

Prayer Works  
for Teens  
Book 1

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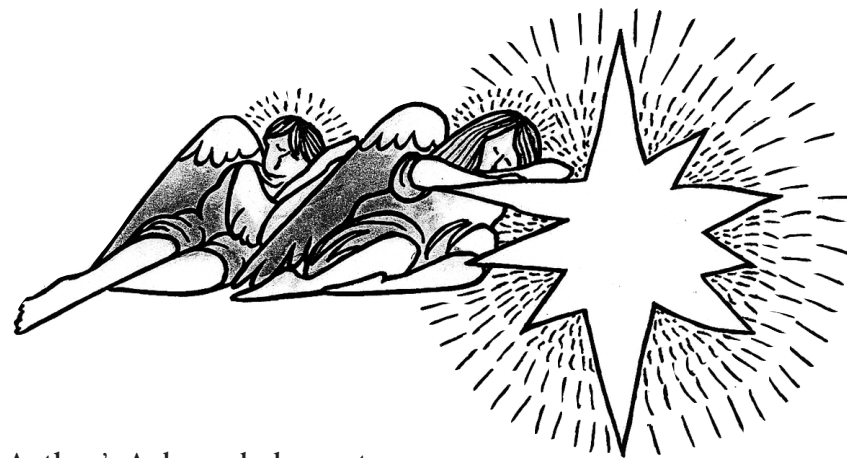
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This book is dedicated to  
David L. Chang  
1958–1994

David, you gifted me with imagination and spirit.  
You stretched my religious boundaries  
to help me form new images for faith and worship.  
You taught me to see all of life as art and service,  
and to see all of prayer as exploration and discovery.



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## Introduction to *Prayer Works*

Prayer works. It really does. Or does it?

Does it work for you? When you try to put together a meeting or an event, what's the hardest part to plan? the icebreakers and games? the theme presentations? the small-group discussions? the large-group activities? or the prayer time?

If you're like many youth ministers, the prayer time is the most difficult to plan. Why? Is it because prayer really *doesn't* work, or because it's really challenging to find ways to pray that are suitable and meaningful for teenagers?

You probably wouldn't be involved in ministry if you truly thought that prayer doesn't work. So, more than likely you just need some help finding ways to pray with young people that connect with who they are and what's important in their lives.

Perhaps you also need a renewed sense of what to expect from teenagers. For instance, if you use the same worship experience with a peer ministry team of high school seniors at a leadership training retreat, and then with a group of seventh graders at an all-night movie lock-in, can you expect the same degree of involvement and prayerfulness? Probably not.

### Sets of Prayer Experiences

Here's what *Prayer Works* offers. Each of the four books includes three sets of prayer experiences. Each set consists of four prayer formats: a short prayer, a medium-length reflection prayer, a long ritual prayer, and a family prayer. Every prayer set focuses on a different image or object. The three focus objects in this book are a rock, an aloe plant, and children of God.

To find out what the focus objects are for the other books of *Prayer Works*, check the back cover of this book. And while you're checking, note what comes at the end of this book. You'll find that the prayers for all four books are indexed by Scripture citations and themes.

The prayer experiences in each book are easy to lead, but you will need adult volunteers to help you with many of them.

### Short Prayer

The short prayer can stand by itself, or it can be the introductory prayer at an event that will include an additional prayer or two with the same focus. The short prayer is perfect for that situation

when you want to start off with some sort of prayer, *but* . . . —“*but* everyone doesn’t know one another yet,” “*but* teenagers will be feeling awkward and it probably won’t be too prayerful,” “*but* it can kill your event to get too involved too soon with anything deep or complex.” You probably know what I mean.

So this first prayer is short and sweet. It reminds us of our connection to God, quiets down the participants, focuses them, and gets them ready to begin. *But* it isn’t so long or cumbersome that the young people start getting restless.

**Medium Prayer** The medium-length prayer can stand by itself, or it can be the second prayer in a series of two or three prayers that you lead at an event or class. It is a faith-sharing prayer that involves self-reflection using Scripture passages or comments, reflection questions, and a conversation with a partner or small group. This prayer has an accompanying handout that contains the Scripture passage(s) or comments and the reflection questions. Directions for using the reflection part of the medium prayer follow. The directions are customized to apply to three different types of groups.

#### Self-Reflection and Sharing with a Small Group

If you have a group of fewer than fifteen teenagers who know one another well, give everyone a copy of the reflection handout, found at the end of the prayer set. Direct them to listen while the Scriptures and comments are being read, and then to jot down some thoughts or feelings that are triggered by the reflection questions. Naturally, you will always have some folks who aren’t “jotters” or journalers, and there is no need to pressure them to write if they don’t want to. But giving the participants time to reflect quietly, whether it is in their head or on paper, is very helpful if faith sharing is expected in the group.

