

PRAYER

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INTRODUCTION

Prayer is an important part of life no matter what faith we profess or what walk of life we are in. As Christians and Catholics we are called upon to pray daily following the example of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. He himself, as is found in Sacred Scripture, prayed often in the synagogue and also went off on his own to pray to God the Father. The prayer which he left us – the Our Father or the Lord’s Prayer – is probably the best known prayer around the world. We are called upon to begin and end our day with prayer to God. These prayers need not be long and lavish but may be quite simple taking but a couple of minutes of our time. They may also be quite personal and in our own words rather than having to recite prayers which we have learned. The choice is ours but the important thing is that we pray.

PREPARING FOR PRAYER

It is important to remember that prayer is not something we can decide to take up whenever we feel like it. It is necessary to prepare a little before praying in order to get the most benefit out of our prayer time. The following is a simple guide.

RELAX BEFORE PRAYING

- Keep feet flat on the ground
- Keep back straight and spine erect
- Keep head straight, not drooping
- Keep hands on knees or one resting in the palm of the other, in the lap
- Keep eyes preferably closed, or open and fixed on a point/object/image in front

- Don't think!
- Keep your mind blank!
- Don't force any feelings one way or the other
- Just let go of everything
- Relax all your muscles, one by one, from your toes to the top of the head
- Become aware of your breathing but without changing it other than to gradually slow it down

It is useful when starting out to have a set image or text in mind to use as a focus for prayer. In time one will be able to move towards contemplation wherein no "aids" are required other than self and God. It should be noted that it can take quite some time to achieve, in fact some never achieve it but keep on praying nonetheless.

It has been said by many authors that trying to pray is itself a prayer – so don't despair if it seems hard going!

SCRIPTURE & PRAYER

There are many references to prayer in both the Old Testament and New Testament and there are also many texts from Sacred Scripture which are themselves prayers, such as the Psalms. The Psalms are quite a rich source of prayer and in them are to be found prayers of petition, of praise, of thanksgiving, of blessing, and so forth. The passages found here can themselves be used as prayers and some are inspirations for prayer.

CHRIST AT PRAYER

(Luke 5:15-16)

His reputation continued to grow, and large crowds would gather to hear him and to have their sickness cured, but he would always go off to some place where he could be alone and pray.

EFFECTIVE PRAYER

(Matthew 7:7-11)

‘Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For the one who asks always receives; the one who searches always finds; the one who knocks will always have the door opened to him. Is there a man among you who would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread? Or would hand him a snake when he asked for a fish? If you then, who are evil, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him.’

PRAYER IN COMMON

(Matthew 18:19-20)

‘I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted by my Father in heaven. For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them.’

PRAYER WITH TRUE FAITH

(James 1:5-8)

If there is anyone of you who needs wisdom, he must ask God, who gives to all freely and ungrudgingly; it will be given to him. But he must ask with faith, and no trace of doubt, because a person who has doubts is like the waves thrown up in the sea when the wind drives. That sort of person, in two minds, wavering between going different ways, must not expect that the Lord will give him anything.

THE BENEDICTUS

(Luke 1:67-79. This Gospel Canticle is said everyday during Morning Prayer of the Church)

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel!
He has visited his people and redeemed them.

He has raised up for us a mighty saviour

in the house of David his servant,
as he promised by the lips of holy men,
those who were his prophets from of old.

A saviour who would free us from our foes,
from the hands of all who hate us.
So his love for our fathers is fulfilled
and his holy covenant remembered.

He swore to Abraham our father to grant us,
that free from fear, and saved from the hands of our foes,
we might serve him in holiness and justice
all the days of our life in his presence.

As for you little child,
you shall be called a prophet of God, the Most High.
You shall go ahead of the Lord
to prepare his ways before him,

To make known to his people their salvation
through forgiveness of all their sins,
the loving kindness of the heart of our God
who visits us like the dawn from on high.

He will give light to those in darkness,
those who dwell in the shadow of death,
and guide us into the way of peace.

THE MAGNIFICAT

(Luke 1:46-55. This Gospel Canticle is used every day during Evening Prayer of the Church)

My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on his servant in her lowliness;
henceforth all nations will call me blessed.
The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy his name!
His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear him.
He puts forth his arm in strength
and scatters the proud-hearted.
He casts the mighty from their thrones
and raises the lowly.
He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.
He protects Israel, his servant,
remembering his mercy,
the mercy promised to our fathers,

to Abraham and his sons for ever.

