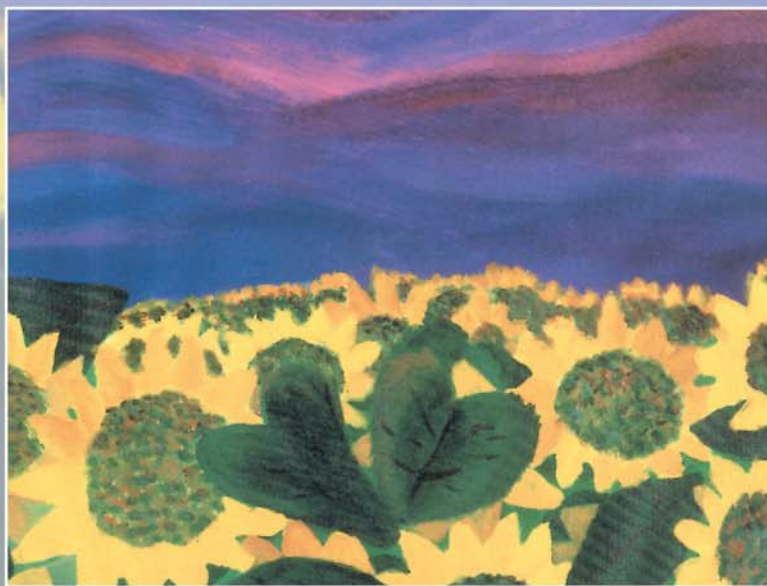


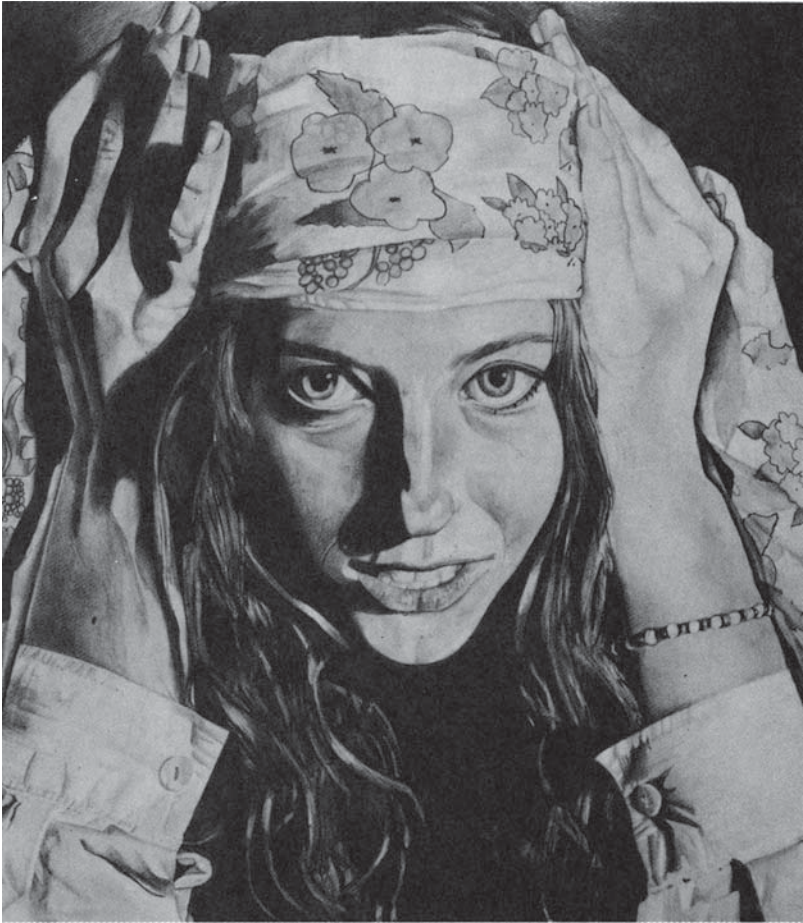
saint mary's press

PRAYERS BY TEENAGERS

*More Dreams
Alive*



EDITED BY CARL KOCH



*Kathleen Lorden
Boylan Catholic High School, Rockford, IL*

More Dreams Alive: Prayers by Teenagers

Edited by
Carl Koch



saint mary's press

Karen Esker, cover artist, Saint Pius X Catholic High School, Atlanta, GA

The publishing team included Carl Koch, development editor; Rebecca Fairbank, copy editor; Barbara Bartelson, production editor and typesetter; Stephan Nagel, art director; pre-press, printing, and binding by the graphics division of Saint Mary's Press.