One effective way to use this reflection method is to have volunteers read the different sections of the handout. For example, if the handout is arranged in this order—Scripture passage, comments, and questions—then one person reads the Scripture passage, a second person reads the comments, and a third person reads the questions, pausing after each question so that everyone (including the readers) can reflect and jot down their thoughts. That pattern would be repeated for the next set(s) of Scripture passage(s), comments, and questions.

Using different voices for different sections of the handout will help everyone listen more carefully. It’s easier to listen when different people alternate reading, as long as every reader speaks with a clear, confident voice that can be heard and understood.

Allow everyone to share verbally with the group. This can be done in a random, spontaneous, whoever-is-ready-to-share-can-share method. Or it can be done with an ordered, go-around-in-a-circle-and-share method.

Often the focusing object (for example, a rock) can be used as a turn designator for this type of prayer. When it’s time for sharing, you, as the prayer leader, pick up the object first, offer your reflections, and then pass the object to the next person to do the same. Or, after you pick up the object and offer a reflection, you place it back in the center of the group and whoever else is ready to share can pick up the object and start sharing.

By the way, not only does the focusing object make an excellent turn designator, it also does a fine job of helping people forget that everyone is watching them. It can be awkward for some people—especially teenagers, but adults as well—to talk to a group when everyone is looking at them. Having an object to fiddle with can distract them from that awkward feeling and help them feel more comfortable.

The prayer experience can be ended with the closing reflection included in the prayer set or with any spontaneous words you think are appropriate.

#### Self-Reflection and Sharing with a Large Group

If you have a group larger than fifteen and don’t want to separate the young people into smaller groups for the process just described, you can change the dynamics of this experience by not distributing the reflection handout to everyone. Instead, tell everyone to find a partner to share with. Call on designated readers to read the Scripture passage(s), comments, and questions from the handout. As each question is read, the partners can share with each other. You might direct the young people to switch partners periodically if you are trying to build community in your group. Or you might direct them to keep the same partner if you are more concerned with developing fewer but deeper relationships. End the prayer experience with the closing reflection or words of your own choosing.

#### Self-Reflection and Sharing with a Journaling Group

If you intend to have the group write in a journal, have the Scripture passage(s), comments, and questions from the handout already written on a chalkboard, piece of poster board, or overhead projector. Everyone can then write the questions in their journal, respond to one or more of them, and then join a journaling partner for a faith-sharing walk. Because this type of sharing disperses the group, it doesn’t always work well to end the activity with a closing reflection, but that’s up to you as you plan your event and assess your group’s needs. Sometimes you might want to regather and close as a unified group; other times you might want to let the partners’ sharing flow into a break or meal and have no official closing.

**Long Prayer** The long prayer can stand by itself or serve as one in a series of two or three prayers at an event or class. This prayer involves more creativity and ritual than the short and medium ones. It is difficult

to describe or summarize because it varies so much from prayer set to prayer set. The long prayer, as its name suggests, usually takes the most time, but it depends on your group and the situation.

Here are examples of the processes in some of the long prayers in the four books of *Prayer Works*:

- ♦ In book 1, the long prayer with the rock image focuses on the strength and permanence of virtues and principles. It involves painting words on actual rocks.
- ♦ In book 2, the long prayer with the nuts image focuses on the importance of God in a life of many choices. It involves creating a faith carrier out of a jar of rice and walnuts.
- ♦ In book 3, the long prayer with the four seasons image focuses on the seasons and repeating patterns in our life. It involves a prayer journey to four different environments.
- ♦ In book 4, the long prayer with the puzzle image focuses on the puzzle of sin and on finding our peace (as well as our piece) in a reconciliation service. It involves working with puzzle pieces.

## Family Component

The most unique aspect of *Prayer Works* is the family component. So often families have no idea what their teenage members do at parish events and retreats. But *Prayer Works* gives you an easy way to involve parents and siblings in the prayer experienced by the teen. Two items make up the family component: a family handout and a sample letter for families.

### Family Handout

Each set of prayers includes a handout containing a family faith-sharing prayer. The family handout is modeled after the medium prayer handout, but the teenager does *not* need to have experienced that prayer for the family handout to be effective. The family handout includes directions and questions designed for use in family settings. You can photocopy the handout and use it in one of the following settings:

**A gathering of families after a retreat or long event.** End a youth retreat or other event with a family meal. Invite all the parents, brothers, sisters, and whoever else may share your young people's homes with them. After the meal, invite several young people to get up and share about parts of their prayer experience by telling stories, doing skits, or showing examples of what happened.

The families can then share their answers to the questions on the handout. Even young children can participate in answering most of the questions. In this way, the families not only have some idea of the kind of experience their teenagers had but also share in the experience itself.

**A separate gathering of youth and families.** Hold a reunion for the teens who participated in an event or retreat, and invite all their family members to attend. Or just have a gathering for the young people you work with and their families. In either case, after a

meal, do an activity that involves storytelling or skits related to the event in which the prayer was used, or just distribute the family handout and move the family groups into conversation using the faith questions.