THE NUNC DIMITTIS

(Luke 2:29-32. This Gospel Canticle is used every night during Night Prayer of the Church)

At last all-powerful Master,
you give leave to your servant
to go in peace according to your promise.

For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared for all nations.
The light to enlighten the Gentiles,
and give glory to Israel your people.

PETITION AND THANKSGIVING – PSALM 27(28)

I cry to you, Yahweh,
my Rock! Do not be deaf to me,
for if you are silent, I shall go
down to the Pit like the rest.

Hear my voice, raised in petition.
as I cry to you for help,
as I raise my hands, Yahweh,
toward your Holy of Holies.

Do not drag me away with the wicked,
away with the evil men
who talk of peace to their neighbours
while malice is in their hearts.
Repay them for their actions, Yahweh,
for the evil they commit,
for their handiwork repay them,
let them have what they deserve!

How blind are they to the works of Yahweh,
to his own handiwork!
May he pull them down and not rebuild them!

Blessed be Yahweh, for he hears
the sound of my petition!

Yahweh is my strength, my shield,
my heart puts its trust in him;
I have been helped, my flesh has bloomed again,
I thank him with all my heart.

Yahweh is the strength of hid people,
a saving fortress for his anointed.
Save your people! Bless your heritage!
Shepherd them; carry them for ever!

THE GOOD SHEPHERD – PSALM 22(23)

Yahweh is my shepherd,
I lack nothing.

In meadows of green grass he lets me lie.
To the waters of repose he leads me;
there he revives my soul.

He guides me by paths of virtue
for the sake of his name.

Though I pass through a gloomy valley,
I fear no harm;
beside me your rod and your staff
are there, to hearten me.

You prepare a table before me
under the eyes of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil,
my cup brims over.

Ah, how goodness and kindness pursue me,
every day of my life;
my home, the house of Yahweh,
as long as I live!

DESIRE FOR GOD – PSALM 62(63)

Oh God, you are my God, for you I long;
for you my soul is thirsting.
My body pines for you
like a dry, weary land without water.
So I gaze on you in the sanctuary
to see your strength and your glory.

For your love is better than life,
my lips shall speak your praise.
So I will bless you all my life,
in your name I will lift up my hands.
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet,
my mouth shall praise you with joy.

On my bed I remember you.
On you I muse through the night
for you have been my help;
in the shadow of your wings I rejoice.
My soul clings to you;
your right hand holds me fast.

SUMMONS TO PRAISE – PSALM 116(117)

Alleluia!
Praise the Lord, all you nations,
acclaim him all you peoples!
Strong is his love for us,
he is faithful for ever.

OUT OF THE DEPTHS – PSALM 129(130)

Also known as the De Profundis

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,
Lord, hear my voice!
O let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my pleading.

If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt,
Lord, who would survive?
But with you is found forgiveness:
for this we revere you.

My soul is waiting for the Lord,
I count on his word.
My soul is longing for the Lord
more than watchman for daybreak.
Let the watchman count on daybreak
and Israel on the Lord.
Because with the Lord there is mercy
and fullness of redemption,
Israel indeed he will redeem
from all its iniquity.

DAILY PRAYERS

THE OUR FATHER

Also known as "The Lord's Prayer"

Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

THE HAIL MARY

Hail Mary,
full of grace,
the Lord is with thee,
blessed art thou amongst women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

THE GLORY BE

Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning,
is now,
and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.

MORNING PRAYERS

Prayer on Waking

O God, and Mary, your mother,
who have brought me and mine safe
from the depths of sleep to another day,
bring us safely

through every trouble of this day and protect us,
body and soul from all evil. Amen.

Morning Prayers

I rise up with God,
may He rise up with me,
may his arm be round me,
waking, sleeping and working. Amen.

O my God, you love me,
you're with me night and day.
I want to love you always in all I do and say.
I'll try to please you, Father.
Bless me through the day. Amen.

Morning Offering

Father in heaven,
I give you today,
all that I think and do and say.
And I unite it with all that was done,
by Jesus Christ, your dear Son.

