

MINDFUL OF MORTALITY

THE LESSON: PSALM 90

In the beginning, the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, chose disobedience. That first sin polluted the goodness of the whole of creation, resulting in sickness, sorrow, and death. Now the story for each one of us is “dust to dust”.

Death is not something that the living often choose to think about. Many of us would rather live as though we will always be here, just as we are now, laughing in the sunlight. But each of us has a limited amount of time before we return to the dust from which we came. If we only pay attention, the reminder of death is constantly with us during life – we hear about it in the news, in our communities, and it even reaches into our families, refusing to be ignored. This is what the Prayer Book liturgy means when it says, “In the midst of life we are in death” (BCP p. 601).

When we think about the inevitability of our own deaths, we are reminded of what *caused* it: human sin. This awareness should lead us to repent and to cling to the mercy of Christ. But being “mindful of mortality” is about more than sombre introspection. It should also lead us to *rejoice* in the blessings of each day, to *honour* God with all that we have now, and to joyfully *anticipate* our glorious future with him in eternity.

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE “FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES”, WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer))

Spend some time reflecting on this truth: God is eternal, we are mortal. Next, take time to repent of your sins and rejoice in your blessings. Ask God to help you to honour him with all of your days and to look forward with hope to eternity. Close your time with the following prayer:

O God, whose days are without end, and whose mercies cannot be numbered: Make us, we beseech thee, deeply sensible of the shortness and uncertainty of human life; and let thy Holy Spirit lead us in holiness and righteousness, all our days; that, when we shall have served thee in our generation, we may be gathered unto our fathers, having the testimony of a good conscience; in the communion of the Catholic Church; in the confidence of a certain faith; in the comfort of a reasonable, religious, and holy hope; in favour with thee our God, and in perfect charity with all men. Grant this, we beseech thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(PRAYER FROM THE ORDER FOR THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD, P. 599)

MINDFUL OF MORTALITY

PSALM 90: **TEACH US TO NUMBER OUR DAYS**

- ¹ Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.
- ² Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth
and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
- ³ You return man to dust and say, “Return, O children of man!”
- ⁴ For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.
- ⁵ You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning:
⁶ in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.
- ⁷ For we are brought to an end by your anger; by your wrath we are dismayed.
- ⁸ You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.
- ⁹ For all our days pass away under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh.
- ¹⁰ The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty;
yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.
- ¹¹ Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you?
- ¹² So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.
- ¹³ Return, O Lord! How long? Have pity on your servants!
- ¹⁴ Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
- ¹⁵ Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, and for as many years as we have seen evil.
- ¹⁶ Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children.
- ¹⁷ Let the favour of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work
of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!