**A bulletin or parish newsletter insert.** Use the family handout as a bulletin or parish newsletter insert. This is a wonderful way to spread the good news about what young people in your faith community are doing. Write a brief article about the event in which you used the related prayer forms with the young people. Include other folksy details about where you were, the history of the event, or some of the related activities. Explain that you are providing this family prayer handout as a service to *all* families, whether or not they had a teenager who attended the event, and that you hope it helps spread the kind of spirit the parish's young people experienced at the event.

**A personal letter and take-home handout.** Send a personal letter home to the parents of the participants, highlighting parts of your group's event or retreat, and thanking them for making the family arrangements that were necessary for their teenager to attend the event. A sample letter for families (described below) is included at the end of each set of prayers for you to use as a guide in composing your own letter.

**A follow-up mailing.** A few days after the meeting or event, mail the family handout to the parents of the young people who attended, along with a letter of explanation.

### Sample Letter for Families

At the end of each set of prayers, a sample letter for families is offered for possible use with the family prayer handout. Be sure to customize the letter to match the prayer and the setting in which it was used. And be sure to personalize the letter by using the names of the young people and parents. If you do not have access to a computer to make this feasible, then you could ask a few volunteers to type up the letters for you. Simply supply the basic text, with a list of the names and addresses of the young people and their parents. You'll find this extra effort goes a long way.

## Benefits of the Family Component

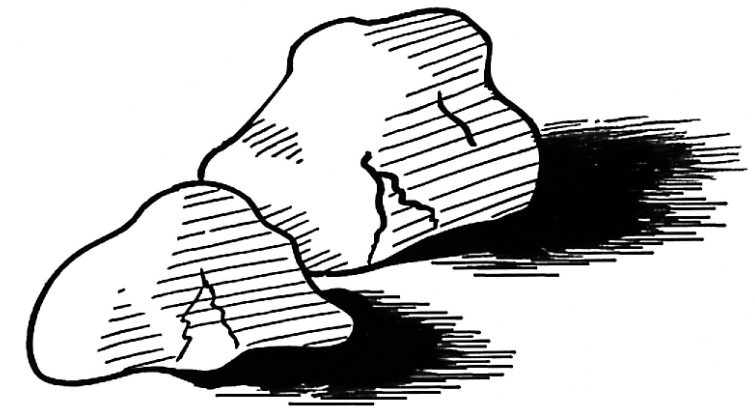
If you are hesitant about including a family component in your plans, please consider the benefits. If you get to know your young people's families, the young people will be more apt to come to future events because their parents will feel a greater attachment to you and your parish. The parents will be more likely to call on you in an emergency because they have developed trust in you, and they will also be more likely to say yes when you need volunteers. Besides, taking care of family needs and helping families develop their faith is a wonderful way to improve the lives of your young people. So how can you go wrong? That's a winning combination!

## **Prayer Works for Youth Leaders, Parents, and Peer Ministers**

Don't worry about how to pull off these prayers—each one is simple to do and has already proven successful with teenagers. And the instructions are very specific and easy to follow, which makes it possible for peer ministers, parents, and youth leaders to run the experiences. For instance, material that is to be presented aloud to the group is highlighted with a black rule at the left margin. Teen leaders who are looking for prayers to facilitate will like these because they get the participants involved. Moreover, the prayers in each set have the same format, and that makes it easy to add icebreakers or related activities with a similar focus.

If the teens can do it, so can you. All you need is a little faith. So relax. Remember, prayer works. It really does.

## *Prayer Set 1* **Rock**



## Short Prayer

- Themes** ♦ the strength of rocks and their sacredness to the Lakota people  
♦ faith that is solid as a rock

**Background Information** Although this prayer is short, its theme is broad. It brings together the symbols of rock as strength and solidity, as a metaphor for faith, and as a sacred object to the Lakota people.

The Lakotas are a Native American people with a rich prayer heritage. The rock prayer is only one of their many traditions. When you speak of the Lakota people, it is important that you always show respect so that the participants in your prayer experience see the rock and its significance to the Lakotas prayerfully and reverently, never comically or disrespectfully.

### Preparation

**Supplies** □ a rock

**Setting** This prayer can take place almost anywhere, with the participants arranged in almost any position. They can sit around a meeting table, on the floor, or on couches and chairs spread out around the room. They can even stand. Because the prayer is so brief, it doesn't require a distraction-free environment. As long as the participants can hear the words and see the speaker, the prayer can be effective.

**Expectations** This prayer works equally well with junior high youth, senior high youth, and adults. It is short, to the point, and informative, and sets the mood to go forward into your meeting, event, retreat, class, or other gathering.

**Procedure** If you want to emphasize the rock to the participants, hold it in your hand. If you have a very large and heavy rock, put it in the middle of the area where the participants are gathered.  
The prayer is simple. Proclaim the words in a clear and confident voice. If you have an active and restless group, you might first

ask them to quiet themselves so that they can become more aware of the presence of God.

