Catechetical Material on the Importance of Deepening our Prayer Life

Part I: Introduction
This catechetical material is designed for graduating high school students so that they will have a better understanding of the importance of continuously deepening their personal and communal prayer life that is centered in the Eucharist.

Topic: The Importance of Deepening our Prayer Life
Kind of Material: This is a whole day recollection module for the graduating high school students on prayer.

Audience: This Catechetical Material is intended for Fourth Year high school students from a Private Catholic Co-Ed school in an urban setting.

Situation: Fourth Year High School students from a private Catholic school ranging from 16-18 years old understand that prayer is a relationship with God. They have learned that authentic prayer is inseparable with community service. They pray during the school masses and liturgies and attend outreach activities which are required as part of their school’s religious activities. As such prayer is perceived as academic requirement in Catholic schools and not really as a relationship with God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

Problem: How to teach the students the importance of continuously deepening their personal and communal prayer life that is centered in the Eucharist using the story of Jesus walking on the water (Matthew 14:22-33).

Objectives: This recollection is ordered to enable the graduating high school students to:

- Worship: Appreciate the importance of continuously deepening their prayer life as maturing followers of Christ
- Doctrine: Understand that faith is nurtured by prayer which is entering into a loving personal relationship with God our Father as His adopted children through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit
- Morals: Witness to their genuine Catholic prayer by becoming a prayerful person who lives a life of loving service to God and others amidst trials and challenges in their life

Significance of the Material
Objective Significance:
Continuous deepening of our prayer life enables us to enter into a more intimate loving relationship with God.

Subjective Significance:
As the graduating students enter into a new chapter in their life, they will face more temptations and new difficulties that would often distract and take them away from praying and attending Mass. Understanding that their prayer life reflects the relationship they have with God would help them discern and act according to God’s way especially in difficult situations.

Scope and Limitations:
This catechetical material is intended for graduating high school students focusing on the continuous deepening of their prayer life. Using Matthew’s account on Jesus Walking on the Water (Matthew 14:22-33) and from CFC 1475 and 1479, this recollection for graduating high school students would focus on continuously deepening their prayer life centered on the Eucharist. Although there is a mention of the Eucharist, it is not the purpose of this recollection to discuss Eucharist at length. The inclusion of it is to emphasize its centrality in all our prayers.

Methodology:
This catechetical material uses the NCDP’s source integration (Scripture, Church Teaching and Human Experience) to communicate the importance of deepening one’s personal and communal prayer life centered in the Eucharist. It uses the see-judge-act-celebrate-evaluate framework to guide the students in the process of appreciating prayer and deepening their prayer life. In discussing the Gospel story “Jesus Walking on the Water” and see more clearly how the story will help them in their struggles with their prayer life, W. Brueggemann’s three-fold schema or pattern of psalms (orientation, disorientation, new orientation) will be utilized.

Outline:
I. Introduction (Situation)
II. Opening Prayer
III. Human Context
   - Sharing of students’ personal reason for praying and how their prayer life affects their Christian faith.
IV. Exposition
   - A. Film showing of a video clip of “Jesus Walking on the Water” in Matthew 14:22-33
   - B. Discussion on what the story of “Jesus Walking on the Water” teaching them about the importance of maintaining a good prayer life with guided questions for reflection.
      1. Key point 1: A Walk to Remember
      2. Key points 2 & 3: Catch Me I’m Falling
      3. Key points 4 & 5: You Changed My Life
V. Integration
VI. Action plan
   - Creating a personal working plan that will continuously deepen and keep one’s prayer life alive even after graduation
VII. Evaluation
VIII. Celebration of the Holy Eucharist

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V. Only.)

Part II: The Material for Students

I. Situation:

You are now graduating students from a Catholic school. Being enrolled in this institution for many years you already have the knowledge of the basic truths about our faith which includes prayer. However, do you really value these basic truths? Or are they only put as a matter of marks or grade? Do you realize the importance of your prayer life especially during your struggles and challenges as you enter college life. If prayer is at the heart of our relationship with Jesus and our response to God who already knows and loves us perfectly, is this not an assurance that we can relate to God in good and challenging times?

Thus, we hope that through this recollection before your graduation, you will have a clearer understanding of the importance of your prayer life especially during your struggles and challenges as you enter college life. If prayer is at the heart of our relationship with Jesus and our response to God who already knows and loves us perfectly, is this not an assurance that we can relate to God in good and challenging times?

II. Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let us reflect as we listen to the song, Panginoon, Aking Tanglaw (Fruto Ramirez, SJ).

III. Human Context

A. Let us become aware of our situation as graduating students. You have already an understanding of what prayer is all about in your CLE classes. We invite you to answer these following questions individually:

1. Why do you pray? How often do you pray?
2. What are the difficulties or struggles that hinder you to pray?

B. Group yourselves into pairs and share your answers.

C. We would like to ask for volunteer students to share in the big group their answers to the questions.

IV. Exposition

A. Film showing of a video clip of “Jesus Walking on the Water” in Matthew 14:22-33

After the film showing, please answer the following questions:

1. What feelings or thoughts came into your mind after watching the film?
2. How do you think does this story relate with your prayer life?

We usually use this video clip or the Scripture text in Matthew to discuss faith. But now you will see that this also teaches about prayer life which is a key in nurturing your faith in relationship with God.

B. Discussion of the Scripture Text

I. A Walk to Remember

Key point #1

Activity: Crocodile Game

1. You will group yourselves into 10.
2. All groups will line up in one side of the venue.
3. Imagine that you are frogs in a dry land about to cross the swamp filled with crocodiles to reach the other side.
4. Each member/ frog of the group will have to go to the other side of the venue using 5 lotus leaves in the form of rugs.
5. An individual should step on the available rugs without stepping on the water to reach the other side. Once an individual steps on the water, he/she will be eaten by the crocodile and he/she will have to go back from the beginning.

6. The first group that has all its members on the side wins the game.

Guide Questions:

1. How did you use the rugs in crossing the water to reach the other side?
2. What did you and your classmates do before and after crossing?
3. What was your observation during the game?
4. How is the activity related to you as graduating students?

In the activity, you have experienced letting go to reach the other side on your own. Some groups talked first about what they’re going to do before starting while others immediately began crossing. Some of you were very eager to cross the water but some were not. Many found it difficult to cross because of the limited rugs given to you and the distraction coming from others.

Just like in the game, as you walk your way from high school towards the next chapter of your life, you are reminded to remember what Jesus did in the story, “Walking on the Water.” Let us reflect on how Jesus taught the disciples how to proceed with life and enter into a special kind of, “A Walk to Remember”.

Matthew 14: 22-23

Then he made the disciples get into the boat and precede him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. After doing so, he went up to the mountain by himself to pray. When it was evening he was there alone.

1. What did Jesus instruct the disciples to do?
2. What did Jesus do after sending his apostles?
3. How do you feel after being able to learn a lot from your high school experience for being entrusted by your teachers and parents to go to the next chapter of your life?

After having finished preaching and ministering to the crowds, Jesus sent his disciples into the boat to precede him to the
other side of the Sea of Galilee. Here, it seems that the disciples had just experienced a feeling of certainty in life after having seen the teachings and miracles of Jesus. We can assume that as the disciples embarked on the boat they were still filled with awe, recalling with one another their wonderful experiences with Jesus. Through this sharing, the disciples’ understanding about their faith and life and about who Jesus is became deeper.

As graduating students soon to be embarking to college life, the experiences and ideas you have learned and shared with your teachers, parents, and friends helped you a lot in understanding your Christian life. As we gather in the Eucharist we also recall the wonderful works of God as we listen to the Scripture readings in the Liturgy of the Word. Through it we also grow in understanding about God like the disciples in the boat.

However, with the confidence and joy that you are feeling right for nearly finishing high school life, you might become complacent with life. Like Jesus sending his disciples on the other side of the sea, your teachers and parents trust you to go on to the next level of your life as college students. Here you are reminded by Jesus that prayer and the Eucharist plays an important and special role in your lives as seen in the story when he went to the mountain to pray after sending his disciples.

In this part of the test, Jesus shows that even after finishing a ministry or before going to the next, he still finds a special moment where he can pray. Just like Jesus, each of you is also called to strengthen your prayer life now that you are about to graduate and face a new life.

In the following discussions after the break, you will discover the importance of prayer as graduating students soon to be embarking on a new chapter in your life.

**Reflection:**
How can prayer still be significant in your life as graduating students soon to be embarking on a new chapter in your academic life?

