

- 1 On April 12th 1961, a Russian, Yuri Gagarin, became the first person to travel in space. His spacecraft, 'Vostok 1', made a journey of 1 hour 48 minutes, making a single orbit of earth. He was travelling at 17,000 miles per hour (27,400 km/hr).
- 2 When he returned to earth, he reported that he had not seen God in the heavens, referring to people who tend to look upwards when praying to God. Later, a Russian priest said: "*If you haven't seen God on earth, you will never see him in heaven.*"
- 3 Some other astronauts since Yuri Gagarin have found the experience of being in space to lead them closer to God.
- 4 There are poems in the Bible that reflect on our place in the universe, and we use one of them as our prayer today. It is called 'Psalm 8', and a copy of this psalm was later left on the moon in a sealed capsule by American astronauts:

5 *Let us pray:*

**Lord, our God and King,
your greatness is seen
throughout the earth.**

- 6 **When I gaze at the heavens
which your fingers have formed,
and look at the moon and the stars
which you have set there,
I realise how small we are
in the majesty of your creation.**
- 7 **Yet you treasure us
above all that you have made,
and you give us control
over all the works of your hand
- animals both wild and tame,
birds in the air,
and the creatures of the sea.**

- 8 **Lord, our God and King,
your greatness is seen
throughout the earth.**

(*Psalm 8, paraphrased*)

☞ *What might the Russian priest have meant when he said: "If you haven't seen God on earth, you will never see him in heaven"?*

☞ *Why might some astronauts have felt that their experiences led them closer to God?*

☞ *James Weldon Johnson has an interesting poem, 'The Creation': "And God stepped out on space."*

☞ *Yuri Gagarin, once the most famous person in the world, died in 1968, aged 34, when testing a new aircraft.*

☞ *Psalm 139⁷⁻¹⁰ - "If I climb the heavens you are there*

☞ *O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder; This day God gives me; Christ be beside me; Yahweh, I know you are near*

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in
'Praying Each Day of the Year',
a 3-volume book
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:
<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine
to research this topic further.

This material is part of
the prayer and education website
of the De La Salle Brothers
in Great Britain:
www.prayingeachday.org