### Prayer

Rock—*inyan*—is the oldest thing that can be found on earth. It is sacred to the Lakota people. Rocks are so important to them that it is often said that the Lakotas “worship rocks.” Of course they do not worship the rocks themselves, but they use the rocks as a way of getting in touch with the Great Spirit, God. The Lakotas often go to special large stones to pray. They can think of nothing more ancient than the rocks. The rocks have been around before anything or anyone else. No one can remember a time or history that existed before the rocks did. The message and meaning of the rocks are only for those who know how to be open and listen. (Based on Zeilinger, “The Rock,” *Sacred Ground*, pp. 68–70)

The Scriptures tell us that because Simon said he believed Jesus to be the Messiah, the Son of the living God, Jesus called him Peter, “the rock.” Jesus told Peter that on this rock foundation the church would be built.

Rocks are solid. Rocks are dependable. Rocks are strong. We all want to be “solid as a rock.” We want to own “a piece of the rock.” Folksingers have a song that proclaims, “Jesus is the rock that rolls my blues away.”

Let us pray that during our time together our faith will become as solid as a rock. Let us pray that we will develop a Christian bond that has the strength of a rock. Let our prayer echo the prayer of David in the Hebrew Scriptures, who sings, “Life to Yahweh! Blessed be my rock! Exalted be the God of my salvation!” (2 Sam. 22:47 or Ps. 18:46, NJB). Amen.

## Medium Prayer

**Theme** ♦ life events that give us strength

**Background Information** This prayer focuses on rock as a solid, strong result of several processes—processes that people also go through as they become stronger and more “solid” human beings.

The prayer gives the participants a chance to reflect on how rock is formed and how they, as persons, are formed. It is a bit of a science lesson as well as a self-reflection.



## Preparation

- Supplies**
- rock(s)
  - a candle, cross, or other object(s) symbolic of Christian worship
  - copies of handout 1–A, “A Meditation on Rocks”

**Setting** How you arrange the prayer participants depends on the size of your group. Very small groups can sit around a table, in a circle on the floor, or in chairs. Larger groups can spread out around the room. Set up one central focusing area in the middle of a table, the middle of the room, or along a wall that everyone can see. Place in the focusing area a large rock or a number of rocks, and a candle, standing cross, or other object(s) symbolic of Christian worship. Lead the prayer in or near the focusing area.

**Expectations** This prayer works well with junior high and senior high youth. Just expect that the sharing offered by older youth will be deeper than that coming from younger youth. And in either case, a group of people who know one another well will feel more comfortable than a group of strangers.

## Procedure

**Opening Reflection** Explain to the group that with the help of rocks as focusing images, they will spend some time thinking about their lives and how certain events have helped to make them who they are. Then proclaim the opening Scripture reading found on handout 1–A, “A Meditation on Rocks,” or ask a volunteer who is an excellent reader to do so.

**Self-Reflection and Sharing** Use handout 1–A for self-reflection and sharing. This part of the prayer can be done with small groups, large groups, or journaling groups. Details for using the handout with each of these types of groups are included in this manual’s introduction, on pages 8–10.

**Closing Reflection** If a meal is to follow the self-reflection and sharing, you could announce ahead of time that the meal will begin right after the self-reflection and sharing and thus the group will not have a formal gathered closing.

If you are going to have a closing reflection, the prayer in this section is offered as an option. You can either read it yourself or ask a volunteer who is a good reader to do so.

You could instead end the self-reflection and sharing with words of your own, or ask the small groups or prayer partners to end their time together with spontaneous prayer. Use whatever

seems most fitting for your group, your setting, and your time schedule.

“The Rock”

The rock lays near  
 While light comes and goes  
 The rock only exists  
 Said to have no soul  
 The rock cannot be sad  
 It knows not the time  
 It has no life to hold  
 It can’t feel love  
 As we admire it  
 It remains in stillness  
 Yet in its own way  
 May watch!

(Lloyd Carl Owl, a Cherokee,  
 in *American Indian Prayers and Poetry*, n.p.)

## Long Prayer

**Theme** ♦ recognizing virtues in ourselves and others

### Background Information

This long prayer focuses on virtues as the mark of a holy life and the rock upon which our faith community is built. It has a Lakota influence. The Lakotas are a Native American people whose traditions have a deep spirituality. Be sure to model reverence for the Lakotas and their customs so that the group approaches the prayer with respect.

The prayer includes a craft project. The participants are asked to reflect with their prayer partner, choose a virtue that captures their partner’s personality, and paint that word (along with any decorations they want to add) on a rock.

Also included in this prayer are an affirmation of the participants and a blessing.