**Break (30 minutes)**

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2. **Catch Me I’m Falling**

**Key point #2:**

**Recap:**

Before we had the break, the first part of this recollection gave you a glimpse of the disciples’ disposition when they boarded the boat. They had a wonderful experience with Jesus. These made their understanding about their faith and who Jesus is in their lives become deeper. We connected this with your life now as graduating students. You are going to move on to the next phase of your student life, bringing with you all your learning and experiences. But in this part of the story you are reminded about the importance of prayer and the Eucharist as we saw Jesus going to the mountain to pray after sending his disciples.

In the next key points that we will discuss, you will better understand why it is important to nurture our prayer life both personally and communally in the Eucharist. But before we proceed to that we will have an activity which maybe most of you are familiar with.

**Activity: Trust Walk**

1. Look for a partner and assigned among you who will be student A or B.
2. Student A will be blindfolded and student B will be the guide by giving instructions and holding his/her hands. He/she will walk from a designated starting point to a destination point. The student who is blindfolded is not allowed to talk or make any conversation.
3. After student A reaches the destination, we will repeat the activity but this time student A will be the guide and student B will be blindfolded.

**Guide Questions:**

1. What did you feel while you were blindfolded and were not able to see?
2. What were the difficulties you encountered as you walked blindfolded?
3. How did your partner’s voice and hand help you reach your destination?

In this activity, you experienced how hard it was to walk in darkness. As much as possible you want to communicate clearly with the one who is guiding you. Many of you were still hesitant to make a step in fear that you might bump on something or someone or even fall especially when your partner was unclear in giving instructions.

In the next part of our recollection, you will see how the disciples as they sail beyond the sea struggled with the strong wind and waves in the darkness of the night. In the midst of their struggle, Jesus comes to help and guide them throughout their voyage in the sea. We will reflect on this story of how God guides you in the dark and struggling moments of your life and how he “catches you when you’re falling”.

**Matthew 14: 24-25**

*Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore, was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them, walking on the sea.*

1. According to the story, what is happening with the disciples’ boat after having sailed a few miles offshore?
2. Like the waves and the wind that tossed against the disciple’s boat, what are the problems you encounter as a student?

Jesus approaches his disciples at the moment when they are being tossed about by the waters of the sea. In the Old Testament, the water symbolizes death and disorder. Here, Matthew might be presenting a great evil faced by the apostles towards crossing to the other side of the sea. This scene might represent your life as students. As you complete your final requirements for graduation and as you cross to the other side of your life as college students, you will find yourself going against many kinds of struggles where you often feel dying out and disordered. Some of these struggles might be your confusion on what course you are going to take in college, or the struggle of adjusting to new people and relationships. Many of you might be struggling also about leaving home and going to a new environment away from your families and loved ones. The usual response of a
Catholic student like you when encountered by these situations is to ask God for help through prayer. Usually, you think that you pray because you feel the urgency of your need for God’s help in a particular situation. But as you see in this story, before the disciples uttered any help to Jesus, Jesus already took the initiative of reaching out to them. This is because in prayer, you are not the one who actually reaches out to God first. When you feel like praying, it is because God is already taking the initiative of reaching out to you, calling and inspiring you to pray.

Matthew 14: 26-27
When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. “It is a ghost,” they said, and they cried out in fear. At Once Jesus spoke to them, “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.”

1. Why were the disciples frightful when they saw someone walking on the water?
2. What are your fears in life as graduating students?
3. What did Jesus do when he saw his disciples frightened?

Being overwhelmed by the strong wind and water and the darkness of the night at the sea, the disciples were terrified when they saw someone walking in the water. They did not recognize that it was Jesus coming to them.

When you go to college, the struggles and challenges you will face will become more difficult. These struggles and difficulties might put you in a situation where you might become confused and disoriented from the way you usually see your Christian life during high school days.

Many times, being overwhelmed by these situations will blind you and diminish your capacity to recognize Christ amidst your problems and confusion. Being overwhelmed on adjusting to a more serious demand to study harder might, for example, blind you to see that Jesus is there with you even in times when you fail an exam despite your perseverance to study. Darkness here represents the unknown, the uncertainty of what will happen. Your usual tendency as students when faced with uncertainties in life is to fear.

