpose. Most importantly, your answers should be written or spoken directly to Jesus with an intention to listen to His response. If you prefer meditating with Scripture, there are passages and quotes listed in the book at the beginning of each daily reading. There are also more options listed in the weeks below.

Following the reflection questions and Scripture passages are some ideas and questions for group meetings. Utilize whatever is beneficial to you and your group, allowing for other discussion topics to arise from your experiences in prayer.

The final section in this guide includes some general tips and handouts about personal prayer, as well as additional meditations. Please reference them as you see fit.

Our prayers for you this Lent,
St. Joseph Parish Council

Reflection Questions & Scripture Passages

Introduction

- How has God communicated His thirst for You?
- Do you recognize your thirst for God?

Prologue

Day 1

- What would a complete conversion of heart look like in your life?
- What is an area of life you have not handed over to God?

Day 2

- Do you see your profound need for Jesus as the most essential part of life?
- Do your choices reflect that?

Additional Scripture Passages:

- Zacchaeus the Tax Collector (Lk 19:1-10)
- Treasure in Heaven (Mt: 6:19-21)
- I Thirst (Jn 19:28)

I. Dynamics of Thirst (Conversion)

Day 3

- When have you experienced the desert?
- What leaves you aching or feeling unfulfilled, restless?

Day 4

- What sins are you attached to?
- How has mediocrity become a barrier to your relationship with God?

Day 5

- Go through the lists, asking the Holy Spirit to guide your thoughts. Refrain from a willful self-analysis, but rather bring these to Jesus in prayer.

Day 6

- What wounds have made it difficult to trust in God's unconditional love?
- What past pain pushes you to turn to false thirsts, instead of the Father?
- How can you open "all your wounds to him?"

Day 7

- What role does silence and solitude have in your life?
- What tempts you away from the quiet?

Day 8

- How much "deep faith-contact" with Jesus do you experience? Why?

Additional Scripture Passages:

- The Call of Levi (Mk 2:13-17)
- The Woman Caught in Adultery (Jn 8:1-11)
- God's Love (Jn 3:16)
- The Samaritan Woman (Jn 4:4-42)

II. Prayer as Thirst

Day 9

- Did you once experience the "freshness and intimacy with the Lord?"
- Is His personal love for you a daily, lived reality?

Day 10

- How does seeing prayer as "someone" over "something" change your approach?
- What is one of your favorite qualities of God?

Day 11

- How do you tend to evaluate the value of your prayer time?

Day 12

- Is it hard to trust that God is ever-present and always providing?
- When was a time that you trusted Him during a difficulty and you recognized His presence and movements later on?

Day 13

- What is the applicable difference in your prayer life between believing God should "save us *from* the storms" and God will "save us *in* the storms."
- Do you rest with God and enjoy His company when life is difficult? Or are you looking for Him to constantly fix life?

Day 14

- How has Adoration played a role in your prayer life?
- How can you draw closer to Christ through the Holy Eucharist?

Additional Scripture Passages:

- The Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:9-14)
- Dependence on God (Mt 6:25-34)
- Two Foundations (Mt 7:24-27)
- Mustard Seed (Mt 13:31-32)

III. Our Lady's Example

Day 15

- What role does Mary play in your life and in your prayer?

Day 16

- How do you understand Mary's role as your mother?

Day 17

- What is one of your favorite stories or qualities of Mary?

Day 18

- Mary, St. Therese, and St. Teresa of Calcutta all meditated on Christ's thirst. How have you experienced God's thirst for you in a personal way?

Day 19

- How do you live a hidden life?
- How does a purposeful prayer life affect your ability to remain faithful to God and love others?

Day 20

- How have you struggled to surrender to the plans of God? When have you surrendered?
- How does a personal relationship with God change your perspective towards "life's plans?"

Additional Scripture Passages:

- The Visitation, Magnificat (Luke 1:39-55)
- The Nativity (Luke 2:1-20)
- The Presentation (Luke 2:22-38)
- The Finding in the Temple (Luke 2:41-52)

IV. Thirst in the Service of God

Day 21

- What principle is easier for you to understand and accept? Which one is more difficult? (total gift, total trust, total love, total conversion)
- In what way do you and those you love experience spiritual poverty?

Day 22

- How have you personally encountered God?
- How do you balance being "an empty canvas before him" and your need to be vulnerable about your struggles and hopes?

Day 23

- What encounters with beauty have lifted your heart in God's praise?
- How have your wounds and the wounds of others drawn you closer or further from God?
- What temptations or obstacles have become stepping stones towards God? What remains an obstacle?

Day 24

- Who is God calling you to love?
- Are your works of charity an expression of God's love or driven by a need to be busy or prove your own worth?

