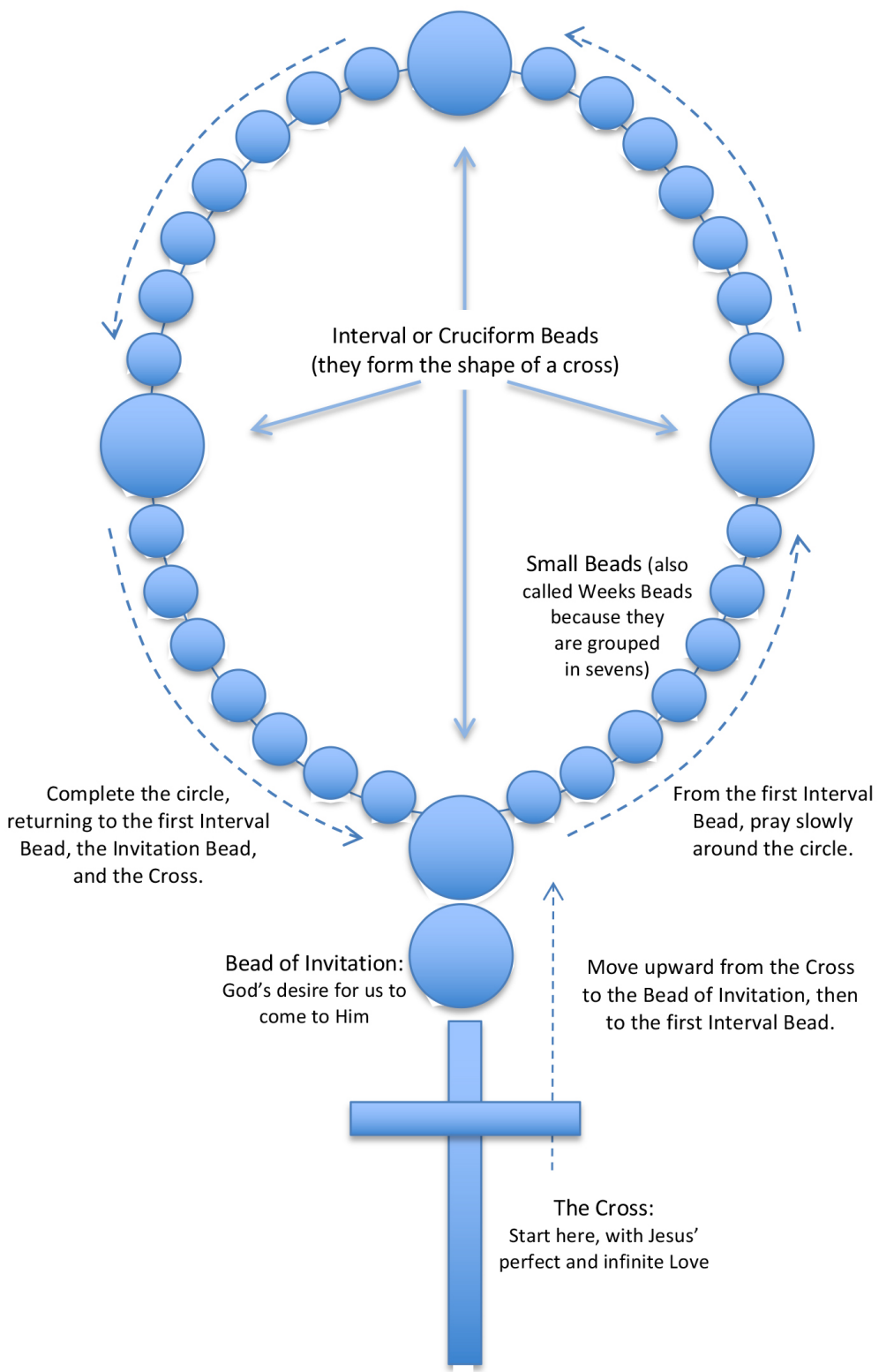


Praying with Prayer Beads





Using Prayer Beads

Praying with prayer beads is an ancient way of praying that engages our whole being in prayer. For millennia, a knotted length of cord or a sack of small stones served as a reminder to pray and as a guide for prayer.

Prayer beads acknowledge that praying is not solely a mental activity. We are physical creatures, with bodies given us by God as gifts. Inviting our bodies along on the journey of prayer can actually assist our praying. It grounds and integrates us, and helps active minds settle as fingers move from bead to bead. Far from the “meaningless repetition” Jesus warned against, slowing down to repeat a scripture or pray a snippet of prayer helps us decelerate from the often-frantic pace of life and enter more fully into the activity of prayer. As we allow the adrenaline levels to dwindle, as we open ourselves more to the words of The Word and of prayers that others have used to seek and address God, we can settle and become quiet long enough to come present to the Love that is always present to us and might even want to something to say to us.

Before starting to pray with the beads, it is helpful to link brief scriptures and/or prayers with the different beads. There are many online resources that offer these passages and prayers, often connecting to the schedule of scripture passages for each week. *Praying with Beads*, by Doerr and Owens, explains how to use prayer beads and lays out an entire year of brief scriptures and prayers based on the Lectionary.

There is no “right” way to use prayer beads. Let them guide you in prayer however seems best to you. Two options are included here. The first is the traditional pattern of praying scripture with the beads; the second uses the ACTS acronym (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication) for the various beads.