In this part of the story, Jesus speaks to his disciples, “take courage, it is I, do not be afraid.” In prayer, God also speaks to you and through continuously developing your prayer life you also grow in your relationship with God which will enable you to recognize God’s presence even in the darkest and most uncertain parts of your lives. St. John of the Cross referred to this moment as the Dark Night of the Soul where although you struggle in the deepest moments of darkness in your life God continuously guides you even when “Heaven’s answer is hidden from your sight”.

So even when you fail in an exam despite studying hard, prayer gives you a time of silence before God who accompanies you even when you feel down and listens to what is in your heart. Through prayer you see more clearly that God is there with you in the guiding presence of your family and friends who continuously give you encouragement, support and love in the midst of your failure. Psalm 23:4 shows you this kind of relationship with God when the psalmist says in his prayer, “Even when I walk through the valley of darkness, I fear no evil for you are at my side.”

As a community we express this confidence in God as we pray in the Eucharist, “Deliver us Lord from every evil and grant us peace in our day. In your mercy keep us free from sin and protect us from all anxiety as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ”.

Reflection:
Right now, what are your fears as a graduating student? What do you think is Jesus telling you now from this part of the story?

Closing Song: In Him Alone

Lunch

Ice-breakers
3. You Changed My Life

Key point #4
Recap: This morning we made a connection in your life as graduating students with the first half of the story of Jesus walking on the water. In the first key point, the role and importance of prayer and the Eucharist was introduced. The second and the third key points underscored the struggles and fears of the disciples when they encountered the waves and wind. They were even terrified of Jesus walking on the water and thought that he was a ghost. This is similar also to
your own experiences of struggles and fears which unfortunately do not stop when you step out of high school.

The last two key points will help you better understand why developing your prayer life more is necessary and that praying with the community in the Eucharist contributes to the growth in your relationship with God. Hopefully, this will lead to a transformation in you and you can say “God, you changed my life”.

Matthew 14:27-33

Peter said to him in reply, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” He said, “Come.” Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw how strong the wind was, he became frightened; and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!”

1. Why did Peter ask Jesus to let him come to him on the water?
2. Why did Peter sink after taking few successful steps?

In this part of the story you see how Peter really wants to come to Jesus, but have you noticed Peter is also testing the presence of Jesus when he said, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” There are times in our lives when we have this kind of behavior when we pray, especially in times when we are facing great challenges in our lives like what you are experiencing now upon leaving your high school life. High school has become your comfort zone and here comes the college life which is an unknown world to you. This new situation which you are about to face might bring you great trials in life. There is the tendency for you to command Jesus to answer your prayer right away. When you feel your prayers are not granted you feel disappointed; or sometimes you lose your faith and even your trust in God. But the truth is that in prayer, God is calling us to TRUST even when distractions come that when you are already on your way to pray, suddenly there are things that pop up into your mind and you let yourself be refocused to that. This struggle is something you will continue to face even as you move on to college.

This passage is telling us that prayer life is a relationship that is journeying. It experiences struggles and difficulties. It is not static but rather it is on a process of deepening our intimate loving relationship with God who is the source of all good things that move us to holiness. When we celebrate the Eucharist, we affirm this in the Eucharistic prayer when the priest leads us in praying, “Lord, you are holy indeed, the fountain of all holiness…”

This relationship can be deepened by giving God your full TRUST even when distractions come. And the key to continuously deepen this trust is by continuously praying as St. Paul says “pray without ceasing” (1 Th. 5:17). If trust is present, you will always call God to save you and Peter did amidst difficulty, struggles and trials where you can sincerely pray, “Save me O God, for the waters threaten my life… rescue me from the mire, may I not sink.” (Psalm 69:2, 15)

We have prepared a video clip for you to watch and reflect on its message. After this, you will answer the guide questions for reflection which will also help you in making your prayer.

Video Clip: Priority

Reflection:
1. What are the things that trouble or pre-occupy you as a graduating student?
2. What is Jesus telling you?

Activity:

Oftentimes you also experience these situations in your prayer life. You pray to God but still in most cases you let the constancy of your prayers be disturbed by too many preoccupations such as responsibilities at home and in school, your life as a son/daughter, as a student and as a friend. There are also situations and things around you that would also distract you from your focus in God in prayer; too much inclination in texting, internet surfing, new gadgets and many more. Moments will also come that when you are already on your way to pray, suddenly there are things that pop up into your mind and you let yourself be refocused to that. This struggle is something you will continue to face even as you move on to college.

