



JUNE
2020

Stella Maris

SUPPORTING SEAFARERS AND FISHERS AROUND THE WORLD

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Stella Maris is a Catholic charity supporting seafarers worldwide.

We provide practical and pastoral care to all seafarers, regardless of nationality, belief or race. Our port chaplains and volunteer ship visitors welcome seafarers, offer welfare services and advice, practical help, care and friendship.

Stella Maris is the largest ship visiting network in the world, working in 332 ports with 227 port chaplains around the world. We also run 53 seafarers' centres around the world.

We are only able to continue our work through the generous donations of our supporters and volunteers.

➤ To support Stella Maris with a donation visit www.apostleshipofthesea.org.uk/ways-donate

Stella Maris

39 Eccleston Square
London, SW1V 1BX, United Kingdom

Tel: +44 020 7901 1931

Email: info@apostleshipofthesea.org.uk

facebook.com/StellaMarisOrg

www.apostleshipofthesea.org.uk

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ABIDJAN - COTE D'IVOIRE (IVORY COAST)

➤ **Abidjan Port is located in the southern part of Abidjan, the economic capital of Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast). The port was built between 1938 and 1950 on the Ebrie lagoon and is linked to the Atlantic ocean by a channel called the Canal de Vridi, which is 2.7km in length and 370 metres wide.**

Abidjan is the most important port in West Africa and a vital part of the Ivorian economy, dealing with over 90% of the nation's foreign trade. It has 34 quays stretching over 6km and provides over 54,000 direct and indirect jobs. It is also connects Côte d'Ivoire to the neighbouring countries by road and rail.

Between 2012 to 2020 the port of Abidjan was upgraded and can now handle container and conventional ships up to 250m long with a 16m draught. A second container terminal is under construction to increase particularly transhipped container traffic. There is also a modern fishing port which can handle most types of fishing vessels.

AOS - STELLA MARIS is very active in Abidjan and cooperates with the Port Welfare Committee (AIGISM) to provide for the welfare of seafarers. AOS Stella Maris was a founding member of the group which built the Abidjan Seamen's club.

The Apostleship of the Sea, Abidjan, started in 1956 and is directed by a religious congregation, the Sons of charity who also run the Port Parish Church of St Anthony of Padua. AOS Stella Maris provides pastoral and social services for seafarers, fishers, port and maritime workers and their families.

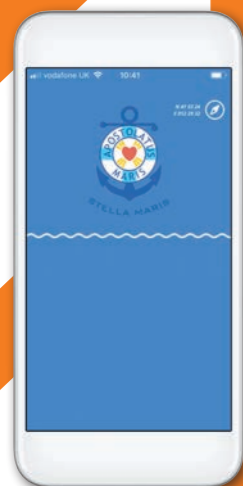
The ship visitors under the direction of Father Celestin help to link seafarers with the Seamen's Club, where there are facilities such as a restaurant, two swimming pools, internet, rooms and a tennis court.

AOS – Stella Maris Abidjan has a full time chaplain, Fr Célestin Ikomba,

a priest of the order of the Sons of Charity. He organises services such as ship visiting, Masses and confessions, transportation, assistance, communication and wi-fi. Our Offices are in the Port Parish Church, which is not far from the port and the seamen's club.



Parish and AOS Stella Maris Offices :
APOSTOLAT DE LA MER,
PAROISSE ST ANTOINE DU PORT,
18BP1135 ABJ 18,
Tel: 00225 21256954
Port Chaplain Fr Celestin IKOMBA :
ikombacelio@gmail.com,
Cell: (00 225)65409099
Facebook : stella maris apostolatus maris