Day 25

- When did someone treat you with compassion, helping you recognize your dignity and worth?
- When has God appeared to be absent? Is it hard to trust that He is more present in those times?

Day 26

- How do you love your family "tirelessly?"
- Who is someone Jesus has placed in your life so you can love them?

Additional Scripture Passages:

- The Greatest Commandment (Mk 12:28-34)
- The Greatest in the Kingdom (Mk 9:33-37)
- The Beatitudes (Mt 5:3-10)
- Love of Enemies (Mt 5:43-48)

V. Sharing in the Thirst of Christ

Day 27

- How has life's crosses drawn you closer or further from Christ?

Day 28

- What is a past cross that eventually revealed the resurrection and God's glory?
- What crosses are you experiencing now?

Day 29

- How can you simplify your life?

Day 30

- How can you more fully accept suffering in your life?
- What are ways you can purposefully unite your wounds to the wounds of Christ?

Day 31

- What is the difference between approaching God as "fixer" vs. spending time with the Lord?

Day 32

- Are you growing in your desire to live more completely for Jesus?
- What continues to hold you back?

Additional Scripture Passages:

- The True Disciple (Mt 7:21)
- Coming Persecutions (Mt 10:16-25)
- Conditions for Discipleship (Mt 10:37-39)

VI. Jesus, the Incarnation of God's Thirst

Day 33

- Are you focused on doing what is right or on being loved by Jesus?
- Is Christ the center of your faith?

Day 34

- How can you console the Heart of Jesus while He is in agony?
- How often do you visit Him in Adoration?

Day 35

- What sins drive you to self-condemnation?
- How can you better receive His mercy immediately and humbly?

Day 36

- What temptations and struggles push you towards indecisiveness?

Day 37- Good Friday

- How are you learning to be more present with Jesus throughout your day and in prayer?
- Do you believe that Christ speaks to you personally when He says, "I thirst"?

Day 38- Holy Saturday

- What would your life be like without Jesus?

Additional Scripture Passages:

- Jesus, the Word (Jn 1:1-14)
- Jesus, Son of God (Mt 3:13-17)
- Jesus, Transfigured (Mk 9:2-8)
- Jesus, Savior (Jn 18, Jn 19)

VII. Satiated Thirst

Day 39- Easter

- What aspects of Heaven excite and motivate you?
- How has daily prayer focused your heart more on the eternal, rather than the "passing earth"?

Day 40

- How can you call on the Holy Spirit more often?

Additional Scripture Passages

- The Empty Tomb (Jn 20:1-9)
- Appearance to the Disciples (Jn 20:19-23)
- The Appearance on the Road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35)
- Jesus and Peter (Jn 21:15-19)

Group Discussion

Group meetings should prioritize talking about your personal relationship with Christ and encouraging one another in that same pursuit. The provided discussion questions can be adjusted for the number of group meetings and the length of each meeting.

Tips for Group Discussion

- Begin with prayer. It can be spontaneous or a Scripture meditation.
- Invite the Holy Spirit into your discussion.
- Emphasize talking about prayer and what Christ is revealing to you in prayer.
- Two questions can be used each meeting:
 - What is Christ revealing to you in prayer?
 - What is something that struck you in the readings?
- Use the provided questions and any of the daily reflection questions to generate further conversation.
- Close your conversation with prayer, interceding for each other, and those you love. Express your gratitude for God's goodness.

Discussion Questions

Introduction, Prologue

- Describe your relationship with Jesus.
- What role does personal prayer play in your faith life?

I. The Dynamics of Thirst (Conversion)

- What false thirsts are an obstacle to your relationship with Jesus?
- What concrete steps can you take towards deeper conversion?

II. Prayer as Thirst

- What is your understanding of prayer?
- When and how do you pray?
- How can you focus more on resting in His love?

III. Our Lady's Example

- How has Mary influenced and guided your spiritual life?
- How can you call on her motherhood more often?

IV. Thirst in the Service of God

- How can you serve God through loving your family?
- Is your service a response to God's love or a need to be busy, proving your value?

V. Sharing in the Thirst of Christ

- How have you been invited into Christ's Passion?
- How have you found a closer relationship with Jesus in your suffering?

VI. Jesus, the Incarnation of God's Thirst

- What do you love about Jesus?
- What has Jesus revealed about Himself and you this Lent?

VII. Satiated Thirst, Epilogue

- How did you grow in your relationship with Jesus this Lent?
- How has your understanding of prayer changed?
- How can you continue to commit to your personal relationship with Him?

