

FR. SPITZER'S SPONTANEOUS PRAYERS IN TIMES OF SUFFERING

"A short prayer pierces the heavens." —The Cloud of Unknowing

- 1 "Abba, take this cup away from me..."**

Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane shows definitively that prayers for the avoidance or lessening of suffering are not unworthy of us—or incommensurate with God's will, which is ultimately our and others' salvation.
- 2 "Hail Mary, full of grace..."**

The Hail Mary reminds us that Mary is a caring mother who wants to help us. Recall the Wedding Feast at Cana when Mary tells Jesus the wine has run out. Though Jesus replies, "My hour has not yet come," His Mother knows He will not turn her down. She confidently tells the servants to, "Do whatever He tells you."
- 3 "Lord, do not let any of this suffering go to waste."**

We might expand this prayer as follows, "Lord, do not let any of this suffering go to waste. Make optimal good come out of it for me, others, and your kingdom." The highest good God can bring out of our suffering is our and others' salvation.
- 4 "Lord, snatch victory from the jaws of defeat."**

When a situation has grown out of control, this prayer moves us from self-reliance to trust. These words can also be added, "Use your wisdom and power to untangle this web of problems—I'm going to remain in the background for the moment."
- 5 "I give up—you take care of it."**

This prayer has the same effect as the prayer given immediately above—it inspires peace, wisdom and hope in the future—enabling us to get through particularly complex and seemingly hopeless situations.
- 6 "Lord, push back the foreboding and darkness."**

Foreboding can come from feelings of anxiety and depression which our conscious or unconscious psyche projects into the future, or a genuine premonition about darkness in the future. When these premonitions are accompanied by feelings of powerlessness and anxiety, we must refuse to entertain them and say this prayer.
- 7 "Thank you."**

Here we are not thanking God for the suffering, but rather for the good things we have had and still have in our life. Virtually every spiritual writer recommends recounting the blessings of the Lord as a way of breaking the spell of dejection, abandonment, melancholy, and despair.

May these prayers help you to know God's peace, mitigate feelings of fear and anxiety, and fill you with confidence and hope for the future!