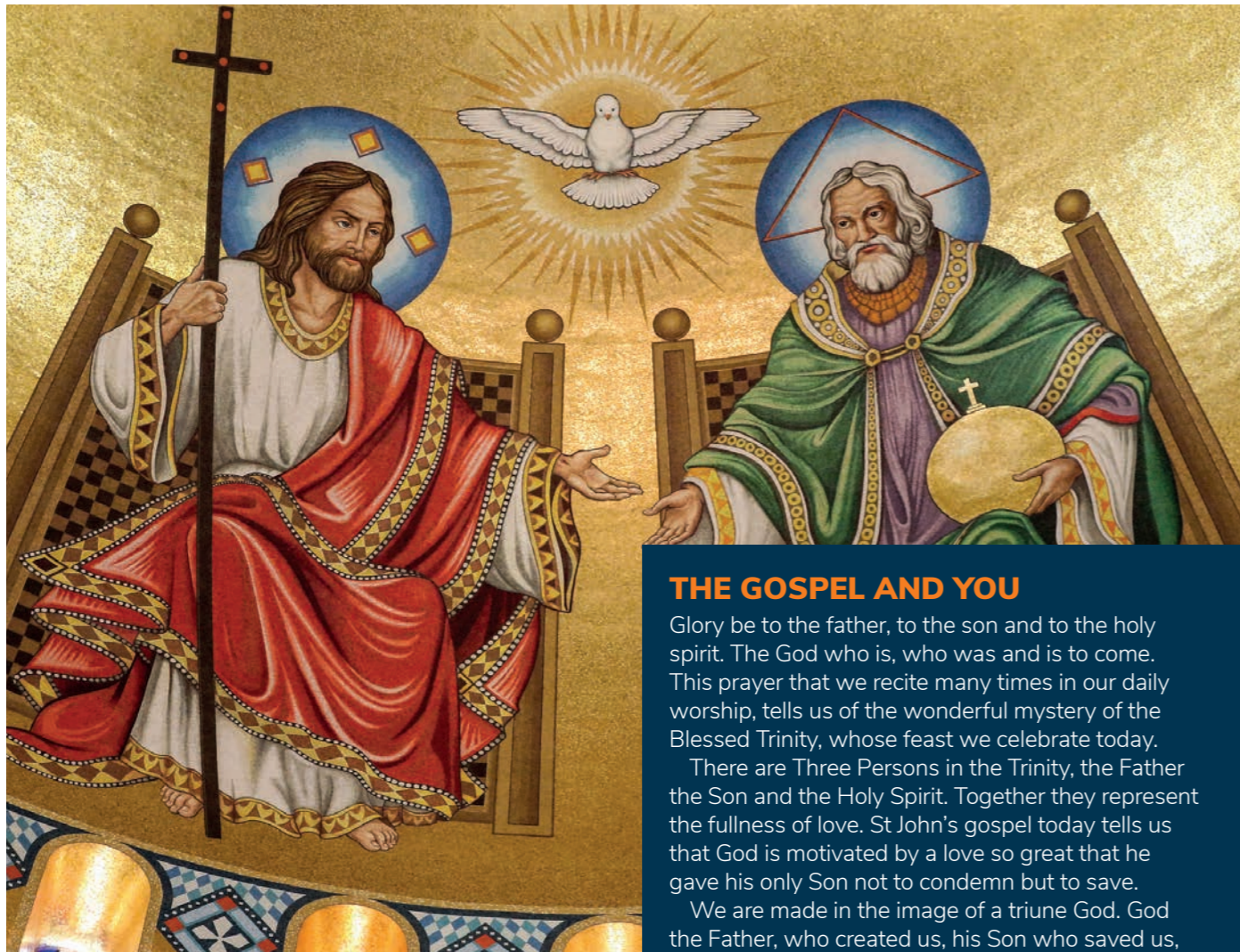
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Stella Maris provides seafarers with practical support, information and a listening ear



THE GOSPEL AND YOU

Glory be to the father, to the son and to the holy spirit. The God who is, who was and is to come. This prayer that we recite many times in our daily worship, tells us of the wonderful mystery of the Blessed Trinity, whose feast we celebrate today.

There are Three Persons in the Trinity, the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit. Together they represent the fullness of love. St John's gospel today tells us that God is motivated by a love so great that he gave his only Son not to condemn but to save.

