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Moments With God

*Turn Waiting
Into Praying*

Jacquelyn Graham

*For God alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from him.*

PSALM 62:5



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LIGUORI MO 63057-9999

Imprimi Potest:

Harry Grile, CSSR, Provincial
Denver Province, The Redemptorists

Published by Liguori Publications
Liguori, Missouri 63057

To order, call 800-325-9521, or visit liguori.org

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Graham, Jacquelyn S.

Moments with God : turn waiting into praying / Jacquelyn S. Graham.—1st ed.
p. cm.

1. Mothers—Prayers and devotions. 2. Catholic women—Prayers and devotions.

I. Title.

BV4847.G68 2012

248.8'431—dc23

2012020775

p ISBN 978-0-7648-2214-8

e ISBN 978-0-7648-6734-7

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Liguori Publications, a nonprofit corporation, is an apostolate of The Redemptorists. To learn more about The Redemptorists, visit Redemptorists.com.

Printed in the United States of America

16 15 14 13 12 / 5 4 3 2 1

First Edition

Contents

Introduction	5
Chapter 1 Children and Family	7
Waiting for Childbirth	8
Waiting for the Baby to Wake Up.	10
Waiting for the Kids to Come Home From School	12
Waiting to Pick Up the Kids From Their Lessons and Classes	14
Waiting for the Kids at Their Sports Practice	16
Waiting for Your Teenager Who Has Missed Curfew	18
Waiting for Your Child to Arrive Home From College	20
Waiting for Your Spouse to Arrive Home.	22
Waiting for a Call With Good (or Bad) News	24
Chapter 2 Household Tasks	27
Waiting for Company to Come	28
Waiting for the Coffee to Perk or the Tea to Steep.	30
Waiting for Dinner to be Ready	32
Waiting to Plant the Garden.	34
Waiting for Seeds to Sprout	36
Waiting for Fruit to Ripen and Vegetables to be Ready to Pick	38
Chapter 3 At Work	41
Waiting for a Job Interview	42
Waiting for the Copy Machine	44
Waiting for the Computer to Boot Up	46
Waiting for Your Next Work Assignment	48
Waiting for Your Lunch Break	50
Waiting for the End of Your Shift or the Close of the Day	52
Waiting for a Decision From the Boss	54
Waiting for Customers.	56

Chapter 4 Out and About	59
Waiting to Get Past an Accident Scene	60
Waiting for the Bus or Train	62
Waiting at the Laundromat	64
Waiting for an Appointment	66
Waiting in a Restaurant	68
Waiting in Line at the Post Office	70
Waiting in Line to Vote	72
Waiting While Gassing Up the Car	74
Waiting for Help to Come	76
Waiting Out a Storm	78
Waiting in Line at the Checkout	80
Waiting for Customer Assistance	82
 Chapter 5 Events & Recreation	 85
Waiting for the Fish to Bite	86
Waiting for Your Teammates to Show Up	88
Waiting for Your Walking/Running Partner	90
Waiting in the Deer Stand or Hunting Blind	92
Waiting in Line for a Concert or Play	94
Waiting for Christmas	96
Waiting for an Important Day in Your Life	98
Waiting for Your Test Results	102
Waiting for Surgery or Treatment for Yourself or a Loved One	104
Waiting in the Emergency Room	106
Waiting at a Friend or Loved One's Bedside	108
Waiting With a Dying Loved One	110

Introduction

Have you ever found yourself getting impatient with the speed of the microwave? Or the copy machine? And then feeling ridiculous because of the absurdity of your dissatisfaction with these time savers?

Such has become the pace of our life that waiting four and a half minutes for our microwave lunch to cook or the fifteen seconds it takes for our original to be scanned and copied seems like a great inefficiency and a waste of our precious time.

Sometimes waiting is a mere annoyance, and sometimes it can be a source of great stress as we await the outcome of a particular situation—staring into the unknown, vacillating between hope and despair.

But waiting can be a gift—kind of a gift card that can be redeemed for the luxury of contemplation and the pleasure of prayer, a quiet conversation with God that can lower our blood pressure and heal our souls. While we anticipate the future, waiting keeps us in the present—in the presence of God.

This book is filled with prayers for those situations when we are forced to wait. These are times when we are not in control, because seldom do we choose to wait when we have the choice of moving on. Someone or something else is governing our life during that time.