Prayer to your Guardian Angel

O Angel of God,
my guardian dear,
to whom God's love commits me here,
ever this day be at my side,
to light, to guard, to rule and guide.
Amen.

NIGHT PRAYER

May I lie down with God,
and may God lie down with me.
May I not lie with evil, nor evil lie with me.
Brigid's girdle round me,
Mary's mantle beneath me,
Blessed Michael, hold my hand,
and make my peace with the Son of Grace.
If any evil thing pursue me,
may the Son of God protect me for a year from this night,
and this night itself, and ever and always. Amen.

THANKSGIVING AT THE END OF THE DAY

Thank you, O God
for everything that has happened today:

for the good things which have made me happy;
for the not so good things which have taught me
that I can't always be getting my own way;
for successes, to give me happy times to remember;
for failures, to keep me humble;
for time at school, at games, with my friends
and in my own home.
And thank you for this minute with you. Amen.

For Others

Before I sleep tonight,
I want to say a prayer for all the people –
known to me and unknown to me –
for whom this has been a special day of gladness or of grief,
of trouble or of joy.
Bless all the homes in which today
life has ended or life has begun.
Amen.

ACTS OF CONTRITION

O my God,
I am very sorry for all my sins,
because they offend you who are so good,
and with your help I will not sin again.

Forgive me, O God,
for all the wrong things
which I have done today.
Forgive me for
careless work,
inattentive study,
wasted time,
duties shirked.
Forgive me for anyone whom I have hurt,
or failed, or disappointed today,
and for anything I have said or done wrong today.
Thank you for the new things I have learned today
and for all the things I have enjoyed.
Amen.

GRACE BEFORE MEALS

Bless us, O Lord,
and these Thy gifts,
which of Thy bounty we are about to receive,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

GRACE AFTER MEALS

We give Thee Thanks,
Almighty God,
for all Thy benefits,
Who lives and reigns,
world without end. Amen.

PRAYERS FOR BEFORE & AFTER RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION

PRAYERS BEFORE COMMUNION

O my God, help me to make a good Communion.
Mary, my mother, pray to Jesus for me.
All you holy Angels and saints, pray for me.
My dear Angel Guardian, lead me to the altar of God.

Act of Faith

O God,
because you said it,
I believe that I shall receive the Body of Jesus to eat,
and the Blood of Jesus to drink.
I believe this with all my heart.

Act of Sorrow

O my God,
I am sorry for all my sins
because they offend you who are so good.
With your help I will not sin again.

PRAYERS AFTER COMMUNION

Act of Faith

O Jesus,
I believe that you have come to me
in Holy Communion
because you have said it and your word is true.

Act of Love

O Jesus, I love you.
Make me love you even more.

Act of Thanks

O Jesus, I thank you
for coming to me in Holy Communion.

Prayer for Others

O Jesus,
bless my father, my mother,
my brothers and sisters and all others I ought to pray for.

Prayer for Help

O Jesus, help me to do what you want me to do.
Help me to do my work better,
help me to be kind and thoughtful at home,
and friendly to all my neighbours.

Prayer of Offering

O Jesus, receive my poor offering.
Jesus, you have given yourself to me,
now let me give myself to you:
give you my body that it may be chaste and pure,
I give you my soul that it may be free from sin,
I give you my heart that it may always love you,
I give you every breath that I shall breathe and especially my last,
I give you myself in life and in death
that I may be yours for ever and ever. Amen.

ANIMA CHRISTI

(early fourteenth century)

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, fill me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O good Jesus, hear me.
Hide me within your wounds.
Do not allow me to be separated from you.
From the malicious enemy defend me.
In the hour of death call me
and bid me come to you that
I may praise you for ever and ever.
Amen.

PRAYERS BEFORE & AFTER CONFESSION

Prayer before Confession

Dear Jesus, help me to make a good Confession,
Help me to find out my sins,
Help me to be sorry for them,
Help me to make up my mind not to sin again.
have mercy on me, O Lord, and forgive me.

Mary, my mother, pray for me.

Confiteor

I confess to almighty God
and to you, my brothers and sisters,
that I have greatly sinned,
in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done and in what I have failed to do,
through my fault, through my fault,
through my most grievous fault;
therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin,
all the Angels and Saints,
and you, my brothers and sisters,
to pray for me to the Lord our God.