## Preparation

- Supplies**
- a fist-sized rock for each participant, plus some extra
  - a table, crate, wheelbarrow, tarp, plastic tablecloth, or colorful bedsheet
  - slips of paper, with each participant's name written on a separate slip
  - eight copies of handout 1–B, "Virtue Readings"
  - a paintbrush for everyone, plus extras (Try out the paintbrushes ahead of time to be sure they aren't too thin or too thick to work well.)
  - cups of water for cleaning paintbrushes
  - water-based paints in bright colors (Ask the folks at your local craft store which kind of water-based paint they recommend for rocks. You'll want one that won't wash off easily once it has dried.)
  - posters or a chalkboard list of all the virtues mentioned in the readings: purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, truth, faith, hope, love, compassion, humility, gentleness, tolerance, forgiveness, joy, peace, goodness, faithfulness, self-control, generosity, courage, respect, wisdom, bravery, patience, dignity, and ability to provide for others
  - a cassette or CD of soft instrumental music and a cassette or CD player

**Setting** Set up two spaces—a prayer space and a work space. The prayer space needs to be an open area so that everyone can sit in a circle, perhaps on the floor (if there is a rug or carpet squares) or in chairs. This prayer experience will not work very well in a church that has stationary pews.

In the center of the prayer space, set up a wheelbarrow, crate, or table to hold all the rocks. Or, if your group will be sitting on the floor, place the rocks on a tarp, plastic tablecloth, or colorful bedsheet to avoid obstructing the participants' view of one another. Because the participants will be using the rocks, be sure to have more rocks than people. That way even the last person can have a choice of rocks, and the remaining rocks will serve as focusing objects.

Rocks the size of your fist are good—they are big enough to write a word on, but not so heavy that they are a burden to carry. If necessary, wash the rocks before the prayer experience. Be sure there is plenty of time for them to dry before the prayer service. You might want to ask each participant ahead of time to bring a rock, and then have a few extra on hand. But that strategy can be risky, because many of the participants may forget to bring a rock.

The work space needs to be large enough for all the participants to spread out and have room to paint on their rock. Have containers of paint spread out across worktables, with two or three brushes by each one. Each brush can have a masking tape "flag" that indicates the color of paint it goes with. Labeled brushes will encourage the participants to move to a different brush when they want to switch colors, thus keeping the paint colors from mixing.

Write the list of virtues on poster board or a chalkboard. Use large enough print to ensure that the list can be read from across the room.

**Expectations** Mature high school youth who know one another well will have no trouble with this prayer. You can expect them to be prayerful and reverent. Some will deeply ponder which virtue to choose for their partner, and they will want to give clear examples of when they have observed their prayer partner demonstrating that virtue. Some will even continue to see the prayer rocks as holy objects. Others might express a further interest in Native American spirituality. Please encourage that if you can!

Younger high school youth who have been together before will also do quite well with this prayer. But if they don't know one another too well, they might feel a little self-conscious about putting their hands on the shoulders of their prayer partner, which this prayer asks them to do. They also might not want to shout out the words at the end of the prayer. Just let them participate to the degree that they feel comfortable.

Junior high youth will do fine with the readings if they are read loudly and clearly. You can expect the young people to want to fool around with the paints, so I suggest you have several adults walking around the worktable(s) to discourage behaviors such as flinging paint or wiping paint on one another.

Junior high youth will also probably giggle a little when they have to put their hands on the shoulders of their prayer partner at the end of the prayer, but there's nothing wrong with their expressing their feelings of awkwardness with an innocent giggle. Again, the key is to have adults sitting with and among the youth.

Junior high young people will no doubt have difficulty trying to explain why they chose a particular virtue for their prayer partner, so don't let the explanation time lag too long. They might not have a lot to say and could begin to feel self-conscious. In fact, they probably won't even know what all the virtues mean, so be ready if they start asking for some definitions!

Overall, this is a good prayer experience for junior high youth because of the freedom of movement during most of it. They probably won't mind shouting at the end of the experience. When it's over, they might remember that rocks are important to Native Americans, and perhaps they'll also remember that somebody actually thought they had a virtue, and they have a rock to prove it!

## Procedure

### Call to Prayer

1. Establish partners for the rock painting by putting the slips of paper with the participants' names on them in a container, pulling them out two by two, and reading them aloud. Make sure that you, as the leader, also have a prayer partner. Then say something like the following to bring everyone together in the spirit of prayer:

I invite you to enter into the spirit of the Lakota sacredness of prayer rocks. Please come forward, choose a prayer rock, and sit beside your prayer partner.

2. Have the participants come forward, choose a rock, and return to their place. Continue setting the mood for the prayer. Use these words, or similar words of your own, to bring out the importance of virtues and their connection to the Lakota people, who go to rocks to pray:

People of God have always known that living by holy virtues and good values is the secret to a holy life. Saint Paul knew it, and the Lakota people know it as well.

I invite you to hold on to your prayer rock as we listen to the word of God, as written by Saint Paul to the Corinthians, the Colossians, and the Galatians, and as passed on by the tradition of the Lakota people. We will even hear some words in the Lakota language.