We are made in the image of a triune God. God the Father, who created us, his Son who saved us, and the Holy Spirit who continues to guide us.

In the recent health crisis, hundreds of thousands of people have died, our churches are closed, people's movements are limited and the world cries out for normality, or at least for an explanation of what is happening.

We are not used to being taken by surprise and we don't like that. We are not in charge, we have lost our control.

Chaplains may no longer visit our ships. We miss them and the consolation they bring into our difficult existence.

It is so easy to see God at work in the happy times of our lives and we thank and praise him for that, but now?

So on this Trinity Sunday we find it difficult to give praise and glory to the three Divine persons of Trinity. We find it hard to feel the great love that defines it. How do we cope. How do we pray?

We pray to a God who has not abandoned us but who is very much among us in the outstanding selflessness we see all around us. Goodness prevails and the generous spirit and skills of the many who try to lighten the darkness.

This is the God of Trinity. The God who loves and cares for us, a God who is in control of our world, a God who is close to us.

Sunday at Sea with Fr Colum Kelly

SUNDAY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

7 JUNE 2020

GOSPEL JOHN 3:16-18

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

'God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved. No one who believes in him will be condemned; but whoever refuses to believe is condemned already, because he has refused to believe in the name of God's only Son.

CORPUS CHRISTI

14 JUNE 2020

GOSPEL JOHN 6:51-58

Jesus said to the Jews:

'I am the living bread which has come down from heaven.

Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.'

Then the Jews started arguing with one another:

'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' they said.

Jesus replied:

'I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you.

Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life,

and I shall raise him up on the last day.

For my flesh is real food

and my blood is real drink.

He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me

and I live in him.

As I, who am sent by the living Father,

myself draw life from the Father,

so whoever eats me will draw life from me.

This is the bread come down from heaven,

not like the bread our ancestors ate:

they are dead,

but anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.'



THE GOSPEL AND YOU

They say "Everything has changed" and so it has. These past six months have taught us many things about the assumptions we have carried for many years.

We can be taken by surprise. We don't have the answer to everything.

Riches and power cannot be a shield from suffering, neither can being a follower of the Lord make us immune from the suffering of the world.

Today on this most special of feasts we may have no processions, in fact we might not even have Mass because our Churches are closed. So much that we have taken for granted has deserted us. We thought the Sacraments would always be available to us and didn't we make such a fuss of our daily Mass being moved from 9.00 to 9.30.

We have taken an awful lot for granted. Maybe we will come out of this a wiser people, I certainly hope so for we have much to learn.

In today's Gospel, Jesus declares himself the bread of life, giving eternal life to all who eat and drink of it. We see this very clearly each time we celebrate Mass and receive Holy Communion. But this is not the only way in which the Lord's presence manifests itself.

Seafarers have known this for ever. Not for them the luxury of a 9.00 Mass. But their faith has sustained them in the knowledge of God's loving presence.

Perhaps the closed Churches teach us to recognise the Divine presence in other ways.

Many of us limit the Lord to Church buildings. The Lord cannot be confined. God's presence is everywhere and the risen Christ is not limited by space or time.

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" So even in the smallest of gatherings, two people standing two metres apart has the risen Lord between them. And take it further, one person in confinement in their own room is enveloped in the loving company of the Lord.

Surely this is an astonishing gift to grasp in these troubled times.

It's a moment for us to rediscover the art of closing the door and praying alone – knowing that the Father will listen to our prayers.

21 JUNE 2020
TWELFTH SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME

GOSPEL Matthew 10:26-33

Jesus instructed the Twelve as follows: 'Do not be afraid. For everything that is now covered will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the daylight; what you hear in whispers, proclaim from the house-tops.

'Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; fear him rather who can destroy both body and soul in hell. Can you not buy two sparrows for a penny? And yet not one falls to the ground without your Father knowing. Why, every hair on your head has been counted. So there is no need to be afraid; you are worth more than hundreds of sparrows.