Copyright © 1995 by Saint Mary's Press, Christian Brothers Publications, 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1320, www.smp.org. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced by any means without the written permission of the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

5003

ISBN 978-0-88489-321-9, Print
ISBN 978-1-59982-206-8, Digital

Contents

Preface 7

1. Personal Matters 11

2. Friends and Family 35

3. The Big Picture 49

4. Addressing God 73

Index 100



*Joe Mackowiak
Marian Catholic High School, Chicago Heights, IL*

Preface

In May 1991, Saint Mary's Press published *Dreams Alive: Prayers by Teenagers*. Because of the enthusiastic response to that book, we decided to do this sequel: *More Dreams Alive*. Consequently, in October 1993, I sent out a letter to religious education chairpersons in all Catholic and selected Christian high schools and parish religious education programs throughout the United States, inviting them to collect prayers and reflections of their students. The letter said: "The topics the students choose to write about can be virtually anything that deals with concerns or themes of high interest to young people. The selections may be funny or serious, focused on themselves as individuals or on other people, perhaps even reactions to national or world affairs. Most important, we are looking for writing that reflects honesty, authenticity, and an awareness of the real world of young people." I believe you will find that the prayers we selected have all these qualities.

To ensure spontaneity, I asked that the students not be told the prayers were being written for possible publication. When teachers had selected prayers for submission, the writers were given the opportunity to attach their full name, initials, or first name, or to remain anonymous. All the prayers were identified by the school or parish from which they came.

Prayers and reflections poured in from all over the country: Massachusetts to California, Washington to Florida. By May 1994, I had hundreds of pages of writing

to work with. The sheer number, the quality, and the diversity dazzled me.

I began reading, sorting, and selecting. After an initial sorting, I asked six students to help with the final selection: Erin Hansen and Paul Zobitz from Saint Mary's College of Minnesota, and Liza Bambenek, Mary Costello, Tim Vessel, and Joe Wilzbacher from Cotter High School, Winona, Minnesota. Kim Vogel, campus minister at Cotter High School, graciously coordinated my work with the Cotter students. The team of students studied the prayers and helped select the ones that appear in this book. Their contribution was indispensable and is greatly appreciated.

Using the Prayers

If our experience with *Dreams Alive* is any indication, teenagers, religious educators, youth ministers, and retreat staff will find the prayers useful in a variety of settings and situations: to start a class, to give focus to a prayer session, and so on. Many of the prayers can also trigger discussion about topics important to teenagers.

Before starting a prayer, you may wish to recall God's presence for your group. Such a reminder calms people and prepares them to attend to the prayer being read. To assist you, three different calls inviting God's presence are listed at the beginning of each part of the book (see pages 11, 35, 49, and 73).

Many of the prayers have final lines that close them nicely. However, after reading a prayer, you may wish to invite those praying with you to share insights or petitions related to the prayer. Or you may want to give people a moment to pray silently.

This book of prayers could also be a helpful gift to parents of teenagers. The prayers can remind adults that despite appearances sometimes to the contrary, teenagers have a unique and lively perspective on faith, the world, and themselves. The prayers may open avenues of much-needed teen-parent communication.

A Final Word of Thanks

Great thanks are due to all the students who allowed their prayers and reflections to be submitted for consideration. The only unpleasant aspect of editing this book was having to eliminate so many wonderful prayers. They just could not all go into the book. So, I thank all of you for your contributions and understanding.

The art used on the cover and the illustrations inside the book were also contributed by students. The gift of their work is gratefully acknowledged.

Thanks also go to all the religious educators throughout the United States who sent in the thousands of prayers received. Your cooperation made the book possible.

I hope all who pray these prayers find consolation, inspiration, and great hope.

Carl Koch
Editor



Dan Powers
Marian Catholic High School, Chicago Heights, IL

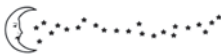
1

Personal Matters

Recalling God's Presence

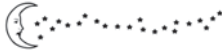
- Let us remember that God is with us now.
- God, be with us now as we pray.
- Gracious God, we stand in your presence to pray.