When you find yourself waiting, look in the contents section at the beginning of this book for the situation that fits your life in that moment. Each devotion will begin with a prayer that will remind you of God's place in your life and focus your thoughts. A Scripture quotation and reflection follow. They contain wisdom to

help you think beyond the obvious, to go deeper into the meaning of that moment in time. Then, in “A Moment With God,” you will find questions and prayers that will enable you to spend a moment in prayer for your immediate needs and the needs that may have surfaced through your newly awakened awareness of your unity with all of God’s works. You will end with a prayer called a “Collect” (emphasis on the first syllable), which gathers your thoughts and new discoveries and offers them to God. Of course, you have the freedom to adapt any of these prayers to your unique situation.

What a wonderful opportunity to grow in our understanding of our relationship with God! It is in our experiences of waiting that we can learn to give ourselves over to the one who loves us and waits with us.

Waiting to Get Past an Accident Scene

Prayer

O God, who watches over all things, give me patience and compassion as the human drama up ahead is unfolding. Help me in my own vulnerability as I pray for others. Amen.

The Word of God

Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:51–53

Reflection

Any accident can serve to remind us that life can change in a “twinkling of an eye.” We can never be ready for an accident. That’s why it’s called an “accident.” But we can prepare ourselves for its aftermath by putting ourselves in God’s care, submitting ourselves to God’s love.

Waiting in the traffic jam caused by an accident fills us with conflicting emotions: anxiety and impatience to get to our destination, curiosity about what has happened and what we will witness when we get to the scene, sympathy for the people involved, and a feeling of “there, but for the grace of God, go I.”

A Moment With God

If you were the victim of this accident, what kind of prayers would you want from those who pass by?

Lord, be present to these people in their difficulties and give them strength to face the consequences of this accident.

What do you want to pray for the emergency responders on the scene?

Lord, instill upon the drivers in the cars around me your patience and calming peace so that those who are assisting the victims of this accident may do so in safety.

What other prayers do you have at this time?

Prayer

Immortal God, you are the constant in an unpredictable world. Guide us, protect us, and make your love known to us when we meet the unexpected. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Waiting for the Bus or Train

Prayer

O God, you have guided our ingenuity to create ways of transporting people to their destinations with precision and orderliness. Be with me in my comings and my goings among your people today. Amen.

The Word of God

*O LORD, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.*

PSALM 139:1–3

Reflection

As you wait for your bus or train to arrive and take you to your destination—be it work, shopping, an entertainment or sporting event, an evening with friends or family, or back home again—you have an opportunity to observe and give thanks for the diversity of the human race as created by God.

Reflect on the fact that with all of our differences we are all fellow travelers on this journey through our days and nights. How are you going to relate to your companions as you travel through the streets or on the rails? A smile, an act of kindness or courtesy, a showing of respect—just one of these actions can make another person's day, and all of them together just might make a life better. What is your next move?

A Moment With God

Each person is a story. Choose a person around you, respectfully observe him and make him a part of God's story for you by praying for that person.

Lord, I ask that you make your presence known in the life of this child of God. You know the needs of this person as no one else ever can. Bless and keep him in your care.

As each journey begins, we face many unknowns. What is ahead for you on this day?

Lord, walk with me through this day. Help me to make wise decisions and to be a blessing to all I meet.

What other prayers do you have at this time?

Prayer

Lord God, you know my needs and the needs of all those around me. Be with us as we face the joy and sorrows, the victories and defeats in each of our lives. Help us find the blessings you have placed before us on this day. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Waiting for an Appointment

Prayer

O God, you know my life: my past, my present, and my future. As I sit in this waiting room immersed in thoughts of my purpose here today, calm me so that I can express myself clearly and listen intently. May the outcome of this appointment have a positive impact on my life and the lives of those I touch. Amen.

The Word of God

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6–7

Reflection

You may be waiting for an appointment with a doctor, a lawyer, an accountant, your boss, or any of the numerous people who have an impact on your life. You may expect that it will turn out very well or very badly, but one thing you do know is to expect the unexpected. It is times like these when we learn how little we are in control of our lives and our futures, even when we live our lives the best we can according to God's holy word. The only thing we can control is our own reaction to the events of our lives. Knowing that God is present in your life, walking beside you or sitting right there next to you, can give you the peace that will help you overcome your anxiety.

A Moment With God

What are the possible outcomes that you expect or desire from this meeting?

Lord, let the results my meeting with ___N. be according to your holy will.

How do you want your demeanor to present itself at this meeting?

Lord, may your presence to me manifest itself in my presence to ___N. Open my heart to all that is said and put your words on my lips.

Are there other people in the waiting room with you? What about the person or people with whom you are meeting?

Lord, bless these people with your peace as they go to their meetings. May all of the outcomes be according to your will.

What other prayers do you have at this time?