Personal Prayer Resources

Basic Structure to Prayer Time

Prior to Prayer Time

- Keep prayer materials in an accessible location.
- Choose to spend time with Christ and find a comfortable, quiet area.

During Prayer Time

- Begin by inviting the Holy Spirit into your heart and mind.
- Spend a few moments resting in the Father's presence.
- If daily trials are on your mind, bring them directly to Jesus.
- Read the excerpt for the day and any additional meditations.
- Let your mind settle on the phrases or thoughts that stand out to you.
- Ask Christ what He wants to reveal or share with you today.
- Write down these revelations.
- Conclude your time with gratitude for His Presence and humility in following His will.

After Prayer Time

- Throughout the rest of the day, recall revealed truths and, when you think of Christ, say a simple prayer.

Discerning Spirits: Hearing the Voice of God

Resource provided by Father Ryan Kaup

God's Voice	Satan's Voice
Stills you	Rushes you
Leads you	Pushes you
Reassures you	Frightens you
Enlightens you	Confuses you
Encourages you	Discourages you
Comforts you	Worries you
Calms you	Obsesses you
Convicts you	Condemns you
God is never early and He is never late. He is always right on time and His plans for you are good. God is a God of love and order.	If the voice you are hearing doesn't sound like goodness, love, and order, then it is not from God.

Ways God Speaks to Us

1. Hearing – “thought” voice
2. Seeing – Imagination
3. Feeling – ex: that feeling in the pit of your stomach
4. Knowing – Graced knowledge in a moment

Praying with Scripture

Resource located at: <http://www.Leone.com/Mandela/prayer.him>

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GOD SPEAKS TO US FIRST

This fundamental truth makes it possible for us to pray to God. He has been concerned for each of us long before we became concerned for ourselves. He desires communication with us. He speaks to us continually, revealing Himself to us by various modes:

- Through Jesus Christ, His Word
- Through the Church, the extension of Christ in the world (because we are joined together in Christ, God speaks to us through other people)
- Through visible creation around us, which forms the physical context of our lives. (Creation took place in His Son, and it is another form of God's self-revelation.)
- Through the events of our lives
- Through Holy Scripture, a real form of His presence. This is the mode of communication we are most concerned with in prayer.

HE INVITES US TO LISTEN

Our response to God's initial move is to listen to what HE is saying. This is the basic attitude of prayer.

HOW TO GO ABOUT LISTENING

What you do immediately before prayer is very important. Normally, it is something you do, not rush into. Spend a few moments quieting yourself and relaxing, settling yourself into a prayerful and comfortable position. In listening to anyone, you try to tune out everything except what the person is saying to you.

- In prayer this can be done best in *silence and solitude*. **Select a favorite passage from Holy Scripture, 5 to 10 verses. Put a marker in the page.** Try to find a quiet place where you can be alone and uninhibited in your response to God's presence. Try to quiet yourself interiorly. Jesus would often go up to the mountain by Himself to pray with His Father.

In an age of noise, activity, and tensions like our own, it is not always easy or necessary to forget our cares and commitments, the noise and excitement of our environment. Never feel constrained to blot out all distractions. Anxiety in this regard could get between ourselves and God. Rather, realize that the Word did become flesh—that He speaks to us in the noise and confusion of our day. Sometimes in preparing for prayer, relax and listen to the sounds around you. God's presence is as real as they are.

Be conscious of your sensations and living experiences of feeling, thinking, hoping, loving, of wondering, desiring, etc. Then, conscious of God's unselfish, loving presence in you, address Him simply and admit: "Yes, you do love life and feeling into me. You do love a share of your personal life into me. You are present to me. You live in me. Yes, You do."

God is present *as a person*, in you through His Spirit, who speaks to you now in Scripture, and who prays in you and for you. **Ask God the grace to listen to what He says. Begin reading Scripture slowly and attentively. Do not hurry to cover much material.**

- If it recounts an event of Christ's life, be there in the mystery of it. Share with the persons involved, e.g. a blind man being cured. Share their attitude. Respond to what Jesus is saying.
- Some words or phrases carry special meaning for you. Savor those words, turning them over in your heart. You may want to speak or recite a Psalm or other prayer from Scripture. Really mean what you are saying.

When something strikes you, e.g.

- You feel a new way of being with Christ. He becomes for you in a new way (e.g. you sense what it means to be healed by Christ).
- You experience God's love
- You feel lifted in spirit
- You are moved to do something good
- You are peaceful
- You are happy and content just to be in God's presence

THIS IS THE TIME TO PAUSE.

This is God speaking directly to you in the words of Scripture. Do not hurry to move on. Wait until you are no longer moved by the experience.