Prayers



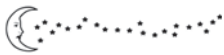
Dear Jesus,
Please help me to have the courage to follow my dreams.
Help me with the determination to carry them out.
Give me the patience to deal with negativity,
the fortitude to accept defeat or failure.
Give me the strength to overcome my barriers.
Strengthen the hope that motivates me.
Give me the desire that makes my will strong.
I know you have given me what it takes to be a success;
please help me to use it to my best potential.
Help me to give what it takes
to be my own success.
Amen.

*Dan Francis
Marmion Academy, Aurora, IL*



How can it be?
 All these problems piled right in front of me.
 No one to turn to, no place to go,
 all these problems trapped inside of me.
 I feel as if I'll explode.
 Dear God, what shall I do
 to become more patient, self-confident,
 and compassionate
 just like you?
 They say every one lives life for a purpose.
 Now I'm confused.
 Some people are victims of abuse and neglect;
 shall we say their purpose for life was to be used?
 Is there any way possible for me to find out,
 before my time on earth is gone,
 if I've taken the wrong route.
 You see I'm trying to figure out now if so far I've
 done good
 in trying to follow your footsteps the best way
 I possibly could.
 Is there a way to figure this problem out,
 so I won't have so much doubt?

Evelyn Hill
Saint Martin de Porres Academy, Chicago, IL



Dear Saint Francis,
 I never knew your story, but when I found out how you
 discovered happiness by being a servant to those who
 once served you, I developed a unique respect for you.
 You seemed so fearless toward life, so prepared. You were
 sure of what you wanted, even in a time of such intense
 corruption. Nobody seemed to see the faith diminishing
 until you gradually cleared their vision. I admire you for
 your brave soul and your undying love of God. To be like
 you would be an amazing accomplishment.

To be honest, I don't tell anybody how I feel about God and my faith. Jesus is my best friend, but how do I tell that to my best friend here on earth? If I even try, they call me nuts. It's true, I hide it. My mother thinks I'm wrong in my ways. She thinks I'm lying when I tell her that I pray nearly every day and then some, but I do.

My dream is to find completeness in so little, like you did. I am sincere when I say people do not understand me. I don't even understand myself. I want so desperately to be good like you, but I am constantly messing up. How do I say I can't do it on my own?

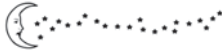
My mind is blocked at times, and God disappears from my thoughts. When I think of all the simple temptations I give in to, I get upset with myself. I wish I could feel as content in humbling myself and raising the lowly as you did.

I am selfish, it is true, but not so selfish as to believe my actions and, no doubt, my words are always correct. I have no gift of eloquent speech, nor a gracefully powerful voice. My sins outnumber the miles to the sun. Yet I know what I feel is growing stronger day by day. You began your life so unaware, but in one moment you discovered what you wanted from your life—to give to the world.

My gift from God is God's presence in my everyday decisions. I possess the gift of what we like to call common sense. Out of my many bad decisions, I have learned small but countless lessons. I see the truth in the life of Jesus, and it grows with each inspiring story, like your own. I have not done this on my own; I learned to guide myself in the right direction when it finally came to me: "There is a God!"

I believe God strengthens my heart to listen to my call. I wish I knew what made you so strong. That is my dream: to understand.

*Maria Mast
Notre Dame Academy, Covington, KY*



Dear God,

Thank you for my body and mind, which help me perform my tasks in life.

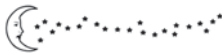
I ask that you sharpen my senses so that I can feel the pain of others, the pain I have become numb to because of today's society.

I ask for the power to resist pride that is undeserving. Let me accept responsibility and independence fully.

Please give me the wisdom to accept help from others when I need it.

Thank you, God, for everything you have given me. Amen.

*Ben Tate
Saint Pius X Catholic High School, Atlanta, GA*



God,

I can recall a time that my mind closed itself off to you, I shut out your words, and narrowed my mind.

I have long since learned, that closed-mindedness is the real sin. I was miserable in my solitary world without you.

Forgive me the times I've done this to you and myself.

But . . .

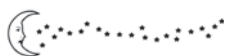
How you energize and empower me, when I open myself to you.