Prayer Outline

Beginning: Start always at the Cross, God’s incomparably gracious and beautiful gift of Himself to redeem and restore us, and pray a prayer or Scripture passage that speaks to you of the grace and truth of Jesus or the goodness of God’s Kingdom ways (such as, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing grace to all” [Titus 2:11] or “But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ” [Eph 2:4-5]), or a prayer of gratitude for God’s grace.

Invitation: Moving upward to the large bead above the cross, the Bead of Invitation calls us to prayer because God desires that we come to Him, draw near with confidence, and settle into His love as we pray. Prayers with this bead might call to mind Jesus’ “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden” (Mt 11:28), “Call to Me and I will answer you,” (Jer 33:3), Samuel’s “Speak, Lord; Your servant is listening” (1 Sam 3:10), or any phrase that carries your heart’s need to seek God (the plea of Simon Peter or the Canaanite woman might be of use here as you come to prayer: “Lord, help me!”).

Interval Beads: The next bead is one of the four large Interval or Cruciform Beads at the compass points around the circle. If you lay the beads out flat, you’ll see that these four large

beads form a cross. You'll typically pray the same scripture or prayer for each of these four beads. Some people use these Interval Beads with their Breath Prayer or to linger with God in silence.

Small Beads: You can pray the Small Beads (also called Weeks Beads because there are seven beads in each of the four groups) in many ways. See further pages for explanations of a couple of the options.

Closing: After the final Interval Bead, let your return to Bead of Invitation leading back to the cross call you again to awareness of God's nearness and love for you. Bring your time of prayer to an end with the Lord's Prayer as you hold the cross of Jesus, who taught us to pray.

Praying Scripture with Beads

This traditional way of using prayer beads lets you linger with just a couple scripture passages or brief prayers. Repeating the words slowly as you finger the beads allows those words to sink in, and they will echo on throughout the day.

Before starting, you'll want to assign a short scripture phrase or traditional prayer to the Interval Beads and a different phrase or brief prayer to the Small Beads. There are examples below that you can adapt and modify; there are also many online resources you can find by searching for "Anglican Prayer Beads."

Praying the Beads:

- Start at the Cross and the Bead of Invitation as described on the previous page.
- After the Invitation Bead, the next large bead is the first of the four Interval (or Cruciform) Beads. You'll pray the same phrase or prayer for each of the Interval Beads around the circle (praying the first Interval bead when you start into the circle and when you end). Some possibilities include:
 - the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."
 - a breath prayer such as "Abba, I belong to You" or another very short phrase that fits with your inhale and exhale
 - a line from a hymn or praise song, sung or hummed softly or silently
- Move into the Small Beads, slowly repeating the Scripture phrase or prayer you've chosen for the beads between the Interval Beads. (You'll be praying this one verse or prayer for all the 28 Small Beads).

Do not hurry your prayer. The point isn't to get through these words and the beads as quickly as possible and be done. The goal is to linger with God and let the words of Scripture and prayer create space within you for God.

You can select a favorite passage (or perhaps one with which you're struggling), a phrase from the week's Lectionary readings, or a short prayer. Remember, you pray this one verse or prayer for each of the Small Beads.

- The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. (Ps 23:1)
- For God alone my soul waits in silence. (Ps 62:1)
- The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? (Ps 127:1)

- Out of the depths I cry to You, O Lord. (Ps 130:1)
 - Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, You are mine. (Is 43:1)
 - You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. (Mt 16:16)
 - Not My will but Yours be done. (Mt 26:42)
 - Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins. His mercy endures forever. (*Book of Common Prayer*, The Seabury Press, 1979)
- Repeat the cycle of Interval Bead and Small Beads as you move around the circle.
 - After the final Interval Bead, return to the Invitation Bead and the cross, as described on the preceding page.

Adoration | Confession | Thanksgiving | Supplication

Use each quarter of the circle to pray one of the four classic aspects of prayer: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. As described previously, begin with the cross and the bead of invitation. You can use the interval beads as described below, or linger briefly for silence between each of the four movements of prayer.

- *Adoration*: Use the first Interval Bead to settle into worship and praise; for example: “Lord, help me worship you in spirit and in truth.” Recall various attributes of God for each of the next seven beads, slowly working – and worshipping – your way through the characteristics of God that come to mind.
- *Confession*: At the next Interval Bead, ask for the Spirit’s leading; then, for each smaller bead, name something in yourself, your family, church, or in the world that isn’t as it should be. Pray prayers of confession (e.g., Psalm 51) and of lament over the brokenness, and bring these broken things to Jesus for His cleansing and healing.
- *Thanksgiving*: Let the Interval Bead at the top of the circle move you into gratitude for the grace of forgiveness and healing following the Confession beads; then, as you finger each of the subsequent seven beads, name something for which you’re thankful or for which you are choosing to practice gratitude.
- *Supplication*: Starting the final quarter of the circle, let the Interval Bead remind you of your confidence to come before God and make request; then as you touch each of the seven beads, ask God for what you, your loved ones, your church, and the larger community and world need in this season.

Closing: As you return to the beads leading back to the cross, let them call you again to awareness of God’s nearness and love for you. Bring your time of prayer to an end with the Lord’s Prayer as you hold the cross of Jesus.

Peggy Lang, 2018