'So if anyone declares himself for me in the presence of men, I will declare myself for him in the presence of my Father in heaven. But the one who disowns me in the presence of men, I will disown in the presence of my Father in heaven.'

“what you hear in
whispers, proclaim
from the house-tops”



THE GOSPEL AND YOU

Do not be afraid. Three times Jesus uses this phrase in this short Gospel reading from Matthew.

In the Gospel they are words of encouragement for the disciples who would face great opposition as they set out on their mission. The words preface three sayings to reassure the disciples in case they are tempted to abandon their mission.

The second highlights God's care for them in the face of any opposition. Opponents can destroy the body but not the soul. For aren't we worth more than many sparrows?

In these unfamiliar times when many certainties are being swept away, how we yearn to hear the voice of God telling us not to be afraid. But we are afraid of many things and those fears cannot be swept aside by mere words, no matter how lovely. We fear for our families, our jobs, our food supply, and we fear the unknown. What will come next?

Seafarers understand all about these fears because they have been a part of their lives for as long as they have sailed.

And they can often come altogether in the space of one voyage. The worry about wages, will they be paid this month? Will the chandlers get food to the ship in time? Are families safe at home? Are jobs safe for another contract?

Seafarers can teach us so much about coping in these times others call unfamiliar.

I have been privileged to celebrate Mass many times on board ships. The crew take great time to prepare in the limited confines of the mess room. The most popular hymn chosen by them contain the lines which I'm sure you all know is:

Do not be afraid,
For I have redeemed you.
I have called you by your name;
You are mine.

In times of fear, I find great comfort in the line: "I have called you by your name". What a lovely consolation to realise that the Lord knows my name and I am treasured in his sight. I will never be alone.



THE GOSPEL AND YOU

In Jewish society at the time of Jesus, family ties were much stronger than we experience today. But to follow the Lord may cause tension or even disruption. In times of persecution, families often betrayed loved ones to the authorities for fear of their own lives.

Today we can find a degree of that tension in our own families where some are mocked for their beliefs, others leave all family ties to go their own way in pursuit of some religious ideal that their loved ones cannot understand.

As the disciples struggle on their way, they are encouraged to take whatever hospitality is offered them. Anyone offering them a welcome will be welcoming the Lord Himself.

That call to serve our neighbour and so the Lord himself has never been more urgent.

Today we see so much kindness in the face of suffering. People coming together, often at great risk, to make sure that others are safe and well. Those who tend the sick, feed the hungry, comfort the lonely, are themselves the loving presence of the Lord. It is sad but probably inevitable that it takes something as destructive as a virus to make us realise how dependant we are on one another.

For as long as I can remember, famine and death on the scale we see today, was always something we watched on television, or maybe didn't watch, it was easier to turn away.

Now we come face to face with the reality of a suffering we could never have imagined and we feel so helpless.

Hope is something as Christian people we carry with us because without hope what else can sustain us. I don't mean some vague nod to a better future but a hope that is based in the certainty of God's great and unconditional love for us.

We pray for that awareness, for a renewed certainty in that hope that God is still amongst us.

The next time you see an image of someone bringing comfort to another then know that hope is not in vain, for in that place of comfort, there too is the God of Hope.

**THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME**
28 JUNE 2020

GOSPEL Matthew 10:37-42

Jesus instructed the Twelve as follows: 'Anyone who prefers father or mother to me is not worthy of me. Anyone who prefers son or daughter to me is not worthy of me. Anyone who does not take his cross and follow in my footsteps is not worthy of me. Anyone who finds his life will lose it; anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it.

'Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me; and those who welcome me welcome the one who sent me.

'Anyone who welcomes a prophet because he is a prophet will have a prophet's reward; and anyone who welcomes a holy man because he is a holy man will have a holy man's reward.

'If anyone gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, then I tell you solemnly, he will most certainly not lose his reward.'