### Prayer Readings

Distribute handout 1–B, “Virtue Readings,” to eight people who are excellent readers, whose voices can be clearly heard and understood by everyone. Assign one of the readings on the handout to each person. Go over the Lakota words with them so that they can pronounce the words with confidence. Give the following introduction and then direct the readers to share the readings with the group:

Think of your prayer partner as you hear these holy words, and try to recognize which of these virtues you have observed in your prayer partner.

### Response to the Prayer Readings

Move everyone into the work space with these words or similar ones of your own choosing:

I invite you to think about what primary virtue you have observed in your prayer partner. You will have the opportunity to paint the name of that virtue on your prayer rock as a gift for your partner. We have prepared for you an area with paints, paintbrushes, and cups of water. A list of all the virtues has been posted as a reminder. After everyone has finished painting their prayer rock, we will return to this space to present our prayer partner with our gift. Please feel free to move toward the work area as soon as you feel ready.

Along with paints, paintbrushes, and cups of water, the work area also needs to include the list you prepared of every virtue mentioned in the readings. Play soft instrumental music in the background so that the young people are not intimidated by silence in the room.

When all the participants have finished painting their chosen virtue on a rock, gather the group in the prayer space, using words similar to these:

At this time, I invite you to come back to our prayer space and to sit down with your prayer partner and explain why you chose that particular virtue for her or him. Then give your partner the prayer rock as a gift.

If you are concerned about paint getting all over the place, have the participants leave their rock on the table to dry instead of bringing it back to the prayer space. Just direct everyone to tell their partner what virtue was chosen for them. The participants can pick up their rocks later when the paint is dry.

### Sending Forth

As you lead this part of the prayer, stand beside your own prayer partner and together model the body posture, gestures, and words for the group. Use these or similar words:

I invite you to stand and enter into the spirit of David, who praised God after God delivered him from all his enemies, especially Saul. Please lift up your arms toward heaven and repeat each phrase after me so that we can praise God together:

I love you, Yahweh, my strength. [Participants repeat.]

You are my rock and my salvation. [Participants repeat.]

I take my shelter in you, because you will protect me.

[Participants repeat.]

For this I will praise you. [Participants repeat.]

I will try to be a rock of strength for your church.

[Participants repeat.]

(Adapted from Ps. 18:1–2,49)

Now I ask you to face your prayer partner. The oldest person in each pair should speak first. First speaker, put your hands on your prayer partner's shoulders. Look into your partner's eyes and say his or her name aloud. [They say the names.]

Now say these words to your partner: “You are a rock for our church.” [Participants repeat.]

All right, now say aloud the word you painted on the prayer rock for your partner. [They each say their word.] Then say these words to your partner: “That is the virtue I have observed in you. [They repeat.] On the rock foundation of your virtue, [They repeat.] our faith and our church is being built.” [They repeat.]

All right, now I ask you to switch roles. Second speaker, put your hands on your prayer partner's shoulders. Look into your partner's eyes and say her or his name aloud. [They say the names.]

[Repeat the blessing prayers used for the first partner. Then continue.]

All right, now everyone can face one another in a circle. Put your hands into the air, and let's say some of David's words together again. Let's shout them out! Just repeat each line after me:

Life to Yahweh!  
 Blessed be my rock!  
 Exalted be the God of my salvation.  
 Amen.

(Ps. 18:46 and 2 Sam. 22:47, NJB)

## Family Component

Details for using the family component are included on pages 11–12 of the introduction to this book. Here are a list of the supplies you will need and a reminder of the settings in which the family component can be used.

- Supplies**
- handout 1–C, “Family Meditation on Rocks”
  - sample 1–A, “Sample Letter for Families”

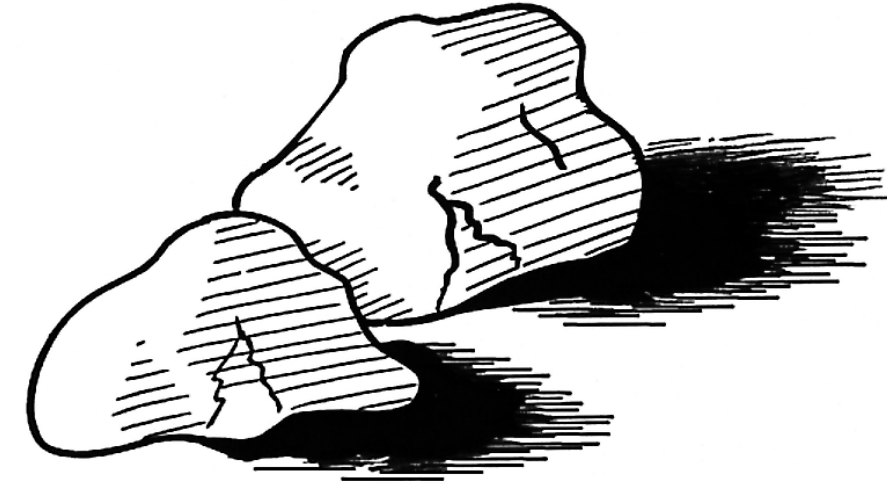
- Settings**
- ♦ a gathering of families after a retreat or long event
  - ♦ a separate gathering of youth and families
  - ♦ a bulletin or parish newsletter insert
  - ♦ a personal letter and take-home handout
  - ♦ a follow-up mailing

## A Meditation on Rocks

### Opening Scripture Reading

Life to Yahweh! Blessed be my rock!  
 Exalted be the God of my salvation.