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Activity:
hand in return. Prayer is not a passive waiting for answers to fall from heaven. You are called to work. When you work with God, when you strive to recognize how God moves in your lives, and cooperate with God’s Grace your faith develops.

A good faith helps you develop a deeper relationship with God. The phrase “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” is more of a challenge than a question for you as graduating students. Like in the case of Peter, Jesus knows you have faith in him. It is there, but it is little. God is calling you to grow in faith, and one best way to cultivate this faith is to continuously deepen your relationship with God through prayer. As you pray, knowing that God’s grace is there, you are moved to work hard in all your academic requirements, to understand your parents when sometimes you feel they don’t seem to care about your feelings, to forgive friends who betray you and teachers who humiliate you, to believe in yourself to look forward to the many possibilities that God offers. In the end, “the wind will die down” maybe instantly or more often slowly and people may see God working in you. This may lead people to worship God and see the many surprises that prayer may bring.

“Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying, ‘truly, you are the Son of God.’” As persons-in-community, we are being called to celebrate the abundant and overflowing love of God for us not only in our individual prayers but also with our Christian community. The boat in this story represents the church where, together, we worship God and do God hommage especially in our celebration of the Eucharist. Jesus who is truly the Son of God reaches out to you in the most intimate manner in the Eucharist. Jesus who has walked with you all throughout your high school years, will walk with you in the coming years, and will continue to walk by you until you finally come home.

Activity: Five Fingers of Prayer

As you leave your alma mater and sail towards new horizons, you are continuously invited to strengthen your loving relationship with God. As you navigate towards new horizons, big tides may come along and waves may get you wet, toss you down, and even drown you a little. But like Peter, remember to call on Jesus in prayer. Anchor yourselves in Jesus for the Jesus who walked on water more than 2000 years ago, is the very same Jesus who has walked with you all throughout your high school years, will walk with you in the coming years, and will continue to walk by you until you finally come home.

**Activity: Five Fingers of Prayer**

**Materials:** Bond papers, masking tape

This activity will guide and help you in your prayers. We will provide you with bond papers where you are going to trace your hand and write the following prayers designated for each finger.

1. **Thumb** – Your thumb is nearest to you. So begin your prayer by praying for those closest to you. They are the easiest to remember.

2. **Pointing Finger** – Pray for those who teach, instruct and heal. This includes teachers, doctors and Church leaders. They need support and wisdom in pointing others to the right direction. Keep them in your prayer.

3. **Middle Finger** – It reminds us of our leaders. For the President, leaders in business industry, and administrators. These people shape our nation and guide public opinion. They need God’s guidance.

4. **Ring Finger** – Surprising to many is the fact that this is the weakest finger as any piano teacher would testify. It should remind us to pray for those who are weak, in trouble or in pain. They need your prayer day and night.

5. **Little Finger** – The last finger is the smallest finger of all which is where we should place ourselves in relation to God and others. Your little finger should remind you to pray for yourself. By the time you have prayed for others, your own needs will be put into proper perspective and you will be able to pray for yourself more effectively. Offer all your joys, pains, and even doubts to God and he will be there to help you. God assures you of his loving presence.

You will be divided into 4 groups per section. Post your work on the board and form any symbol of the Church. (Note: Select some of the outputs that can be used for the prayers of the faithful during the Eucharist.)

**C. Integration**

**Doctrine:** God continuously invites us to a loving personal relationship with Him as His adopted children through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. (CFC1475)

**Morals:** As we continuously deepen our prayer life, we are transformed into real disciples of the Risen Christ who witness to His love amidst trials and challenges.

**Worship:** All Catholic prayers are centered in the Eucharist which is the core of both our personal and communal prayers. In the Eucharist and in prayers, our relationship with the Risen Christ is nurtured.

**Sources:**


Film Clip on “Jesus Walking on the Water”

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mjlo4olBy5A

Prayers taken from the Holy Eucharist


Video Clip “Priority”

www.donghaeng.net

High School Group Members:
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Rosendo J. Jaynos       Camille Iris N. Naval
Henry M. Regal          Allan Philip R. Garcia

Mentors:

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Mr. Raoul R. Roncal