FINDING GOD IN LONELINESS



Are you lonely? Feelings of loneliness can affect everyone – young mothers and their babies, the elderly and their carers, pupils and teachers, the police and criminals, soldiers and doctors, seafarers and truckers, clergy and lay people, the rich and famous as well as the poor and homeless.

It is tempting to see the feeling of loneliness as a modern problem that needs to be fixed like a broken machine. Countless books have been written on the subject with advice on how to eradicate loneliness from our lives, but often without addressing the reason why we feel lonely in the first place. For some, the solution to coping with their loneliness is to rely on the constant supply of images and films on the internet and television. For others, it is to bury themselves in being busy. At least if they live in a world of constant action, they will never have time to be lonely. For still others, the lure of alcohol, drugs and pornography provides a temporary but lethal solution to loneliness. But the reality is that for all our distractions we are merely passing the time, and deep down we still feel dissatisfied. In moments of clarity, such as in the dead of night, we may wake up to recognise that sooner or later our time will run out, and we can begin to become anxious because we realise that our lonely lives have no meaning.

Loneliness can call into question the very purpose of our existence by presenting us with a spirit of

emptiness and nothingness so profound that we can find ourselves faced with the prospect that we are utterly alone in the Universe. In this darkness, we can be gripped by the terrifying realisation that we are ultimately homeless – we do not belong. If this is your experience, and you are living with an unshakable feeling of loneliness, then the Church invites you to take courage: God has not abandoned you; he wants to help you!

Who Am I?

In the face of our mortality, loneliness has become one of the most common subjects of art and literature because it points to the very question of our identity – “who am I?” This question affects everyone in every generation, yet very few people are willing to admit that they feel lonely because of the stigma attached. We tend to assume that if a person has no friends it is because they have been rejected by their peers, and no one wants to be labelled by others as a ‘reject’. However, the feeling of loneliness, instead of crushing us, can become a significant mechanism that leads

us to discover who we are when we look beyond ourselves for an answer to our identity. The Church proposes that if we search for an answer with humility, we will find it in the form of a God who created us. He is not some lonely God out there in an infinite universe, but instead, he is a God of love and relationship, who is just dying for you to know him.

God’s Love as a Balm for Loneliness

If we search for God, we will find him; if we knock on his door, he promises to open it for us (cf. Mt 7:7-8). To find God in loneliness is to discover medicine for our wound. The problem with our fallen human nature is that we can often miss the mark, and in our search, we tend to get blown off course and end up giving ourselves to created things in a harmful way – alcohol, food, sex, money, fame, power, etc. These are some of the idols that we give our lives to in the false belief that they will, in turn, provide us with life. Attraction to these destructive idols can become addictions that render us isolated and chronically lonely. We must face up to the possibility that God will only enter our loneliness if we give him permission to enter. For this reason, we need to find moments where we can allow God to be alone with us, in a lonely place.

Our Lord describes it as our ‘private room’ where we can be alone in prayer with God as our Heavenly Father (Mt 6:6). Perhaps you have suffered from long periods of loneliness all your life. In your torment, the Lord has heard your cry. To the invisible plight of your loneliness, God is not indifferent. He wants to set you free and to be a sign to others of his intimate love for each one of us. The Church’s proclamation of the Good News is an invitation to discover the healing medicine of the God of relationship. He wants to enter into communion with you. The Church invites you to make the prayer of the Apostle Philip your own: “Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied” (Jn 14:8).



Prayer

O Lord, I sometimes feel alone by myself. I am sorry that I have not always trusted in your promises. Thank you for sharing your Divine life with me. Please help me to recognise when I am hiding from you and grant me the joy of being alone with you instead, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

By Fr Antonio Ritaccio from the CTS Booklet
Finding God in Loneliness www.ctsbooks.org





HOW TO PRAY

➤ **Jesus' disciples said to him: "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). Today, too, many people find themselves asking the same thing. The Catholic Church has a wonderful tradition of prayer on which to draw. Unfortunately, many Catholics still see prayer as something complicated and difficult, or reserved for 'professionals' (perhaps priests and religious sisters). This is the first myth to slay! Prayer is not complicated and it is meant for everyone. An early Christian poet, St Ephraem, wrote: "Birds fly, fish swim, people pray." Human beings are made to pray, because they are made for God.**