How you forgive my foolishness, and bring me back.

Thank you. . . .

Amen.

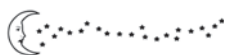
*Ivan D. Dominguez
Salpointe Catholic High School, Tucson, AZ*



God,
 Why did you make growing up so hard?
 Everyone always says these are the best years of my life.
 If they really are, why do I go through so much misery
 and strife?

Sometimes I feel like I'm on top of the world without
 any fears,
 but in all reality I feel pressured to fit in with my peers.
 I'll never know why I try so hard to fit in,
 but deep down inside I know that you are my true friend.
 You'll love me and lead me and forgive all my sins.

Maxine F. Bynum
Saint Maria Goretti High School, Philadelphia, PA

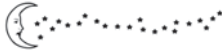


Dear God,
 How can I tell what is right for me? Decisions are tough
 for me. Life is confusing. Many little things become inten-
 sified when it comes to making decisions.

I'm often afraid that I will make the wrong decision,
 and it will come back to haunt me sometime in the
 future. In today's world every decision needs to be made
 carefully. One wrong choice could change the whole
 direction of my life.

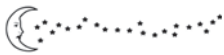
I pray to you, God, to help me in making these deci-
 sions and to guide me through life. The path I take will be
 determined by these decisions, but hopefully with your
 guidance I will stay close to you.

Joe Kita
Saint Mary's of the Assumption, Scottsville, NY



Jesus, I thank you
 for your gifts
 of love and forgiveness.
 Your love has sustained me in painful times,
 and your comforting presence has helped me
 when I have felt abandoned.
 Please, continue to be with me
 as I grow,
 and guide me on my path.
 Help me to remember
 that each day is a gift
 in which I am given the opportunity
 to serve you.
 Amen.

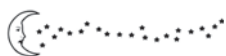
Holly Doyle
Mount Mercy Academy, Buffalo, NY



Dear God,
 You have made all things. You sculpted the planets and
 created human life. I don't have to look long at a sunset
 or a rosebush to know that you are the greatest and most
 talented artist in the universe. Still, God, sometimes I
 don't feel beautiful. I know that you have created me so I
 must be special, but it's hard to feel that way sometimes.
 My hair seems ugly, or my clothes don't feel right, or even
 worse, I feel ugly inside.

Please, God, help me to feel beautiful inside and out
 because I *am!* Help me to remember that I am poetry,
 sculpture, song, and painting. Help me remember that I
 am a masterpiece created by the greatest artist ever.

Angela Meyer
Bethlehem High School, Bardstown, KY



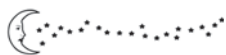
God, I put my faith into your hands.
You are my sole support in these
unsure times.

Where can I turn when it seems
no one has the answers to my questions?
God, I turn to you.

I am full of youth,
yet I am not immortal.
Who can I call on when the friends
I need the most are too busy?
God, I call on you.

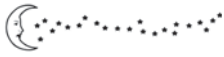
God, I put my faith into your hands,
You are always there,
never too busy.
You have always been
my best friend.
Out of everyone who loves me,
you love me the most.
And you are just a prayer away.
God, this is my prayer.

Asheley Riley
Academy of the Sacred Heart, Bloomfield Hills, MI



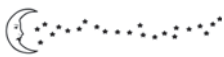
As I looked at myself one day in the mirror,
I saw my reflection and started to sneer.
I always looked different, certainly not the same,
the looks that I had, gave me no fame.
Then suddenly I looked way down in my heart,
and found I had something that set me apart.
As I found this inner beauty that will always
shine through,
I looked up to God and said, "Thank you."

Corrie DeTella
Queen of Peace High School, Burbank, IL



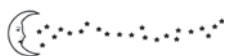
Oh, dear God, please tell me why
 every day I start to cry.
 Others talk behind your back making fun of you.
 You feel as if you've been betrayed
 and nobody loves you.
 Every day I'm killing myself
 about three times a day.
 I can't fight this disease,
 I'm trying to find a way.
 Life isn't fair.
 You can't win.
 Nobody's perfect.
 I don't understand what is happening.
 I'm really scared.
 I can't leave this alone.
 Can you answer my prayer?
 Please, dear God,
 don't let me cry.
 Help me through this,
 so I don't die.