Act of contrition

O my God, I am very sorry for all my sins,
because they offend you who are so good,
and with your help I will not sin again.

Prayer after Confession

Dear Jesus,
thank you for helping me to make a good Confession,
and thank you for taking away my sins.
Help me, dear Jesus, never to offend you again.
Mary, my mother, pray to Jesus for me.
My dear Angel Guardian help me.

THE JESUS PRAYER

The Jesus Prayer is an extremely short prayer but a very popular one particularly in the Eastern and Orthodox Churches where it originated. The prayer is usually repeated over and over again in the form of a mantra but its simplicity and brevity has been a tremendous aid for many people in their meditative prayer.

Jesus, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me.

There is a second version which simply adds the words “a sinner” to the end of the prayer.

THE CREED & THE GLORIA

Most of the world’s religions have a clearly defined set of beliefs on which their faith rests. In the Catholic Church this is found in our Creed and is an important statement of faith as well as being a prayer. There are two forms of the Creed. The first is the “Apostle’s Creed” so called because it was believed to have been used by the Apostles themselves, though today we know that it doesn’t date back quite that far. The second is known as the Nicene Creed and is the one

most commonly used today. It gets its name from the Council of Nicaea which drew it up. Today, the Creed is recited after the Gospel on Sundays of the Church's year, for the opening of Church Councils, and is also the statement of belief used by those about to be ordained to the Episcopate.

The Gloria is a hymn of praise to God which said on Sundays and Feastdays except during the Lenten Season.

THE APOSTLE'S CREED

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

At the words that follow, up to and including 'the Virgin Mary', all bow.

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen.

THE NICENE CREED

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.

At the words that follow up to and including 'and became man', all bow.

For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

THE GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.
We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.
Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

THE TE DEUM

The Te Deum is a great hymn of praise to God and which is recited by clergy, religious and many lay people as part of the Prayer of the Church on Sundays in Ordinary Time, during the Christmas and Easter Season and on days of Solemnity.

We praise you, O God:
we acclaim you as the Lord.

Everlasting Father,
all the world bows down before you.

All the Angels sing your praise,
the hosts of heaven and all the angelic powers,

all the cherubim and seraphim
call out in unending song:

Holy, Holy, Holy,
is the Lord God of angel hosts!

The heavens and the earth are filled
with your majesty and glory.

The glorious band of apostles,
the noble company of prophets,

the white-robed army who shed their blood for Christ,
all sing your praise.

And to the ends of the earth
your holy Church proclaims her faith in you:

Father, whose majesty is boundless,
your true and only Son, who is to be adored,
the Holy Spirit sent to be our Advocate.

You, Christ, are the king of glory,
Son of the eternal Father.

When you took our nature to save mankind
you did not shrink from birth in the Virgin's womb.

You overcame the power of death
opening the Father's kingdom to all who believe in you.

Enthroned at God's right hand in the glory of the Father,
you will come in judgement according to your promise.

You redeemed your people by your precious blood.
Come, we implore you, to our aid.

Grant us with the saints
a place in eternal glory.

Lord, save your people
and bless your inheritance.

Rule them and uphold them
for ever and ever.

Day by day we praise you:
we acclaim you now and to all eternity.

In your goodness, Lord, keep us free from sin.
Have mercy on us Lord, have mercy.

May your always be with us, Lord,
for we have hoped in you.

In you, Lord, we put our trust:
we shall not be put to shame.

PRAYERS TO OUR LADY

As Catholics we pray to Our Lady. This is something which other faith groups find hard to accept and some see it as idolatrous. However, it must be remembered, that in praying to Our Lady we do not see her as being on a par with God. God is God for us and none other. Our Lady has a special relationship with God in that God the Father choose her as mother of God the Son when he became incarnate and a human being. We pray to Our Lady to intercede for us, to intercede on our behalf but all the time knowing that it is God who grants the favour we seek.

Our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary, is not God and to say so or to see her as taking the place of God in our lives is wrong. It is not what we believe or what the Church teaches. As Mother of God the Son, in whose presence she dwells along with the hosts of Heaven, she is able to intercede for us and able to ask him to grant our request. When a prayer is answered it is not answered by Mary in her own right, but by God.

