

CONTENTS

Introduction	4
College Life	7
Gratitude	22
Friends & Family	31
Times of Trouble	39
Guidance	49
Traditional Prayers	61

INTRODUCTION

My flip-flops slapped at the grass as I did my best to sprint across campus in the dark. It was nearly 9 PM, and the cool night air lay still, as if waiting for me to sweep through the quad. Moments earlier I had been seated at my desk in the corner of a cramped room on the 4th floor of McVinney Hall, alternating my gaze from the glaring, empty computer screen to the still unfamiliar walls, as I willed myself not to cry. I spotted the Mass schedule that I had conveniently tacked to the wall, and out of curiosity—or boredom—I read the Mass times. I barely managed to mumble a quick, “I’ll be back later,” to my roommate, before slipping out the door.

I stumbled into one of the dark wooden pews, just as the priest began his short, solo procession from the sacristy to the altar. I had run toward the chapel to be on time, but I was running from some things, too—the work that had already piled up, the hideous dorm showers, the loneliness that I had felt since my arrival a few weeks earlier.

The chapel was nearly silent. It was not the awkward silence of sharing a room with someone I hardly knew, or the silence of sitting alone at lunch. It was a

warm, comforting quiet that felt like home, and I felt no pressure to speak. Here, in the presence of God, I was no longer a nameless freshman, walking in a wandering herd. I bore no label. I was still scared, unsure, and looking for the place where I fit in; but I was no longer alone. God knew me, knew why I was there, and felt no need to make small talk about my major, or my hometown.

I began to go to daily Mass whenever I could make the time. I made a habit of talking to God no matter where I was, or how I felt—grateful, angry, excited, lonely—and I gained strength from our prayerful friendship.

One year later, I hurried toward the chapel for what felt like the millionth time. The construction of a new, larger chapel had been completed since my freshman year, and I could see the steeple from across the quad. I had made a hasty exit after my Habitat for Humanity meeting, and as I walked I checked my watch. I would make it. I slid into a pew beside a group of my friends. After Mass we would probably head to the student center where, over a cup of hot chocolate and a bag of gummi worms, we could discuss anything from my Shakespeare class, to the adventures of being a resident assistant, to my preparations to study abroad. But now, we sat together in the familiar silence.

In the months since my desperate sprint to Mass, it had become obvious that the comfort I felt there

extended beyond the walls of the chapel. It was available in all places, at any time, whenever I turned to God in quiet prayer. This book is a starting point, because sometimes, the hardest part is simply finding the words to begin. A dialogue with God does not need to take on a specific form, and we do not need to be intimidated by the idea. God shares our desire for this intimate conversation in prayer, too, and welcomes us whether we rush in desperation toward Christ's comfort, or simply sit quietly, letting the peace of Christ wash over us, like a still night air anticipating our arrival.

COLLEGE LIFE

Beginning the school year

Christ, you, above all, know the significance of new beginnings. Guide me, Lord, that I might take full advantage of this fresh start, always seeking ways to better myself, to make good use of my time, to balance my schoolwork and my extra-curricular activities. May this school year bring new friends, as well as happy reunions with the old. Help me to go forth with faith, and to approach all things with an adventurous spirit, a ready heart, and a willingness to follow where you lead.

All beginnings are somewhat strange; but we must have patience, and, little by little, we shall find things, which at first were obscure, becoming clear. ♦ ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

First time sharing a room

Lord, I am used to having my own space and dealing only with my own schedule. Help me to adjust, and to learn to take into account another person's schedule, habits, belongings. Help me to see this situation as an opportunity to grow in my capacity for compassion, understanding, patience, and tolerance. It takes time, Lord, to grow used to this new, shared space. Be with us Lord, as we eat, as we sleep, as we wake, as we work, that

we might be considerate and respectful of each other at all times. Bless us, Lord, and bless this room, our new home.

Be not anxious about what you have, but about what you are.

◆ POPE ST. GREGORY

Difficult roommate

We come from different homes and different backgrounds. We have different interests, and separate groups of friends. If it were not for this space we share, it seems (Name) and I would have nothing in common. Help me Lord, to have patience as (Name) and I adjust to this new living situation. Though we may not always agree, help us to treat each other with courtesy and respect. Grant us the patience to listen, to learn, and to heal our relationship, that we might live together peacefully. Help me always to acknowledge your presence here with us, and to see that despite our differences, we are united in your name and by your love.

We can never love our neighbor too much.

◆ ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

Choosing a major

Sometimes this seems an impossible choice. Guide me as I discern your will for my life. Help me to choose a field in which I will thrive, and to choose a major based not on

its convenience or popularity, but because it is a subject I love. Guide my choice, Lord, and throughout my course of study, guide me toward my vocation. Form my mind, that I can make best use of the gifts and talents you have given me. With a passionate heart, a willing mind, and your love, always with me, I cannot go wrong.

The real tragedy in life is not in being limited to one talent, but in the failure to use the one talent. ♦ EDGAR W. WORK

Academic pressures

So much is expected of me, Lord. I feel constant pressure to succeed, to improve. Be with me when my classes overwhelm me, when I am afraid of failure, when I worry about disappointing my professors, my parents, and myself. Lord, calm my mind and help me to see that you truly know and appreciate the effort and diligence I put into my work. May I use my knowledge and abilities to glorify you. May I always recognize the pleasure in simply learning something new, whether from my books or my mistakes. Guide me as I study, as I read, as I learn so that my work, my efforts, are done in your name and for you alone.

If you're always striving to find some new way to grow, to improve, to better your skills and talents, you'll always be successful, both in the eyes of others and in your own eyes.

♦ CYNTHIA KERSEY