(2 Samuel 22:47, NJB)



### Opening Comments

Rocks are strong, solid, and dependable. We want our faith to be strong, solid, and dependable. We want our relationships to be strong, solid, and dependable. We even want our self to be strong, solid, and dependable. How do we develop those characteristics? The same way rocks do.

### Reflections and Questions

#### Igneous Rock

Igneous rock is formed from hot magma within the earth. As the magma surfaces, it becomes lava. When it cools, it hardens into igneous rock.

A volcanic eruption is a major event. Whenever a volcano erupts, it is reported in newspapers and live footage appears on TV news shows.

#### Questions

Sometimes we acquire strength through major life events.

- ♦ What major life event has given you strength? What happened? How did it affect you?
- ♦ What can you learn about yourself as you look back on that event?

## Sedimentary Rock

Sedimentary rock is formed by sediments, or small bits of matter deposited by water, ice, or wind. The sediments can be shell particles, animal bones, plant remains, or bits of other rocks. These get cemented together and hardened into layers. Sedimentary rock is the result.

These parts of plants, animals, shells, or other rocks can be very tiny, insignificant pieces of matter. By themselves, they are nothing remarkable. But put together, they form something strong and solid.

### Questions

Sometimes we acquire strength from a lot of little “nothings,” such as family traditions, things our parents always tell us, what our friends do, the ways we tend to see things.

- ♦ What insignificant little nothings have actually given you great strength? How have these little events affected you?
- ♦ What can you learn about yourself as you look back on those happenings?

## Metamorphic Rock

Metamorphic rock is formed when already existing rock is changed by great heat, pressure, or some chemical action. Metamorphic rock is created by transition. It already is rock, but then it becomes a different kind of rock.

### Questions

Sometimes we acquire strength through a transition in our life. Adapting to change brings us growth, flexibility, and a new outlook on reality.

- ♦ When has a change in your life given you strength? What happened? How did it affect you?
- ♦ What can you learn about yourself as you look back on that change?

## Closing Prayer

“The Rock”

The rock lays near  
While light comes and goes  
The rock only exists  
Said to have no soul  
The rock cannot be sad  
It knows not the time  
It has no life to hold  
It can't feel love  
As we admire it  
It remains in stillness  
Yet in its own way  
May watch!

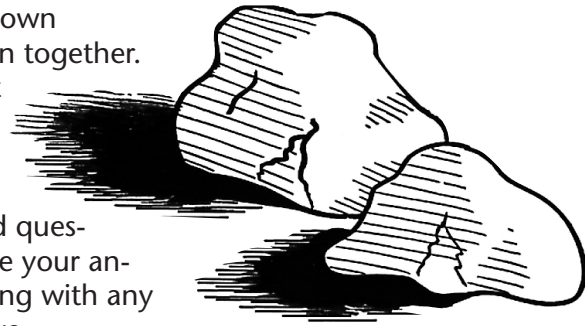
(Lloyd Carl Owl, a Cherokee, in *American Indian Prayers and Poetry*, edited by J. Ed Sharpe [Marietta, GA: Cherokee Publications, 1985], no page)

# Virtue Readings

- Reader 1.** By our purity, knowledge, patience, and kindness we have shown ourselves to be God’s servants—by the Holy Spirit, by our true love, by our message of truth, and by the power of God. (2 Corinthians 6:6–7, TEV)
- Reader 2.** Generosity. *Wa-can-tog-na-ka*. . . . A person is looked up to not only for their ability to provide food, clothing and shelter, but also for the ability to give generously and not count the cost. It is better to give a lot than to have a lot and keep it for yourself. (Ron Zeilinger, *Sacred Ground: Reflections on Lakota Spirituality and the Gospel* [Chamberlain, SD: Tipi Press, 1986], pages 56, 60)
- Reader 3.** Meanwhile these three remain: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13, TEV)
- Reader 4.** Courage. *Woo-hit-ik-a*. Taking care of others means that a person needs to have bravery or courage. It means having to face hard and difficult things for the sake of others. . . . [People] learn to face danger without running away, and how to face even death with dignity. (Zeilinger, *Sacred Ground*, page 61)
- Reader 5.** You must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another. (Colossians 3:12–13, TEV)
- Reader 6.** Respect. *Wo-wac-in-tan-ka*. In order for people to live together in peace, they have to respect one another. The old are respected for their wisdom and the young because they are the future of the people. This attitude also means a reverence for all other living things in the world. . . . All people and things are relatives. . . . The outcome of this respect is peace in families, among tribes and other people. (Zeilinger, *Sacred Ground*, page 61)
- Reader 7.** The Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22–23, TEV)
- Reader 8.** Wisdom. *Wok-sa-pe*. The knowledge and wisdom of the old people is very important for the well-being of the people. They know how to give “good advice” to others because they have seen many things happen and change. . . . Wisdom is knowing that a person is nothing without the power of God. Being humble and caring for others is the wisest power of all. (Zeilinger, *Sacred Ground*, pages 61–62)

# Family Meditation on Rocks

As a family, you could sit down and go over this meditation together. One family member might read the opening Scripture passage, and then others could take turns reading the comments and questions. Then you could share your answers to the questions, along with any other insights you may have.



