



Youth With A Mission



Prayer Guide for Greater Montreal

Introduction

This booklet is written with the express purpose of encouraging Christians and Churches throughout greater Montreal to pray for our city and for the greater metropolitan area. We, at Youth With A Mission, believe that intercessory prayer is always the first step in reaching out to our community. The very heart of the Church's mission is expressed in these words: "May your kingdom come, may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven". So be it in Montreal! Prayer will open the doors to both evangelism and social ministry as we share God's heart for our "neighbour".

Urban ministry has come a long way and become so much more complex since the time when Jonah was called by God to the city of Nineveh. At that time, cities were for the most part unilingual and unicultural, sharing a common identity. Nineveh was an Assyrian city with 100,000 citizens. Apart from a few diplomats and merchants from other nations, they shared a common faith, language and culture. Therefore, a single missionary was able to share with them a single message in a single language to be heard by all.

Today in Montreal, people speak well over one hundred different languages! And even in each of our own cultures, there are subcultures. Some are rich, others are poor. Some work in offices while others work in factories. Amongst younger adults, some pursue university studies and others don't. So even within a common language group, we need speak in different ways in order to be heard. Today, the need is for literally hundreds of pastors, evangelists and Christian workers to reach but our city! We also need the prayers and the testimony of every Christian. Certainly the task is greater than our human capacities and resources. We need God's help, Spirit and strength!

In the following pages, I share with you several ways of undertaking and encouraging prayer for Montreal. Let's pray together for the welfare of our city!

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The seven domains or spheres of influence in society

Society is made up of several institutions and/or infrastructures within which we all live and which, according their nature and purpose, influence us but which we can, in turn, also influence. These can be called "domains" or "spheres of influence" (some have also called them *mindmolders*). Together, they give to our city a distinct character, a unique identity. These domains are seven in number:

- religious institutions
- government and politics
- the world of education
- the business community
- arts, sports and entertainment
- the media
- the family

Each of these dimensions of society influence us in one way or another every day. They are aspects of society that are, in a sense, almost "omnipresent". They are structures of society within which we, as citizens and as disciples, are called to interact and to serve. Jesus said : "I have sent them into the world" (Jn. 17:18). Following is a seven day prayer guide giving a brief introduction to each of the seven domains as well as suggestions for prayer. Obviously, this sequence can be modified and could be used over seven weeks or seven months.

How to pray

You can pray during your regular church services and meetings, with your home prayer and Bible Study group, with your family or alone. You can also do some prayerwalking by going to some of the key areas of your neighborhood or of the city according to the theme of the day and praying "on site with insight" (i.e. going to city hall to pray for government or Place des arts to pray for the arts). One church in Montreal even invited persons working in each of the seven domains to give a brief exposé for seven consecutive days of prayer!

Sunday: religious institutions

As Christians, we go to church most often on Sundays. Other religious communities may meet on another day of the week, such as Jews on Saturday, the sabbath. For us as well as for those of other religions, our churches (temples, mosques or synagogues) are places where we worship God (or a concept of God) together and where we are instructed and disciplined in our particular faith. Whatever our religion, it forms our way of understanding both God and the world in which we live. For those of us who have received the revelation of Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, and who are, by the gift of His life on the cross, reconciled to the Father, it's important for us to pray that the witness of the Church might have an impact on our city so that a great number of people from many other religious and cultural backgrounds might also know salvation and thereafter worship the living God and Father of our Lord.

* Pray for your own assembly / local church / parish, for your pastor(s) and other leaders, and for the ministries and witness of your church in your own neighborhood;

* Pray for our relationships between churches and for growing unity, particularly in that it's together that we form the Church in the city;

* Pray for the other religious groups in your neighborhood as well as in the city: Jews, Muslim, Hindhu and Bhuddist, as well as New Agers and occult practitioners who, in each their own way, are seeking God or a spiritual meaning to life. Pray that they might know Jesus, the only mediator between God and men;

* Pray for those evangelistic events that might contribute, throughout the city, to a new awareness of the presence and love of God as revealed in Jesus and that His name might once again catch the imagination of the masses and reawaken a thirst to truly know Him.

Monday : government and politics

When God created man in His image and placed him in the garden of Eden, He gave him the command to "have dominion" over the earth. So human beings were given authority to govern over the whole of Creation. To govern means to establish the rules by which we are to live together and by which we are to insure the stewardship and the distribution of the goods of the earth for the wellbeing of all. Each country has its own form of government. The province of Quebec is part of a federation, Canada, and so we have three levels of government: federal, provincial and municipal, each of which are to exercise complementary powers. The book of Romans tells us that "all authority is from God" and other texts encourage us to pray for those in authority.