Contemplative prayer

All prayer is valuable, even the shortest and most spontaneous, but the prayer that goes deepest, and truly touches the heart, is the form of prayer known as contemplative, or mental prayer. Again, the terminology can put people off: but it shouldn't. All prayer can be defined very simply - 'conversation with God'. In contemplative prayer the conversation is longer than usual, and to help prevent our minds wandering, we make use of a few basic rules. But the rules are very simple, and mental prayer can be made by anyone. As St Teresa of Avila said "Contemplative prayer is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us."

One Form of Prayer

Over the centuries, the Church and its saints have developed many different forms of mental prayer. The one outlined here is a simple one, a form made popular by St Francis de Sales in the 17th century, and used by millions

of people ever since. St Francis aimed especially at the laity and people living in the secular world: he believed all were called to holiness, and all to prayer.

Finding a place to pray

Prayer is not complicated, but it needs patience and dedication. Finding appropriate surroundings is important: the great saints can pray anywhere and anytime, but most of us are not so fortunate! Try and find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. If you have access to a church, that would be ideal - or the opportunity to pray before the Blessed Sacrament, even better. But a quiet room on board will work just as well. It is also important to pray in an appropriate posture: sitting upright or kneeling, helps to keep most people alert and attentive.

Giving time to Prayer

How long should you pray for? As long as you can! It is obviously better to pray for five or ten minutes than not at all. That said, we do need to be generous with God, and

practical - giving time to prayer allows us to listen as well as speak. Many people find it useful to give a set amount of time each day to prayer - 'beginners' might like to start with, say, ten minutes. This may increase as time goes by. In time, some find half an hour or even an hour a day is what they grow to like and need. Set yourself a realistic target - and stick to it. Don't be tempted to cut short your prayer because you may find it difficult at first - treat it as important, and persevere.

When to pray

What time of day is best for prayer? Well, we can pray at any time, morning, afternoon or evening. Realistically though, most people are more alert in the mornings. The later we leave our prayer, the more tired and distracted we may become.

The presence of God

When you come to pray, wherever it is, first remind yourself that God is there. Then consciously place yourself in his presence, and ask him to help you.

Lifting your mind

To come to prayer, we need to focus our minds on God. There are many ways to do this. You might read a brief passage from the Gospels, look at an icon or a crucifix, reflect on one of the Mysteries of the Rosary (the Rosary, incidentally, is itself an excellent form of mental prayer, if prayed reflectively). You can close your eyes. Be still and try to enter into your own heart, and quietly repeat a simple phrase, sincerely, such as "Lord Jesus, have mercy on me, help me". Don't be in a hurry. Once God has filled your thoughts - talk to him. Tell him you believe in him, hope in him, love him. Tell him your troubles and say sorry for your sins. This is prayer.

Distractions

Unless we are very focussed or very holy, our minds soon get distracted. From thinking of God, we soon find ourselves thinking of food, work, and our families. Don't be distracted by distractions. Even the saints suffered

from them, and they are not important. If you find your thoughts have wandered, simply bring them back again (read another verse of the gospel - fix your gaze on the icon - repeat your phrase). Distractions never entirely disappear, but they will grow less with practice. Don't be discouraged by them. They are quite normal. To pray can in this sense involve a bit of a battle.

