



Daily Prayer For Individuals and Families

Adopted from *The Lutheran Service Book* (p. 294)

January 28, 2024 A.D. 4th Sunday after the Epiphany

This brief service is intended as a simple form of daily prayer for individuals and families. When more than one person is present, the psalm and responses may be spoken responsively, with one person reading the words in regular type and the others responding with the words in bold type. The Creed and Prayers that are in bold type are to be said by all.

The sign of the cross ✠ may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

Invocation

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Psalm

(From Psalm 32)

Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.

Blessèd is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.

Blessèd is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.

You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance.

For those with access to the internet, you may now play today's worship video, located on Bethany's website (www.bethanycr.org) under the Worship Resources tab and then continue with the Apostles' Creed. Everyone else may continue the service as printed....

Scripture Lesson

(I Corinthians 8:1-13)

Sermon – ✠ *Knowledge and Love* ✠ (A copy is included at the end of this service.)

Apostles' Creed

☩ I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, Born of the Virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, died, and was buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven And sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit; The holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; The forgiveness of sins; The resurrection of the body; And the life ☩ everlasting. Amen.

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.
For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and
ever. Amen.**

Bethany's Prayer List

Thanksgiving

- Maya (granddaughter of Ben & Dawn Mims) - born 1/20
- Ron Prescott - recovered after surgery

Entrusting into God's Care

- Persecuted Christians and refugees
- Peace in Europe and throughout the world
- Project 24 students, Yvonne and Lorine

Healing

- Loren (relative of Barb Deetz) - health issues
- Charlie (relative of Barb Deetz) - health issues
- Kris Dunn - recovering after surgery
- Luci Stoelting - recovering after hospitalization
- Kevin Hansen - recovering after hospitalization
- Ray McGraw - recovering after surgery
- Emily Kroemer - health issues
- Kim Neuhaus - recovering after surgery
- Lora Raymon - recovering after surgery
- Carolyn Johnson - recovering after surgery

- Cindy Broadwater - recovering after hospitalization
- Kelly Johnson - healing
- Philip Hackbardt - recovering after surgery
- Ethel Doehrmann - immunotherapy treatment
- Doug Knutson - immunotherapy treatment
- Deb Heitland - health issues
- Abi Clark - health issues

Homebound

- Candi Engel - Heritage Care Center

Mourning, friends and family of

- Adam (friend of Cindy Goerdts) - died 1/19

Serving Our Country

- Ben (son of Kroemers) - IA National Guard
- Devin (friend of Kroemers) - IA Army National Guard
- Mitchell & Benjamin (relatives of Schoens & Smiths) - US Navy
- Harrison (son of Siecks) - US Army, stationed in TX
- Jordan (grandson of Kim Neuhaus) - IA National Guard

Collect of the Day

Let us pray...Almighty God, You know we live in the midst of so many dangers that in our frailty we cannot stand upright. Grant strength and protection to support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Concluding Prayers

Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and take them to heart that, by the patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Together we pray... **I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that you would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.



✠ *Knowledge and Love* ✠

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

St. Paul begins I Corinthians 8 by saying that this passage of Scripture is about food offered to idols. Apparently, in the Greek city of Corinth there were Christians who faced somewhat of a problem. It was common in cities like Corinth for there to be many non-Christian religious rituals, state festivals, and even things like birthdays, anniversaries, and funerals, where animal sacrifices would be offered up to false gods. During these sacrifices, a part of the animal was burned on the altar dedicated to whatever false god was being honored. Whatever meat was not consumed by the flames was either eaten at the temple, in what was essentially a version of a fellowship hall, or taken home and eaten by the families celebrating whatever occasion.

The initial problem for the Christians living in Corinth was what to do when someone invited them to dinner in these temples or homes when the food to be served was the leftover sacrifice to a false God. Some Corinthians believed that it was perfectly fine to eat this meat, while others believed dining in a pagan temple with food sacrificed to a false god was a sin against the true God. But when we see Paul addressing this problem in our Scripture lesson, we see that from God's perspective, this is more than just a question of what we or someone else may eat, or even what we may or may not do in any aspect of our lives. It is really a question of how we are to love or care for other people. Especially other people whose faith may not be as strong as ours. And when we see that this is the true issue facing the Corinthians, we also see that just because you are allowed to do something, doesn't mean that you always should.

