



GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study

#247 - October 2025

A Best Practice: Praying with the Names of Real People

Cardinal Matteo Zuppi, the head of the Italian Bishops Conference, led a seven-hour prayer vigil for child victims of the Israel-Hamas War, Thursday, August 14, 2025, at the park of Monte Sole di Marzabotto near Bologna, Italy.

Cardinal Zuppi took turns with dozens of other members of his diocese reading the names and ages of the 16 Israeli children and the 12,211 Palestinian children who have been killed in the war.

Last month's issue of **GEMS** looked at a way of remembering deceased loved ones during the month of November. That – and the August prayer vigil in Italy – reminded me of many parishes who, during the Easter Vigil's Litany of the Saints, pray by name for every parishioner who has died that year.

Praying with the names of real people celebrates and remembers the Communion of Saints.

What might be some other ways to pray in this way, especially connecting with the real people in the news of our day?

Prayers of the Faithful / General Intercessions

- Include the names of specific people mentioned in the news (victims of violence, leaders in crisis, people suffering natural disasters).
- For example: "We pray for Mayor [Name] and all civic leaders working to bring peace and safety to their communities."
- Use first names when possible to preserve dignity and avoid turning prayers into headlines.

Prayer Walls or Books of Intention

- Keep a bulletin board or digital prayer wall where parishioners can write down names they've encountered in the news, which are then included at Mass.
- This can include photos or clippings from the news to focus prayer on specific individuals.
- A Book of Intention near the altar can include such names, which reminds everyone that the Church prays with and for the world.

Weekly Parish Prayer List

- In the parish bulletin, website, or email, include a short section: "*This Week We Pray With...*" naming individuals in the news.
- Parishioners can take these names into their personal and family prayer.

Lectio Divina + Current Events

- During small groups or faith-sharing, invite participants to place names from the news into the Scripture reflection.
- Example: Reading the Good Samaritan, then praying for a named refugee family or a victim of injustice in the news.

Candle Lighting or Prayer Services

- During holy hours or prayer vigils, read aloud the names of people from the news (victims of shootings, natural disasters, wars).
- Light a candle after each name to embody remembrance.

Homilies and Reflections

- The priest or deacon can incorporate current events into their homily, using a news story to illustrate a scriptural point or to encourage the congregation to pray for those involved.
- This helps the community connect their faith to the world around them.

Specific Prayer Services

- Parishes can hold special prayer services, holy hours, or vigils in response to significant events, such as a major tragedy or a national crisis.
- During these services, specific names of victims, first responders, or leaders can be lifted up in prayer.

GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

Prayer Chains

- A prayer chain (via email, text, or phone) can be organized to send out specific prayer requests as soon as news breaks.
- This allows for immediate and widespread prayer for individuals and situations in the public eye.

Social Media

- Parishes can use their social media platforms to post prayer intentions for people in the news, inviting the online community to join in prayer and solidarity.

Integrating with the Rosary

- In place of general intentions, parishioners could insert names from the news into each decade.
- Example: *"This decade we pray for Maria [last name], who lost her life in the recent flooding."*

Social Justice Ministry

- Encourage parish social justice committees to "pray the headlines" by naming individuals in their opening or closing prayers.
- This keeps advocacy rooted in prayer and the dignity of persons.

Children, youth and Faith Formation

- Invite children and youth to bring one name from the news to their faith formation sessions.
- Together, the group prays for each person—making the world more real and teaching that faith touches daily life.

Small Group and Scripture Study Integration

- Begin gatherings by praying for people you've seen in the news that week.
- Connect current events to biblical themes - praying for modern-day leaders facing choices like biblical figures did.
- Use news stories as prayer prompts during discussion times.

Special Prayer Initiatives

- Host prayer vigils for communities affected by disasters, naming local leaders and first responders.
- Organize prayer walks where you stop to pray for elected officials, healthcare workers, or educators by name.
- Create prayer cards with photos and names of people making headlines for various reasons.

Teaching Opportunities:

- Help parishioners understand that praying for public figures - regardless of political affiliation - is a biblical call to intercede for those in authority.
- Show how specific, name-based prayers can make current events feel more personal and urgent.



Guidelines for Sensitivity

- Always pray *for* people, never *against* them.
- Balance public figures (leaders, newsmakers) with ordinary individuals (victims, rescuers, families).
- Use names with care—especially if the person's story is tragic, ensure tone is compassionate, not sensational.
- When naming individuals, it's important to be respectful of their privacy and dignity, especially in sensitive situations. The focus should be on their human need for grace, strength, and comfort.

GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

Tips for Praying with News Names

- Invite a heart check before praying, seeking to pray with compassion and humility, even for controversial figures.
- Ask the parishioners to pray not only for immediate needs but also for transformation, healing, or wisdom for those named.
- Pray for all people, not just for a specific outcome. The focus should be on praying for God's will, for peace, healing, and wisdom, rather than for a specific political or social outcome. This helps the parish avoid partisanship and focus on the spiritual needs of those involved.
- Model a compassionate response. By praying for people in the news, a parish models a Christian response to a broken world—one of compassion, hope, and faith, rather than anger or despair. This encourages parishioners to see their faith as relevant to all aspects of life, including public affairs.
- Education and Discernment. A pastor or parish leader can guide the community in how to "pray the news" by encouraging a reflective, rather than reactive, approach. This may involve providing resources or leading discussions on how to engage with current events from a Scriptural perspective.



Some Sample Intercessions

- For President [Name], Governor [Name], and all leaders who bear the weight of decision-making in difficult times, that they may be guided by wisdom, humility, and concern for the common good, we pray to the Lord.
- For the victims of the recent tragedy in [City], especially [First Name, Last Name], whose lives were taken too soon, that God's mercy welcome them and bring comfort to their families, we pray to the Lord.

- For [Name], a journalist who has risked much to bring truth to light, and for all who serve the public through honest reporting, that they may be protected and strengthened, we pray to the Lord.
- For [Name] and [Name], children whose images in the news have moved us to compassion, and for all young people caught in war, disaster, or poverty, that they may be safe and find hope, we pray to the Lord.
- For first responders, including [Name] of [City], who gave of themselves in recent days to save others, that their generosity may be blessed and their courage sustained, we pray to the Lord.
- For our parish community, that as we hear the names of those in the news, our hearts may be moved not only to prayer but also to action in service of justice, we pray to the Lord.
- ***A parish might rotate these weekly, always connecting names from the current news cycle with the universal prayer of the Church.***

A Template for Praying with the Names of Real People in the News

For Leaders and Decision-Makers

For [Title] [First & Last Name], and for all civic and world leaders facing [situation/crisis], that they may act with justice, wisdom, and compassion, we pray to the Lord.

For Victims of Violence or Tragedy

For [First & Last Name], and all who lost their lives in [event/location], that they may be welcomed into God's embrace, and that their families may be comforted, we pray to the Lord.

For the Vulnerable

For [First Name(s)], and for all children, families, or communities suffering from [disaster/war/poverty], that they may know protection and hope, we pray to the Lord.

GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

For Helpers and Responders

For [First & Last Name], and all first responders, medical personnel, and volunteers serving in [place/situation], that their courage and generosity may be strengthened, we pray to the Lord.

For Those Working for Justice and Truth

For [First & Last Name], and all who labor for peace, truth, and reconciliation in our world, that their efforts may bear fruit, we pray to the Lord.

For Our Parish Community

That as we lift up names from the news in prayer, we may grow in solidarity with the world's suffering and become instruments of God's peace, we pray to the Lord.

Other GEMS issues on prayer which you might be interested in:

- [Lenten Evening Prayer](#)
- [Stations of the Cross with Taizé Prayer](#)
- [Prayer Forms](#)
- [Praying with the Labyrinth](#)
- [Prayer Forms \(Part II\)](#)
- [Prayer Forms \(Part III\)](#)
- [Lenten Evening Prayer: Who is My Neighbor?](#)
- [It Happens at Home](#)
- [Prayer Stations](#)
- [A Blessing for Widows](#)
- [Remembering our Deceased Loved Ones](#)
- [Prayer at Home during an Election](#)



Janet Schaeffler, OP
www.janetschaeffler.com
jschaeffler@adriandominicans.org

Past issues of **GEMS** are archived at www.janetschaeffler.com

Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found in:

- *Deepening Faith: Adult Faith Formation in the Parish*
<https://www.litpress.org/Products/4652/Deepening-Faith>
- *Guided by the Directory for Catechesis: Transforming the Vision and Practice of Parish Catechesis*
<https://twentythirdpublications.com/products/guided-by-the-directory-for-catechesis>
- Lifelong Faith Training: <https://www.lifelongfaithtraining.com/>
- Lifelong Faith: <https://www.lifelongfaith.com/>
- Seasons of Adult Faith website: <http://adultfaith.weebly.com/>
- The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation:
https://www.lifelongfaith.com/uploads/5/1/6/4/5164069/seasons_of_aff_-_journal_special_issue.pdf