A family member might read the closing prayer to conclude the sharing. Keeping a rock on or near your kitchen table would reinforce your commitment to keep your family's faith as strong and solid as a rock.

## Opening Scripture Reading

Life to Yahweh! Blessed be my rock!  
Exalted be the God of my salvation.

(2 Samuel 22:47, NJB)

## Opening Comments

Rocks are strong, solid, and dependable. We want our faith to be strong, solid, and dependable. We want our family relationships to be strong, solid, and dependable. We even want our self to be strong, solid, and dependable. How do we develop those characteristics? The same way rocks do.

## Reflections and Questions

### Igneous Rock

Igneous rock is formed from hot magma within the earth. As the magma surfaces, it becomes lava. When it cools, it hardens into igneous rock.

A volcanic eruption is a major event. Whenever a volcano erupts, it is reported in newspapers and live footage appears on TV news shows.

### Questions

Sometimes we acquire strength through major life events.

- ♦ What major life event has given our family strength? What happened? How did it affect us as a family and as individuals?
- ♦ What can we learn about ourselves as we look back on that chapter of our family life?

### Sedimentary Rock

Sedimentary rock is formed by sediments, or small bits of matter deposited by water, ice, or wind. The sediments can be shell particles, animal bones, plant remains, or bits of other rocks. These get cemented together and hardened into layers. Sedimentary rock is the result.

These parts of plants, animals, shells, or other rocks can be very tiny, insignificant pieces of matter. By themselves, they are nothing remarkable. But put together, they form something strong and solid.

### Questions

Sometimes we acquire strength from a lot of little "nothings," such as family traditions, things our parents always tell us, what our friends do, the ways we tend to see things.

- ♦ What insignificant little nothings have actually given us great strength? How have these little events and practices affected us as a family and as individuals?
- ♦ What can we learn about ourselves as we look back on those small chapters of our family life?

### Metamorphic Rock

Metamorphic rock is formed when already existing rock is changed by great heat, pressure, or some chemical action. Metamorphic rock is created by transition. It already is rock, but then it becomes a different kind of rock.

### Questions

Sometimes we acquire strength through a transition in our life. Adapting to change brings us growth, flexibility, and a new outlook on reality.

- ♦ When has a change in our family life given us strength? What happened? How did it affect us as a family and as individuals?
- ♦ What can we learn about ourselves as we look back on that change in our family life?

## Closing Prayer

"The Rock"  
The rock lays near  
While light comes and goes  
The rock only exists  
Said to have no soul  
The rock cannot be sad  
It knows not the time  
It has no life to hold  
It can't feel love  
As we admire it  
It remains in stillness  
Yet in its own way  
May watch!

(Lloyd Carl Owl, a Cherokee, in *American Indian Prayers and Poetry*, edited by J. Ed Sharpe [Marietta, GA: Cherokee Publications, 1985], no page)

Sample 1–A

## Sample Letter for Families

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

It has been a pleasure having \_\_\_\_\_ with us. Thank you for making all the necessary family arrangements so that she/he could be with us. It was truly a gift from your family to our parish community.

During our time together, we focused on the symbol of the rock. In fact, \_\_\_\_\_ may have been given a rock to bring home. If so, a virtue has been painted on the rock—a virtue that was seen in \_\_\_\_\_’s personality. Perhaps you might ask \_\_\_\_\_ to see the rock. Praising certain virtues is a Lakota tradition as well as a Christian tradition. Saint Paul lists Christian virtues in many of his letters in the Christian Testament.

We spent some time listening to passages from those letters and thinking about virtues that reflect who we are. We also discussed the sacredness of prayer rocks in the Lakota tradition. You might ask \_\_\_\_\_ to share memories from the experience.

We also did a reflection prayer based on the types of rock that are formed from the forces of nature. Enclosed is a copy of a family-based version of that reflection prayer. I encourage you to take some time during or after a family meal to go through the questions and discuss them as a family. You could even give a small prayer rock to each person as part of the discussion, or leave a rock on your kitchen table for a while to remind your family that you want your family relationships to stay as solid as a rock. These are just a few ideas to help you get in touch with \_\_\_\_\_’s experience with this prayer.

If you have any questions about our programs, or if any of your family members would like to become more involved with our parish in any way, please don’t hesitate to call me. I wish your family great peace and joy.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_