

My dear Little Flower,

Change the oil! Occasionally our vehicle's dashboard lights up to remind us that it is due for an oil change - that small yellow light which at times gives us a scare, and we ask: what is wrong now?

Nothing's wrong - just the usual check up and oil change, or a tire rotation. In our spiritual journey, we do have those dashboard alerts; sometimes, we see it, sometimes we feel it in our gut. Our soul is due for an oil change. What is your spiritual or soul dashboard saying?

For many, it is a question of unwinding, taking a vacation, stepping away from work, spending time with family. But most of the time, we do need an occasional reminder that God is waiting for us to be with Him. So, for a lot of people, these dashboard alerts are reminders that we need to step back from everything, spend time with our family or friends, spend time with God.

For the men of our parish, it isn't late to sign up for the Men's Cornerstone Retreat that will happen at St. Bart's in Scotch Plains, which starts in the evening of March 8 (Friday) and ends in the evening of March 9 (Saturday). Let this be my invitation to you this week.

What does your spiritual dashboard say? One of the best practices of being a Catholic is making a retreat at least once a year. Also, I would like to personally invite all to avail the usual spiritual check-up with Jesus at the Sacrament of Reconciliation - come as a family, change the temperature of your household this Lent.

Your parish priest,  
Fr JC Merino

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### **Catechesis on the "Anima Christi" Prayer**

The Anima Christi (Soul of Christ) prayer is a powerful and moving prayer that has been attributed to St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) - the founder of the Jesuits. It is a prayer that can lead us into an immediate union with Christ. The Anima Christi prayer predates Ignatius by as much as a century-and-a-half. However, Ignatius was known to be very fond of this prayer, and it often served as the opening prayer of his Spiritual Exercises.

The Anima Christi prayer is a sublime prayer that transcends all time and all centuries. It is our hope that on our Lenten journey, this prayer can touch us as a family of faith on a profound level and lead us into a deeper relationship and union with Christ.

During Covid, we prayed the beautiful prayer for Spiritual Communion after receiving the Eucharist, to invite (and unite ourselves) with our live streaming congregation. Now that the pandemic is over, we replace the Spiritual Communion with the "Anima Christi"; it is time for us to once again gather around the Table of the Lord as one, and while we have the blessing of receiving the Lord in the Eucharist, we also pray as a family community to unite us in Jesus Christ - in His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

### **Catechesis on praying in the Taizé tradition: "What is the Taizé Prayer"**

The Taizé Prayer was developed by an ecumenical (Christian-based) community of monks in France. The monks combined elements of the Catholic Church's traditional Liturgy of the Hours with elements of contemplative meditation prayer, which consists of periods of silence with meditative readings from Scripture, prayers of praise and intercession, and repetition of simple, contemporary chants based on the Psalms or other parts of the Holy Scripture. The aim of all these is to gradually move prayer from the head to the heart.

The spiritual tradition of the Taizé Prayer is geared towards all ages - but most especially attractive to the youth and young adults. The Taizé Community describes the power of its unique musical style in this manner: "As the words are sung over many times, this reality gradually penetrates the whole being. Meditative singing thus becomes a way of listening to God. It allows everyone to take part in a time of prayer together and to remain together in attentive waiting on God..." The sung scripture calls our spirit to move "little by little" on a journey until "our being finds an inner unity in God". Our prayers "continue in the silence of our hearts when we are at work, speaking with others or resting. In this way prayer and daily life are united. They allow us to keep on praying even when we are unaware of it", in the inmost rooms of our heart.

In the context of our Lenten Pilgrimage here at our parish, praying in the tradition of Taizé and the Anima Christi Prayer might bring us ever united to each other and Christ in our journey as a faith community - our Lenten journey through Calvary and Cross.

At Little Flower parish, we gather as a community to pray in the tradition of the Taizé during Advent and Lent. Our next gathering for this type of prayer is on March 8 at 7PM.