Prayer

Lord God, ruler of life, your presence upholds me in uncertain times. Stay by me in my encounter with ___N. Keep us both in your care, and bring us to an understanding of each other and our needs. I ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Waiting in a Restaurant

Prayer

O God, you have given to humanity the bounty of your earth and the talent to prepare it to give pleasure. As I wait to be seated or served, help me to reflect on the grace of being in a place where all of your blessings come together in this meal. Amen.

The Word of God

*On this mountain the LORD of hosts
will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-matured wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines
strained clear.*

ISAIAH 25:6

Reflection

If you are alone waiting to be seated at your table or alone waiting for your meal, it is a good time to reflect on all the gifts that God has bestowed on humanity that will be represented in the meal that you are anticipating: the fertile fields and abundant crops, the fruitfulness of the beasts of the land, air, and waters, the stewardship of the farmers, ranchers, and fishermen who harvest them.

In order to be served to you, much of this food must be brought to this place by people and technology which has built on generations of progress that comes from talent and ingenuity that can only be a gift from God. And finally, people who share in God's creative work fashion this meal for you, and people who share in God's benevolent deeds serve this meal to you.

A Moment With God

Think about those who made this meal possible.

*Lord, bless with your grace the people who produced,
transported, are preparing, and will serve this meal.*

Reflect on all those for whom a meal like this will never be possible.

*Lord, uphold all of those who are hungry and who are
working to feed and in all ways improve the lot of those
who hunger.*

What other prayers do you have at this time?

Prayer

O God, Creator of all things, you are the origin of all that is good in our lives. I pray in humble gratitude for all of the gifts you have bestowed on me. I praise and thank you for this meal, for those who made it possible, and for the company I enjoy. I ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Waiting in Line at the Post Office

Prayer

O Lord, who sent messages to his people by way of angels, be present to me as I run this errand. May the business I have here today at the post office be life-giving to all who are affected by it. Amen.

The Word of God

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."

LUKE 1:26–28

Reflection

Oh, that all messages and packages that go through the postal service could be so alive with grace and blessings! Mary was alone, perhaps in prayer, perhaps doing chores when the angel Gabriel appeared to her. She had no expectation of the message she would receive. Yet it changed her life and the life of her fiancé, Joseph, drastically. Ultimately it changed the world.

The letters and packages we send won't have such an impact on the world, but they do have the potential of bring joy, hope, and happiness to the recipients. It might be good to think about the impact of our mailing on the person who receives it.

Life doesn't always allow for peace and love in every missive. However, a conscious effort of compassion and empathy for others can change the world that surrounds you.

A Moment With God

Reflect on the person who will be receiving mail from you soon.
Pray for that person.

*Lord, bless ___ N. ___ on this day and on the day that my
mail will reach him (her).*

If you are not mailing anything but buying stamps or conducting other business, think about how you will approach the person at the window.

*Lord, may I be a bright spot in this person's busy day. Grace
me with your patience and compassion for this person.*

What other prayers do you have at this time?

Prayer

Lord God of hosts, you sent an angel to bring Good News to Mary, the mother of your Son. Enkindle the joy in my heart so I may be a beacon of your Good News to all I meet today. Bless all those who are affected by my business here today. I ask this through your Son, Christ our Lord. Amen.

Waiting in Line to Vote

Prayer

O Lord, you have blessed me by placing me in a nation in which I can exercise my right to vote without fear or caution. Guide me in my choices so that I may be confident that my decisions will benefit all of your people. Amen.

The Word of God

Peter began to speak to them: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all.”

ACTS 10:34–36

Reflection

The rhetoric has been loud and often angry. Occasionally a candidate will even claim that he or she has been chosen by God to serve in office. But Peter, chosen by God to lead the Church, stated clearly that God is not partial to anyone. All of those people who show respect to God and do the right things are acceptable to him. Think of the implications that Jesus, around whom the Christian faith is centered, preached only peace. How do our candidates measure up to that tenet of our faith?

The Church tells us to follow our own consciences as we make our voting decisions. But our consciences must be “well-formed.” We should know the teachings of Scripture and Church tradition, and we must read the signs of the times in order to make our decisions.

We are privileged to live in a country in which we can trust the electoral process. We are obligated to carefully consider our choices for the good of all God's people.

A Moment With God

As you review your slate of candidates, pray for each one.

Lord, bless N. with the wisdom and right judgment to do your will for my community, state, and nation.

Pray in gratitude for your right to vote.

Lord, I give you praise and thanksgiving for this nation, which gives all of us the right to exercise this duty of our citizenship.

What other prayers do you have at this time?

