

## Praying with ropes

Prayer ropes are not uncommon as an aid to intercession in Orthodox Christianity and of course prayer beads are well known in the Catholic tradition. The idea of a prayer rope is basically as a way to focus and discipline our prayers for others or, depending on the type of prayer used, a way to become still and open before God.

### On your marks:

You will find more information on prayer ropes in [A-cross the World](#) from Barnabas, including a craft activity for making a prayer rope for yourself. The following idea develops this as a group activity, in which the tying and untying of the prayer knots makes concrete an opportunity to pray with faith for different people and situations.

### Get set:

You will need a long, fairly thick piece of rope – enough to create a circle onto which each child in the group can hold.

You will also need a number of shorter pieces of rope of different colours, at least one for every child in the group.

### Go!

1. When it comes to the time for prayer with your group, sit in a circle and then pass around the large, thick rope. The leader should then tie the two ends together firmly.

Explain that many Christians around the world use a rope with knots to help them pray. The central knot is often in the shape of a cross. You may at this point like to tie into the joining knot a small wooden cross.

The circle is a symbol of God's love that goes on forever and ever and which holds all things together. The cross is the guarantee of that love and the way we know that God's love is for each one of us. The rope itself is made of three cords intertwined and this is symbolic of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – the three ways in which we experience God who is nevertheless One.

2. Now hand out the smaller, coloured pieces of rope. Invite the children to knot these onto the larger rope. These represent the different sorts of prayers that the children want to pray. You might perhaps like the children to choose a different colour to represent thank-you, sorry or please-help prayers. As they do this, also invite the children to talk about the sort of prayer that their knot is going to represent.

3. Once all the coloured robes have been tied on, explain that you are all now going to pass the rope around so that everyone holds onto a different knot for a short time. The time spent with each knot will depend on the size of the group but I would suggest this should be no more than a half a minute. As the children hold on to the different knots invite them to pray for the various things that have been mentioned, either silently or out loud. Assure them it doesn't mean they have to remember exactly who said what about each knot.

It will help to have some simple words to say as a signal for the knots to be passed on for the next pause for prayer. Perhaps you could all say together something like:

*Thank you God for your strong love that holds all things together*

Or else maybe the person who ends up holding the cross-knot each time could say this. Alternatively the leader could use different phrases from the Lord's Prayer to punctuate the times of prayer between each knot.

4. Once all the knots been passed around, or when you think the time has been long enough, invite the children to untie the knots in front of them – apart from the cross-knot – as a way of demonstrating that God will hear and answer their prayers. God promises to help us find a way through the puzzling and knotty situations we all face and bring release in his time and way.

5. Why not make the prayer rope available in subsequent sessions with the children and encourage them to go up and tie on a piece of rope whenever they want to, as an expression of committing to God's love a particular need that comes to mind during the session.

*Don't spend your time worrying about things but in everything with prayers filled with thanks let God know what it is on your mind. And the peace of God, which is beyond our understanding, will keep your heart and your mind at peace in Jesus Christ.*

Philippians 4:6-7

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