- Don't get discouraged if nothing seems to be happening. Sometimes God lets us feel dry and empty in order to let us realize it is not in our power to communicate with Him or to experience consolation. God is sometimes very close to us in His seeming absence. He is for us entirely in a selfless way. He accepts us as we are, with all our limitations—even with our seeming inability to pray. A humble attitude of listening is a sign of love for Him, and a real prayer from the heart.
- At these times remember the words of Paul:
 - "The Spirit, too, comes to help us in our weakness, for when we cannot choose words in our to pray properly, the Spirit himself expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words." (Rom. 8:26-27)
 - Relax in prayer. Remember, God will speak to you in God's own way.
 - "Yes, as the rain and snow come down from the heavens and do not return without watering the earth, making it yield and giving growth to provide seed for the sower and bread for the eating, so the word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty, without carrying out *my will* and succeeding in what it was sent to do." (Isaiah 55:10-11)

Spend time in your prayer just being conscious of God's presence in and around you. If you want to, speak with Him about the things you are interested in or wish to thank Him for, your joys, sorrows, aspirations, etc.

Summary of the 5 P's of Prayer

1. *Passage from Scripture* (Pick one and have it marked and ready.)
2. *Place* (Where you are alone and uninhibited in your response to God's presence.)
3. *Posture* (Relaxed and peaceful. A harmony of body with spirit.)
4. *Presence of God* (Be aware of it and acknowledge and respond to it. If nothing happens...)
5. *Passage from Scripture* (Read it very slowly aloud and listen carefully and peacefully to it.
 - a. Read *aloud* or *whisper* in a rhythm with your breathing—a phrase at a time—with *pauses and repetitions* when and where you feel like it.
 - b. Don't be anxious, don't try to look for implications or lessons or profound thoughts or conclusions or resolutions, etc. Be content to be like a child who climbs into its father's lap and listens to his words and his story. When you finish, remind yourself that God continues to live in you during the rest of the day.

Excerpts from Mother Teresa's *I Thirst Meditation*

It is true. I stand at the door of your heart, day and night. Even when you are not listening, even when you doubt it could be Me, I am there: waiting for even the smallest signal of your response, even the smallest suggestion of an invitation that will permit Me to enter.

I want you to know that each time you invite Me, I do come always, without fail. Silent and invisible I come, yet with a power and a love most infinite, bringing the many gifts of My Spirit. I come with My mercy, with My desire to forgive and heal you, with a love for you that goes beyond your comprehension.

I know you like the palm of my hand. I know everything about you. Even the hairs of your head I have counted. Nothing in your life is unimportant to Me. I have followed you through the years and I have always loved you even when you have strayed. I know every one of your problems. I know your needs and your worries and yes, I know all your sins.

But I tell you again that I love you, not for what you have or ceased to do, I love you for you, for the beauty and the dignity My Father gave you by creating you in His own image. It is a dignity you have often forgotten, a beauty you have tarnished by sin. But I love you as you are, and I have shed My Blood to rescue you. If you only ask Me with faith, My grace will touch all that needs changing in your life: I will give you the strength to free yourself from sin and from all its destructive power.

I know what is in your heart, I know your loneliness and all your wounds, the rejections, the judgments, the humiliations, I carried it all before you. And I carried it all for you, so you could share My strength and My victory. I know, above all, your need for love, how much you are thirsting for love and tenderness. Yet, how many times have you desired to satisfy your thirst in vain, seeking that love with selfishness, trying to fill the void within you with passing pleasures, with the even greater emptiness of sin.

“Come to Me all you who thirst ...” (*John 7:37*). I will satisfy you and fill you.

Do you thirst to be loved? I love you more than you can imagine ... to the point of dying on a cross for you. **I THIRST FOR YOU.** Yes, that is the only way to even begin to describe My love for you. **I THIRST FOR YOU.** I thirst to love you and to be loved by you. So precious are you to Me that **I THIRST FOR YOU.** Come to Me, and I will fill your heart and heal your wounds. I will make you a new creation and give you peace even in your trials. **I THIRST FOR YOU.** You must never doubt My mercy, My desire to forgive, My longing to bless you and live My life in you, and that I accept you no matter what you have done. **I THIRST FOR YOU.** If you feel of little value before the eyes of the world, it doesn't matter. There is no one that interests me in the whole world than you.

I THIRST FOR YOU. Open up to Me, come to Me, thirst for Me, give me your life. I will prove to you how important you are for My Heart. Don't you realize that My Father already has a perfect plan to transform your life, beginning from this moment? Trust in Me. Ask Me every day to enter and take charge of your life and I will. I promise you before My Father in Heaven that I will work miracles in your life. Why would I do this?

Because **I THIRST FOR YOU.**