Listening

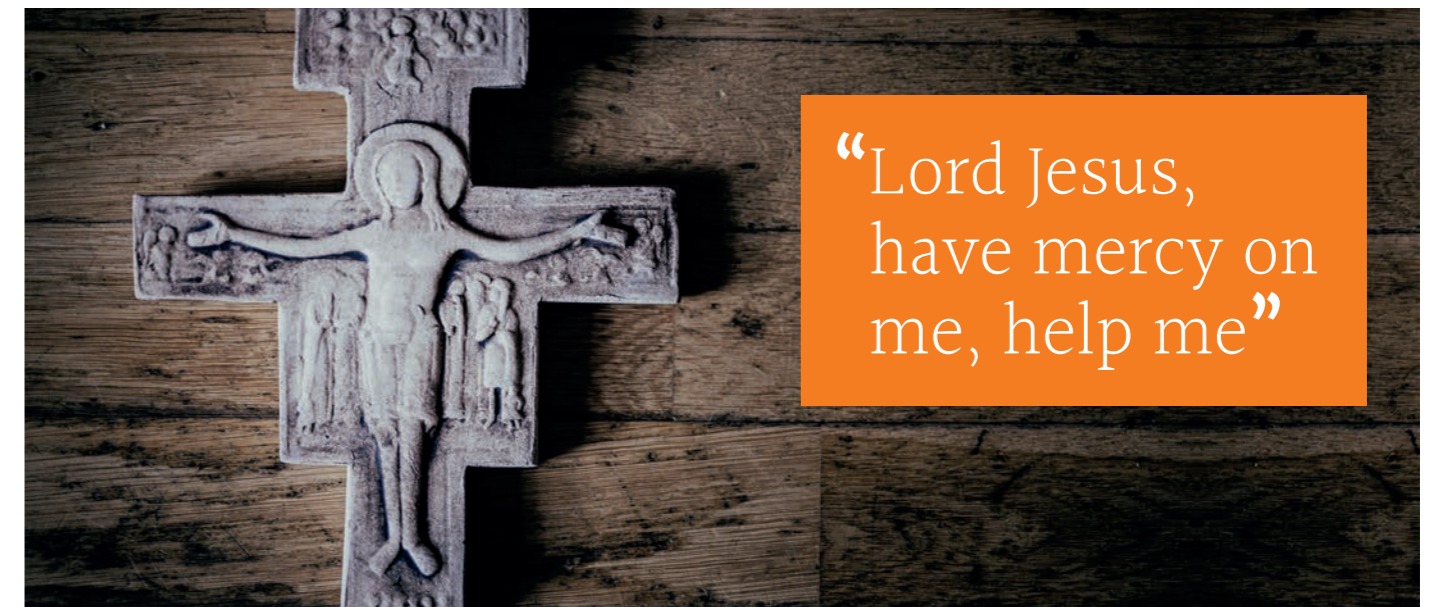
In this way - thinking of, talking to, and loving God - our time of prayer will soon pass. But it is important that we listen too - a listening of the heart. If we treat God as a real friend - if we tell him our troubles, our difficulties and our temptations - then in prayer, he will show us the answers to all these questions, helping us to see things in a new perspective, with fresh understanding. Even the most insoluble problems can be resolved in prayer.

Conclusion

When our time of prayer is almost finished, there are three final things we should do.

1. Try and find something to 'take away' with you - perhaps a word of scripture, an idea or an image - something to remind you of your prayer throughout the day.
2. If appropriate, make a resolution: resolve to act as God has guided you in your prayer (and if you still feel a lack of guidance, ask God to show you the way forward).
3. Give thanks to God for this time of prayer, and ask him to remain with you always. You may want to end by saying a brief prayer of your own choice, such as the Our Father.

It is hard to write about prayer, because it is something that needs to be experienced. If you really want to learn to pray, then the only way to do it is to try. Set aside the time. Open your heart, and persevere - you will never look back, and you will never regret it.





Prayer to the Sacred Heart

June is the Month dedicated to the Sacred Heart

O most holy heart of Jesus, fountain of every blessing, I adore you, I love you, and with lively sorrow for my sins I offer you this poor heart of mine. Make me humble, patient, pure and wholly obedient to your will. Grant, Good Jesus, that I may live in you and for you. Protect me in the midst of danger. Comfort me in my afflictions. Give me health of body, assistance in my temporal needs, your blessing on all that I do, and the grace of a holy death. Amen.



STELLA MARIS