Take for instance, gambling. Now there are some devout Christians who believe that gambling is sinful and therefore their consciences will not allow them to go to the casino, play the lottery, or bet on sports. But many of these well intentioned Christians may be surprised to find out that there is nothing in the Bible that says gambling is in and of itself sinful. To be sure, gambling encourages greed and coveting, as well as the mismanagement of the gifts given to us by God. It also may undermine our reliance on God to give us our daily bread and lead people away from productive work. However, because the Scriptures do not say that gambling is sinful, even with all of its dangers, Christians must not say it is sinful. If we do, we are attempting to build a fence around God's Law, which is the same mistake that the religious leaders of Jesus' day fell into.

So, Christians may gamble, but should they? Should churches sponsor bus trips to the casino? Should Christians buy raffle tickets or participate in office pools that make watching the big game "interesting"? They may - after all knowledgeable Christians, well versed in the Scriptures, know that God does not forbid gambling. They have that knowledge.

But let's say Bethany sells some raffle tickets to raise money for the one of our ministries. We all may know that this type of gambling is fine, but what if it encourages someone to buy tickets who, wanting to support the work of the church, still believes gambling is sinful or maybe has had a problem with gambling in the past. All of a sudden, the church, doing something which was initially not wrong, has led another to act against their conscience. And when one goes against their conscience, uninformed and as weak as it may be – when one is not certain whether he has done right or fearful that he has done wrong, the condition of that person is to be pitied. In this

case, Bethany might have had the knowledge that gambling is not sinful, but with this knowledge, St. Paul would say we destroyed the brother for whom Christ died and therefore not only sinned against the brother, but also sinned against God.

This is why St. Paul reminds the Corinthians at the beginning of our text that knowledge by itself puffs up, but love builds up. Everyone in Corinth seemed to know that food sacrificed to a false god was food sacrificed to nothing. So, it was permissible to eat such food. But even though all of the Corinthian Christians knew this, there were some who, due to their former habits and practices, could not rid their consciences that eating such meat somehow connected them to these false idols and their worship. This was their weak point and this is where they needed to be built up. This is where those who not only possessed the correct knowledge, but also had clear consciences regarding the matter, needed to use their knowledge not to puff themselves up, but to love their weaker brothers and sisters.

Paul suggests that this entails more than just telling them what is right or wrong, but refraining from anything that might harm their faith. He himself says, “*if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.*”

I pray that all of us might have the right knowledge of our Christian faith. But I also pray that your knowledge of our faith, or your knowledge of whatever it is you have, does not “puff you up” but helps build you and others up. This type of knowledge is always coupled with love – not just for God, but for all whom Christ has died for as well.

I hope therefore that you, along with St. Paul may boldly say that if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make him stumble. That you might say, if gambling makes my sister stumble, or if slacking off at work or in school, or if sleeping in on Sunday morning, or whatever thought, word, or action I may do makes my brother or sister stumble, I will not do it. Not because God says or I think it is sinful, but because I have love as well as knowledge.

Love, working together with knowledge, is what St. Paul urges the Christians in Corinth to strive for when settling the issue of food sacrificed to idols. St. Paul is helped in his efforts by having the perfect example of knowledge and love in Jesus Christ our Lord. If He, as the Son of God, was willing to set aside all of the power and freedom that belonged to Him as God, to die for us sinners, shouldn't we also be willing to conform our lives to the way of love? Love for God and love for those around us?

When we have knowledge and love we must confess that just because we can do some things, does not mean that we always should. This is the mark, not of a weak Christian, but of a strong and mature one. And this mark is placed upon us not through knowledge alone, but from true knowledge that always is found with love. If we desire to grow in this true knowledge with love, we must never turn to ourselves or even to God, insofar as He comes to us in His Law. But go to God on the cross, where we clearly see His love for us. Where we don't see Him using His divine power and might to come down from the cross or calling angels to fight for Him. But rather see Him dying for us poor, miserable, and weak sinners so that we might have forgiveness and life. So that we might live as His people here in this world 2000 years later. So that we might live as St. Paul urges the Corinthians – with true knowledge, knowledge filled with love for God and love for one another. Amen.