THE HAIL MARY

Hail Mary,
full of grace,
the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou amongst women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary,
Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

THE MAGNIFICAT

My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on his servant in her lowliness;
henceforth all nations will call me blessed.
The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy his name!
His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear him.
He puts forth his arm in strength
and scatters the proud-hearted.
He casts the mighty from their thrones
and raises the lowly.
He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.
He protects Israel, his servant,
remembering his mercy,
the mercy promised to our fathers,
to Abraham and his sons for ever.

THE MEMORARE

Remember, O most loving Virgin Mary,
that never was it known,
that anyone who fled to thy protection,
implored thy help,
or sought thy intercession,
was left unaided.
Inspired by this confidence
I fly unto thee, O Virgin of Virgins, my Mother.
To thee do I come,
before thee I stand,
sinful and sorrowful.
Do not O Mother of the Word incarnate,
reject my petition,
but graciously hear and answer me. Amen.

THE ANGELUS

The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary;
and she conceived by the Holy Spirit.
Hail Mary, etc.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord;
be it done unto me according to Thy word.
Hail Mary, etc.

And the Word was made flesh;
and dwelt amongst us.
Hail Mary, etc.

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray;
Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord,
Thy grace into our hearts that we,
to whom the incarnation of Christ,
thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel,
may, by His Passion and Cross,
be brought to the glory of His Resurrection,
through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

May the divine assistance remain always with us.
May the souls of the faithful departed
through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

There are a number of Marian Antiphons which are used at particular times or season of the year. The Alma Redemptoris is used during the Season of Advent, the Ave Regina Caelorum during Lent, the Regina Coeli during Eastertide, and the Salve Regina during Ordinary Time.

SALVE REGINA

Salve regina, mater misericordiae,
vita dulcedo, et spes nostra salve!
Ad te clamamus exsules filii Evae.
Ad te suspiramus,
gementes et flentes in hac lacrimarum
valle.
Eja ergo, advocate nostra,
illos tuos misericordes oculos
ad nos converte.
Et Jesum benedictum fructum ventris tui
nobis post hoc exsilium ostende;
O Clemens!
O pia!
O dulcis
Virgo Maria.
V/ Ora pro nobis, sancta Dei Genitrix.
R/ Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus
Christi.

Hail Holy Queen,
hail! our life, our sweetness and our hope.
To thee do we cry,
poor banished children of Eve.
To thee do we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.
Turn then, O most gracious advocate,
thine eyes of mercy towards us,
and after this, our exile,
show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb,
Jesus.
O clement,
O loving,
O sweet Virgin Mary.
V/ Pray for us O holy Mother of God.
R/ That we may be made worthy of the
promises of Christ.

AVE REGINA CAELORUM

Ave, Regina caelorum!
Ave, Domina Angelorum,
Salve, radix, salve, porta,
Ex qua mundo lux est orta.
Gaude, Virgo gloriosa,
Super omnes speciosa;
Vale, O valde decora,
Et pro nobis Christum exora.
V/ Dignare me laudare te, Virgo sacrata.
R/ Da mihi virtutem contra hostes tuos.

Hail O Queen of heaven enthroned!
Hail, by Angels mistress owned!
Root of Jesse! Gate of mourn!
Whence the world's true Light was born.
Glorious Virgin, joy to thee,
Loveliest whom in heaven they see;
Fairest thou, where all are fair!
Plead with Christ our sins to spare.
V/ Vouchsafe that I may praise thee, O sacred
Virgin.
R/ Give me strength against my enemies.

REGINA COELI

Regina coeli! laetare, Alleluia;
Quia quem meruisti portare, Alleluia.
Resurrexit, sicut dixit, Alleluia.
Ora pro nobis Deum, Alleluia.

O Queen of heaven, rejoice, Alleluia.
For he whom you were privileged to bear,
Alleluia;
Has risen as he said, Alleluia.
Pray for us to God, Alleluia.
V/ Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, Alleluia.
R/ For the Lord has risen indeed, Alleluia.

ALMA REDEMPTORIS

Alma Redemptoris
mater quae pervia caeli,
Porta manes et stella maris,
succurre cadenti,
Surgere qui curat populo;
tu quae genuisti,
natura mirante tuum sanctum Genitorum.
Virgo prius ac posterius:
Gabrielis ab ore,
sumens illud Ave,
peccatorum Miserere.
V/ Angelus Domini nuntiavit Maria.
R/ Et concepit de Spiritu Sancto.