* Pray for our prime minister () and for the premier of Québec (). Pray also for the mayor of Montreal () and/or the mayor of your own city if you live in the suburbs. Pray as well for the municipal counsellors representing your neighborhood;

* Pray for their respective governments, federal, provincial and municipal, so that they might be inspired by God and establish laws that are in conformity with His will, laws that alone can keep us from evil and that can encourage other citizens to seek what is righteous;

* Pray for our international, national, provincial and municipal relationships so that at every level we might also consider the needs and the interests of others and that we might be just in all things;

* Pray for our justice system so that the rights of the weakest might be respected.

Tuesday: the world of education

Contemporary society places a high value on education, to the point that many young people pursue their studies at university and many adults take evening classes. Without a diploma, it is ever more difficult to find employment. But what exactly is education? Isn't it the means we take in order to transmit to the next generation our understanding of the world so that it might be able to take up the reins and insure continuity? Education is often limited to the knowledge of facts and theory, but it has another dimension often ignored in our day: the transmission of our faith, of our beliefs and values. This implies the formation of character by both spiritual and moral disciplines. Education, therefore, is important because we can know both God and the world in which He has placed us so that we might administrate it according to His will.

* Pray for our minister of education (), and for the pedagogues working with him, in their difficult job of establishing teaching programs at all levels;

* Pray for those places in your neighbourhood dedicated to education, from daycare centers to elementary and secondary schools. Pray also for the teaching staff and for the students, including those from your own church;

* Pray for those Cegeps and universities frequented by members of your own family as well as your church. Pray for those Christian organizations working on the campuses;

* Pray, lastly, for social service organizations, both private and government-run, who often work with those who've not had the benefit of such an education and who struggle with poverty and unemployment and often-accompanying lifestyle problems such as alcohol and drugs. Pray for those organizations working in your own neighborhood as well as for their beneficiaries.

Wednesday: the business community

The economic health of our city, of our province and of our country concerns us all and its health depends in large part on the business community. We mentioned earlier that to "govern means to establish the rules ... by which we are to insure the stewardship and the distribution of the goods of the earth for the wellbeing of all". The business world is that dimension of society that takes care of the "stewardship" and "distribution" itself. The business world includes 1) financial institutions such as banks and the stock market, 2) industry, whether mines and forests to the construction of airplanes and the development of new medication and, 3) commerce, there where we make our purchases. It is a very competitive domain that necessitates the search for excellence as well as a profound need for integrity.

* Pray for righteousness and integrity in the business world where the desire for profit and personal gain are a constant temptation. Pray for those business people who are members of our own families and of our churches as well as those amongst our neighbours;

* Pray for the economic wellbeing of greater Montreal, but not at any cost. Pray for the entrepreneurs and the development of their ideas and projects. But pray as well that all is done in an ethical manner. Let's stand against all projects that puts into danger the spiritual and moral health of the city. A case in point are the Gay Games that Montreal will potentially receive in 2006 where the primary motive for the city is economic;

* Pray for the principal companies, both industrial and commercial, in our city and in your neighbourhood. Pray as well as for those business people that you yourself meet whether at your bank, at the restaurant, in the stores where you shop. If you work in an office or a store or a factory, pray for your boss, your colleagues and your clients.

Thursday: arts, sports and entertainment

Human creativity is a gift from God by the very fact that He created us in His image. Language (the spoken word) is the first of all art forms since God told Adam to name all of the animals, thus inviting us to create language. It's by His word that God created all things and it's through the word that we name them! But artistic forms are almost unlimited: music and dance, visual arts and cinema. In society, it's through art that we often express and transmit our beliefs and values, the very soul of our culture. But it's also through art that we'll also question and at times denounce those same beliefs and values. Through the arts, we can access popular imagination and help to transform society. Sports also awaken our passions : the face off, the taking of positions, the competition. In a sense, it's a reflection of life. And what are we to say about all of the other means of entertainment and relaxation available to us, either alone or with friends?

* Pray for the cultural and artistic milieus in greater Montreal. We know that our city is recognized in North America as one that is avant-garde. Pray that the Gospel might have an impact on artists of all disciplines that live and work here so that they might be awakened to the greatness and splendour of God and that their works might reflect this. Pray for them by name;

* Pray for those artists in our churches that their vocation would be recognized and that they might receive from our churches the pastoral care and support that they so need. Pray that the life of the Holy Spirit in them would lead them in their work of creation to the glory of God;

* Pray for those involved in both professional and amateur sports in our city, both athletes and coaches, and that they might be models of honesty and of social commitment to their fans;

* Pray for your personal hobbies and interests, for the place we accord in our lives for these and for our friends, for rest, for health, for a balanced life.