Gina Calderone
Maria High School, Chicago, IL



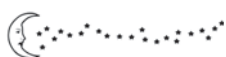
When the pressure to succeed seems overpowering,
 and that helpless feeling of failure begins to set in,
 help me to realize alternative paths to my goals.
 When the future appears too frightening to face
 and independence is an ominous unknown,
 help me to have faith in myself and my ability
 to handle life on a personal level.
 When death slides its dark shadow
 over everything believed to be real,
 help me to understand its purpose
 and overcome its impossible pain.

Teresa Davidson
Routt High School, Jacksonville, IL



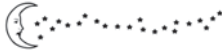
Dear God,
 All of my life I've been told what to do, but choosing you has been the best decision I've ever made. You've stuck by me through everything, even when I didn't think you were around. Sometimes I question you, and I'm sorry. Saying, "everything happens for a reason" is confusing, but I think I'm starting to understand. You work in such secretive ways. Well, maybe they're not secretive, but just not seen by those not allowing you into their lives. Letting *me* experience so young a deeper sense of *you* reassures my faith and trust. Knowing you are right here with me makes me feel special.

Allison Vasilj
Marian Catholic High School, Chicago Heights, IL



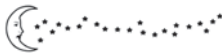
Dear God,
 I feel like a broken-up puzzle, pieces of life scattered to the wind. I know each piece fits somewhere special, but alone I cannot make the pieces fit. I remember that your Son's life puzzle was difficult, but piece by piece it began to fit so perfectly. Help me by giving me guidance. By the Holy Spirit, help me to fit my pieces together, for now they are scattered far apart. My life is complete chaos. I pray, help me to complete my puzzle by giving me guidance in my actions, decisions, and duties. I wish to be closer to you.

Ann Taksas
Marian Catholic High School, Chicago Heights, IL



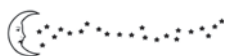
Dear God,
 Help me through the times
 in which I think you just
 don't care, or that you aren't
 really there.
 Help me through times that are
 rough, and even when it isn't
 that tough.
 And most of all, help me to
 realize that your love is
 infinite and always, always
 definite.

Scott Noone
Boston College High School, Dorchester, MA



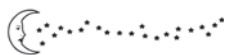
Holy Spirit,
 Give me *wisdom*, so I can learn from my mistakes and
 help other people.
 Give me *counsel*, so I may have someone to lean on
 in times of need.
 Give me *reverence*, so I may show how I love you.
 Give me *courage*, so I may stand up for what is right,
 so I may achieve my goals without hurting others.
 Give me *understanding*, so I may try to understand people
 better and not get angry with them.
 Give me *wonder*, so I may respect what the Creator put
 here and love it even more.
 Give me *knowledge*, so I may learn about my faith,
 my world, and myself.
 Let me use and develop these gifts so I can act more like
 Jesus. I try hard, but I sometimes fail. Once again
 I ask for *courage* to get up and try again. Amen.

Charles Brace
Canevin Catholic High School, Pittsburgh, PA



Dear God,
 Only fifteen months left until I graduate.
 My teachers, my parents, everyone,
 tells me I should be making choices
 that will affect my whole life . . .
 that these are some of the most important decisions
 I will ever make.
 And I can't even decide what TV show to watch
 or who to take to prom
 or if I like chocolate or plain milk better.
 There are so many colleges to see,
 so many tests to take,
 so many decisions to make.
 It's overwhelming.
 Help me to not grow up too fast . . . to stay carefree
 and appreciate youth while I still have it.
 Did Jesus always know what he was destined for?
 Did his divinity protect him from human fear
 and uncertainty?
 Or did he, too, need your support;
 did he need your strength to help carry out your will?
 Please send me a sign.
 Help me to realize what my secret ambitions are. . . .
 Help me discover your plan for me.
 Guide me toward the person you want me to become,
 and give me the courage I need to become that person.

*Kathleen Callahan
 Rosary High School, Aurora, IL*



God, help me understand myself a little bit better. Help
 me to cope with the things in life that are important to
 me. My life can be stressful if I don't take it one step at a
 time, but I know you'll give me the strength to survive.
 I know that with your help it will be possible.

*YoKatty Hernandez
 Saint Mary High School, Jersey City, NJ*