

**St. James Parish
Religious Education Program**

CONFIRMATION: ST. FRANCIS PROJECT

As part of your preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation you are asked to reflect on the Prayer of St. Francis and discern which portion of the prayer speaks most deeply to your heart.

Please share your thoughts, reflections and experiences in a one-page essay.

Reflect on how you might personally have already experienced some or all of this most beautiful prayer. How will you apply St. Francis' teachings in this prayer to your own life as you go forward as confirmed disciples of Christ?

After this spiritual exercise, it is our sincere hope that these gentle and powerful words will remain firmly planted in your memory and in the center of your daily prayer. Keep these words close to your heart so that all people whom God may place in your path will come to see the love of Christ reflected in you.

This project is due on 3/6/22 for Religious Ed students and 3/7/22 for SJS students.



THE PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace
Where there is hatred, let me sow love
Where there is an injury, pardon
Where there is doubt, faith
Where there is despair, hope
Where there is darkness, light
And 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
And it is in pardoning that we are pardoned
And it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life. Amen.

Meaning of the Prayer of St. Francis

The first line of the prayer is asking for the Lord's help for us to spread peace to the people around us. It was Christ's mission to bring God's perfect state of peace to the world during his earthly ministry. Saint Francis saw this as his mission as well. In his Rule of 1223, he writes, "they should not be quarrelsome or take part in disputes with words...or criticize others; but they should be gentle, peaceful and unassuming, courteous and humble, speaking respectfully to everyone... Whatever house they enter, they should first say, 'Peace to this house.'"

A large part of loving peace is shunning hatred. In his 9th Admonition, called Charity, St. Francis pens these words: "Our Lord says in the Gospel, Love your enemies. A man really loves his enemy when he is not offended by the injury done to

himself, but for love of God feels burning sorrow for the sin his enemy has brought on his own soul and proves his love in a practical way.” Hence the line, “Where there is hatred, let me sow love.”

In the midst of the chaos of the Crusades, St. Francis found a path of non-violence. He went to Egypt in search of the leader of the Muslim forces called the Sultan. Once they met, St. Francis had a peaceful dialogue with the Sultan. A spirit of understanding, respect, and forgiveness dominated their conversation. Thus goes the line, “Where there is an injury, pardon.”

As a young man, there was a time when St. Francis found himself in serious doubt as to whether God really cared for him. As he prayed in solitude, God opened his eyes of faith. He then saw a vision: Christ Himself was gazing at him from the cross, but with such loving eyes that his soul melted. This lifted his doubt away. The line “Where there is doubt, faith” can inspire others to see beyond their doubts as well.

St. Francis also took great care of a lot of suffering people in his time. Thanks to his help, these desperate people felt dignified with a ray of hope upon experiencing such compassion. The lines “Where there is despair, hope” and “Where there is darkness, light” express the desire to give hope to the otherwise hopeless.

Because of St. Francis’ belief in God, he had a reason to always be joyful. God overflowing with love was his source of joy. Francis said that he wanted his followers to go around and “inspire the hearts of people and stir them to spiritual joy.” The line “And where there is sadness, joy” serves to stir people’s hearts in hopefully the same way.

The last seven lines describe the heart of the Gospels. They also serve as a good set of guidelines to live by every single day. It’s about giving rather than receiving, and it emphasizes the sacrificial nature of the love of Christ, which we also ought to show to others.

Using the Prayer of St. Francis Today

The prayer of St. Francis is a prayer loaded with spiritual meaning. For one, the words of the first few lines indicate how we should live our lives. In this world full of darkness, despair, and sorrow, we should be people who promote light, hope, and joy. This prayer is all about living our lives just as Jesus did during his time here on earth. Living in a similar way is the most effective way of reflecting the image of God through our lives as his creation.

Although Francis of Assisi did not actually write this prayer, he was known to faithfully live out the principles in it. Though born to a wealthy family, he chose to dedicate his life to Jesus Christ later on. It is said that he even had a vision where Christ told him to “repair my church,” and so he did with his own hands. He chose to live a life pleasing to Christ, even if it meant leaving his material wealth behind.

For many of us, we may not be called to the same path as St. Francis. However, as followers of Jesus, we are all called to be like Jesus and to live as he did. Whether we have much or little, this prayer reminds us of how we ought to behave every day, especially in the way we treat others as Christians and disciples of Jesus.