Friday: the media

The media represent the various communications enterprises whose primary role is the dissemination of information. They include the press, television, radio and the internet. Expressions such as "multimedia" remind us that we are in a field that is highly dependent on the most recent technologies. Events are at times said to be "well covered by the media". Media, therefore, inform us about the events of the day, at home and abroad, as well as of their place in the evolution of civilization whether in our region or elsewhere in the world. They will also inform us of things that are of both specialized as well as of general interest. The omnipresence of the media in society (some will even speak of "incessant bombardment", particularly when it come to advertizing), never ceases to influence us in our habits as consumers but also in our ways of understanding the world.

* Pray for the authorities and specialists in the field of media and communications. They are at the head of the CBC and the Gazette. They teach in our universities and sit on special government committees such as the CRTC. Let's pray that the Holy Spirit give them a discerning mind and high moral standards, that they may oppose those abuses by the media where "freedom of expression" is used as a pretext.

* Pray for those radio, television and newspaper personalities in our city, that the Lord would call them to Himself. Pray as well for those Christians that you know who are studying or already working in this field;

* Pray for those Christian ministries that work in this field: publishing houses, newspapers and magazines, on radio and television. Pray for the wisdom and provision of God for the various projects that we're aware of;

* Pray that the message of the Gospel of Jesus be announced by the media.

Saturday : the family

The family is the first of all institutions. It includes the immediate family, parents and children, but also the extended family: grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. Before all else, it's to the family that we more immediately identify since it's in her midst that life was given to us and that we began to learn and experience life. Each of our families is part of a larger community that gives to it its ethnicity, its language, its culture and even its spirituality which are in turn transmitted to us as individuals. So it's from the family that we first receive our initial identity and it's from the family that we enter into relationship with the world. It's the family that often counsels and supports us. And the family is presently in peril.

* Pray for our own families, both immediate and extended, thanking the Lord for those who are close to us. Pray for good and close relationships between couples, parents and children, brothers and sisters. Pray that there where relationships are broken and where there is suffering, that there might be repentance and forgiveness.

* Pray for our relationships within our particular cultural community, whether it be English, Haitian, Spanish, Chinese, Greek, French or other. Pray for ministries of evangelism towards our own people and for the planting of new churches in their midst.

* Pray for our relationships between peoples in greater Montreal: for respect and for agape love. Pray for the witness of the Church in this area by first of all expressing our thanks to God for the multicultural Church that we are in our city and which is for each of us a source of mutual enrichment. Let's thank God for one another by mentioning those specific communities in our neighbourhoods that we are in relationship with.

* Pray that each of our communities receive from the Lord a mission vision and calling for other cultural and linguistic communities in Montreal and that He call workers to build bridges between us. Pray for the planting of new churches in the various communities where there are as yet no established church or ministry. Let's pray for revival in our city.

Other ideas for creative prayer

1. Geographical

The island of Montreal is composed of many smaller communities. Our team once spent an entire day driving around its' circumference and making a total of 13 stops to pray for Old Montreal and the downtown, Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, Pointe-aux-Trembles, Montreal-North, St-Laurent, Pierrefonds, Beaconsfield, La Salle, Verdun and many places in between including those buroughs in the heart of the city. Laval is made up of 13 communities from Chomedey to Ste-Rose to Pont-Viau. The south shore as well from Boucherville to Brossard.

2. Historical

Beginning at Place-Royale in Old Montreal, Montreal's very first market place, you can follow the development of Montreal over the centuries by thinking of those first nation peoples that preceded all others and praying for Kanasatake and Kahnawake. It could be worth your while to visit the Pointe-à-Callière Museum across the street and particularly their multi-media presentation of Montreal which is so informative. From there, follow the growth of the initial settlement as a Catholic mission post, the arrival of the English and the ensuing economic and industrial growth of the city, the impact of the Quiet Revolution on contemporary society and present multiculturalism.

3. Cultural and linguistic

The nations of the world are now present in Montreal. Not only can we stroll in Chinatown or in Little Italy, we can also eat at an Ethiopian, Syrian or Thai restaurant as well. Some communities are large and others are hidden in the masses. Some have a well-established Christian presence: the haitian and hispanic communities have more than one hundred churches each. Other groups such as Laotians have no church at all in their own language. And there are still others that have no Christian witness whatsoever. To make them aware of Montreal's multiculturalism, I have several times taken groups to the Plamondon Metro neighbourhood (Victoria Street north of Queen Mary). Once there, I've told them to go into one of the many shops (all the colours of the world are there except white) and told them to buy something to either eat or drink that was totally foreign to them. And as we've consumed these various delicacies (!?), we've prayed for the particular people and culture that we've come into contact with.