Prayer

God of power and might, you have bestowed many blessings on our nation. May the decisions I make today be of benefit to all of your creation, in my country, and in the world. I offer this prayer to you in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Waiting While Gassing Up the Car

Prayer

Lord God, you created our natural resources and gave humankind the knowledge to develop the technology I am using. As I make this pause in my journey, let me remember your gifts and my responsibility to be a good steward to them. Amen.

The Word of God

*The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it,
the world and those who live in it;
for he has founded it on the seas,
and established it on the rivers.
Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
Those who have clean hands and pure hearts,
who do not lift up their souls to what is false,
and do not swear deceitfully.
They will receive blessing from the LORD,
and vindication from the God of their salvation.*

PSALM 24:1–6

Reflection

Those who must drive cars for transportation have a love/hate relationship with gasoline. We know we have to buy it, no matter how expensive it is. If we can't ride the train or bus, then we have to spend time alongside a gas pump. We watch the prices judiciously. We'll drive a few more miles to save two cents a gallon.

We are painfully aware that the oil from which gasoline is derived is a nonrenewable resource that despoils the environment in its production and distribution. And that makes us feel guilty.

It is good to reflect on these facts and the fact that God is the creator of our resources and expects that we will use them responsibly. To use a gift of God to destroy what God has made cannot be justified. Being intentional about what we can do to conserve fuel is the beginning of what we must do to secure those “clean hands and pure hearts” we so desire.

A Moment With God

Pray for the earth and the wisdom to preserve it.

Lord, guide humanity as we live on this fragile planet. Give me the wisdom and courage to be a part of the solution.

Pray for safety as you resume your journey.

Lord, protect me and keep me alert and careful as I journey to my destination.

What other prayers do you have at this time?

Prayer

Creator God, you have given us the earth and all that is in it. Bless and sustain my efforts to steward your creation responsibly. Help me as I try to influence others to do the same. I ask this through Jesus, your Son. Amen.

Waiting in Line at the Checkout

Prayer

God of plenty, as I stand here prepared to pay for these items, I ask that you inspire in me the wisdom and discipline to make responsible decisions. Never let me lose sight of what is real and right in my life and in the life of my family, O Lord, because I have been blinded by my desire for what is new and better. Amen.

The Word of God

*Ho, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and you that have no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.
Incline your ear, and come to me;
listen, so that you may live.*

ISAIAH 55:1–3A

Reflection

In our culture, it is difficult to avoid being swept up in the consumerism that seems to define our public life. We all want to use good judgment when we shop. We attempt to distinguish our wants

from our needs. We try to avoid impulse purchases. And we try to pass these values on to our children while their whole environment, their whole social system seems to conspire against our message.

Perhaps heeding the words of Isaiah may help. When we recognize that all that we have that is truly good, truly of value comes from God, when we recall those times when what we bought did not satisfy, we can have more realistic expectations about what we require for a good life.

A Moment With God

Reflect on the items you are buying.

Lord, may these purchases be used to do good in your sight.

Pray for all of those in your community and in our world whose “wants” can never be attained and whose “needs” will never be met.

Lord, guide us in changing the systems that keep people living in poverty.

What other prayers do you have at this time?

Prayer

O God, I thank you for your generosity to my family and me. Grant that we may use your benevolence wisely, always mindful that our blessings originate with you who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

Waiting for Customer Assistance

Prayer

O God, you come to my assistance whenever I call. Help me now as I wait for someone to assist me in solving my problem and work with this person to get good results. Amen.

The Word of God

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.

ACTS 2:1–2, 4–6

Reflection

You've made it through the maze of phone prompts to customer service, and now you're on hold. During this time you may be anxious about a few things. Will the person be able to help me? Where is the person I will be talking to? What is his or her native language? Will I be able to understand this person? How complicated will this be?

In our small world, many of us communicate with people whose first language is not our own. Our ears constantly must adjust to accents in order to do business.

It may be a comfort to know that we are not the first to have that problem. The known world of the first century was also small, not because of technology, but because of geography and trade. The streets of Jerusalem and other cities on trade routes were a cacophony of many languages. But when the Apostles were called to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Spirit gave them the ability to communicate as necessary. With patience and understanding we, too, can gain that ability.

A Moment With God

Pray that you will be able to work with the person who answers your call.

Lord, help me to listen carefully to this person so that we may work together.

Pray for understanding in our small world.

Lord, guide the people of our world in understanding and respect for each other.

What other prayers do you have at this time?

Prayer

Lord of the universe, you have enriched our world with countless cultures and ethnic groups. Free me from fear and help me to embrace all people as your children and my sisters and brothers. I ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son. Amen.