

## Asking and Searching and Knocking

One of my friends was a chaplain at University Hospital during the first year of the pandemic. He told me that during that time his prayers usually concluded: "O God, not thy will, but mine be done!"

Most of us, at one time or another, have desperately prayed for something, but "my will" just isn't what happens. And yet, Jesus says, "Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you" (Luke 11:9).

This verse might suggest that we can pray for anything we want: a diamond necklace or a fancy car, cure of disease, financial success, world peace, whatever, and (click!) we'll get it. Whatever we want, when we want it. And if that doesn't happen, well, maybe we didn't pray correctly, or we're not good enough, or we don't have enough faith.

But then in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray for the reign of God, bringing peace and justice and well-being for all people. We are to pray for the essentials of life: "our daily bread." We are to pray to be forgiven and for the strength and courage to forgive others. Finally, we are to pray for safety from temptation and evil (Luke 11:2-4).

The essence of what we are to pray for is relationship with God, closeness to God, and trust in God's faithfulness and mercy.



These days, I am praying for the sick, for those who are in danger and afraid, for the suffering and the hungry, for peace, for human rights. I don't believe the lack of results reflects "God's will." God is intimately present in suffering, and over time (perhaps a very long time), I believe God will bring resolution and reconciliation.

Jesus does not promise that every want will be fulfilled. He does promise God's love and "good gifts" which may not be what we expect and might be much more than we ask or imagine.

Jesus promises us the

Holy Spirit to nurture and sustain us in our prayers and carry us on our journey to love God and each other. With the power of the Spirit, we can follow Jesus with persistence and with hope (Luke 11:13b).

—Sr. Ellen Francis, OSH

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*What are you praying for? Where do you find hope when your prayers are not fulfilled as you wish?*

# What gives OSH sisters hope?



**Sr. Carol Andrew**

What nourishes biblical hope? I often find this hope through using the Bible for lectio divina. One of my favorite passages to pray with is Psalm 71:21: "You strengthen me more and more; you enfold and comfort me." As I move into experiencing God loving and comforting me, I know deeply that there is no end and no negativity in God's love for me. God won't ever find something unlovable in me!

I then notice a difference in how I experience myself. It's like living inside of God's own hopefulness.



**Sr. Ellen Stephen**

Jesus said, "I have called you friends because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father" (John 15:15). I've found that's what friends do: share freely with each other. How gracious that we are welcomed into such friendship with God! Spirit to spirit bonded in love. God, who is love (John 4:8) receives and silently responds. This way of contemplative prayer is a partner to liturgical prayer and embraces intercessory prayer. All prayer in holy connection sustains my hope.



**Sr. Faith Anthony**

I practice zazen. A 13<sup>th</sup> century Zen master Dōgen says, "To study the Way is to learn oneself. To study oneself is to forget oneself. To forget oneself is to be actualized by all things, etc" (Genjōkōan). This meditation practice places me among everything in the universe as one of them. I have my own preference and idea of God but try to remember, "I may be wrong," and pray, "Your will be done, and let your servant rejoice and hope in you, no matter what happens."



**Sr. Ann Prentice**

One of my favorite sources of hope in these days is the video blog from our Bishop Visitor, The Rt. Rev. Carlye J. Hughes, Diocese of Newark NJ. Twice a month, she posts a video at <https://dioceseofnewark.org/bishops-vlog/> in which she speaks to us as though she's responding to a plea from a dear friend who needs a compassionate, realistic, spiritual reply. Hers is perhaps the most calm, comforting voice and manner I know.

**The Rt. Rev. Carlye Hughes**  
OSH Bishop Visitor





### Sr. Miriam Elizabeth

"Light after darkness, gain after loss, strength after weakness, crown after cross; sweet after bitter, hope after fears, home after wandering, praise after tears. Alpha and Omega, beginning and the end, He is making all things new, springs of living water shall wash away each tear. He is making all things new. Sight after mystery, sun after rain, joy after sorrow, peace after pain, near after distant, gleam after gloom, love after loneliness, life after tomb."

From choral anthem "All Things New." Music by Elaine Hagenberg. Lyrics adapted from "Right" by Frances Ridley Havergal; chorus taken from Rev 21:5-6. To listen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGNU0Wz2ors/>.



### Sr. Mary Lois

"What if I had not believed that I should see the glory of God in the land of the living (Psalm 27:13)?" My hope confidently rests in God whom I have seen in countless ways in my life. In God there is no place for fear. God's presence and protection are my sources of comfort and courage.



### Sr. Rosina Ampah

As long as the sun keeps rising daily, I have hope because God's love is always available to us. My strong relationship with God that began in childhood and my continuing reading of the Bible and daily prayers keep me hopeful. The reading of the mystics past and present and my personal encounters with God's love contribute to my ability to remain hopeful.



### Sr. Linda Elston

My favorite prayer in the OSH Breviary is a closing prayer in Matins: "May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Spirit." Whenever I officiate at Matins and get to choose which of the three available closing prayers to speak, 90% of the time I choose this one. Yes, it gives me hope – in that moment and for the day to come. The real trick here is that the Greek word *pisteuo*, translated as "believing," actually means "trusting." So, it's also a challenging prayer!





## Sister Faith Anthony Practicing Tai Chi



I started Tai Chi with Yang Ming-shi in the early 1980s in Tokyo. After a long gap, I resumed it at the Kroc Center in Augusta, GA. I do Tai Chi because I like it – I feel grounded and connected with others in this slow movement.



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Seated: Srs. Linda and Rosina

Standing: Srs. Ann, Ellen Francis, Miriam Elizabeth, Carol Andrew, Faith Anthony

Not shown in photo: Srs. Ellen Stephen and Mary Lois