

# Call and Response

## Chapter 1 Recognising God's Invitation

### God's Search for Us - Our Search for God

In the hustle and bustle of modern life, it sometimes seems that we are too busy, too preoccupied, to recognize the intimate and vital connection that God has with each one of us. God, however, is not too busy and never ceases to invite each and every person to take up the search.

Deep down inside each of us, there is a desire to love and be loved. It is the call of God's love that ignites in us the desire to love and to know God. Everyone has a desire for God, it is part of being human. The fact that humans are created in the image of God can sometimes be hard to believe, as we are daily confronted with images of suffering and injustice. We can ask ourselves, "Why does God allow all these bad things to happen?" and "Why are there so many people who say they do not believe in God?" Answering these huge questions is beyond the scope of this book. However if we begin to see God not so much as a puzzle to be solved but as God who loves us and desires to be loved in return, we may find that the questions are answered in surprising ways.

People sometimes report that they experience God's call to them in an intensely personal way. They tell of a sense in which they feel chosen and are drawn out of themselves into something larger.

In the Bible, St John writes in his first letter that *God is love*. St Paul, in his letter to the church in Corinth, writes,

*Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

*Love never ends.* I Cor. 13:4-8

In attempting to describe love, St Paul is telling us something of the mysterious nature of God. It is God who is patient and kind; it is God who does not take offence, nor store up grievances in a

large scorebook. It is God who finds joy in the truth and it is God who is willing to endure for us, whatever comes.

St Paul continues, *When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.* I Cor. 13:11.

St Paul is inviting us to take up the challenge of being an adult in our relationship to God, and to begin to experience and think about religion, God, prayer and the Catholic Church in a mature way.

As adults, we are aware that we are not self-contained. There are some people who depend on us for their wellbeing and we depend on others for our wellbeing. In terms of God and religion in faith, we believe we can depend on God.

If you are not sure how you might talk to God, some people find that a good way to begin is to recite time-honoured prayers.

Written prayers give the beginner the words with which to talk to God. For those experienced in talking to God, time-honoured prayers perhaps provide an opportunity to reflect on the reality the words represent.

If prayer has not been part of your life thus far, reciting the following prayers on a regular basis may be a good place to start:

#### THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

The Sign of the Cross is an ancient, prayerful action, made with the right hand moving from forehead to breast and from left to right shoulder, while reciting the following words, *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

The right hand is then joined to the left hand.

It is customary to begin and end all prayers with the Sign of the Cross.

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.

#### THE 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.

#### GLORY BE TO THE FATHER

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

#### CONFITEOR

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

May almighty God have mercy on me, forgive me my sins, and bring me to everlasting life. Amen.

#### GRACE BEFORE MEALS

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

#### GRACE AFTER MEALS

We give you thanks, almighty God, for all your benefits; who live and reign, world without end. Amen.

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

### PRAYER OF ST FRANCIS

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury , pardon;  
where there is discord, union;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy;  
for your mercy and for your truth's sake.  
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;  
in forgiving that we are forgiven;  
and in dying that we are born to eternal life.

### PRAYER FOR THE SICK

O Almighty, everlasting God, eternal salvation  
of those who believe, hear our prayers on  
behalf of your ailing servants for whom we  
implore the aid of your mercy, that with health  
restored to them, they may offer thanksgiving  
to you.

Extract from *Call and Response: An Introduction to the Catholic faith*.  
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