Mother of Jesus!
heaven's open gate,
Star of the sea,
support the fallen state
of mortals,
thy whose womb the Maker bore;
And yet, strange thing,
a virgin as before.
Who didst, from Gabriel's hail
this news receive
Repenting sinners by thy prayers relieve.
V/ The Angel of the Lord declared unto
Mary.
R/ And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.

THE ROSARY

The Rosary is a very traditional Roman Catholic prayer and the Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary (October 7) has been observed since 1571. The Rosary is divided into four main categories and each has five further divisions called 'decades.' Each decade reflects on a particular aspect of the life of Christ and Our Lady as found in the Gospels. They help to strengthen faith and provide a source of meditation while praying a familiar prayer. Quite often people offer up each decade for a special intention.

The four main divisions of the Rosary are as follows:

The Joyful Mysteries (said on Mondays & Thursdays)

- The Annunciation
- The Visitation
- The Birth of Our Lord
- The Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple
- The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple

The Sorrowful Mysteries (said on Tuesdays & Fridays)

- The Agony in the Garden
- The Scourging at the Pillar
- The Crowning with Thorns
- The Carrying of the Cross to Calvary
- The Crucifixion and Death of Our Lord

The Glorious Mysteries (said on Wednesdays & Saturdays)

- The Resurrection
- The Ascension into Heaven
- The Descent of the Holy Spirit
- The Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven
- The Crowning of Our Lady as Queen of Heaven

The Mysteries of Light

- The Baptism in the Jordan
- The Wedding at Cana
- The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God
- The Transfiguration
- The Institution of the Eucharist

The Rosary begins with the Opening Responsory (V/ O God open my lips. R/ And my mouth shall declare your praise.) This is followed by the recitation of the Apostle's Creed. Next comes one 'Our Father,' three 'Hail Marys' and one 'Glory Be to the Father.' After this are followed the five decades which consist of one 'Our Father,' ten 'Hail Marys' and one 'Glory Be to the Father' in each decade. Many Catholics pray the Rosary using a set of beads strung together to form a Rosary. The Rosary concludes with the 'Hail Holy Queen.'

THE ROSARY OF THE SEVEN DOLOURS

This is a different rosary to that mentioned above and in fact is not very common today. This particular rosary remembers the seven sorrows of Our Lady and is much shorter than the more common one. It has seven 'divisions' and each division has one 'Our Father' and seven 'Hail Marys.' The rosary concludes with three 'Hail Marys.'

The Seven Dolours of Our Lady are:

- The prophecy of Simeon.
- The flight into Egypt.
- The loss of the Child Jesus for three days.
- Meeting Jesus while he was carrying his cross.
- Standing beneath the cross on Calvary.
- Receiving into arms the dead body of her Son.
- Watching the burial of her Son's corpse.

PRAYERS TO SAINTS

PRAYER TO ST JOSEPH

Spouse of the Virgin Mary

Oh, St. Joseph,
whose protection is so strong,
so great, so prompt before the throne of God,
I place in you all my interests and desires.
Oh, St Joseph,
do assist me by your powerful intercession,
and obtain from your Divine Son for me
all spiritual blessings through Christ Our Lord,
so that, having engaged here below your Heavenly Power,
I may offer my thanksgiving and homage to the most loving of Fathers.

Oh, St. Joseph, I never weary of contemplating you,
and Jesus asleep in your arms.
I dare not approach while He reposes near your Heart.

Press Him in my name,
and kiss His fine head for me
and ask Him to return the kiss when I draw my dying breath.

St. Joseph, Patron of Departing souls,
pray for me.

PRAYER FOR EXPECTANT MOTHERS

(Saint Gerard Majella)

Almighty and everlasting God,
through the working of the Holy Spirit
you prepared the body and soul of the glorious Virgin Mary,
Mother of God, to be a worthy dwelling for Your Son.
Through the same Holy Spirit
you also sanctified St. John the Baptist before his birth,
and now I implore you to hear my humble prayer.

Through the intercession of St. Gerard,
I beg and entreat you to protect me (her) in motherhood.
Protect also from the evil spirit
the child you have given me (her)
so that it may receive baptism by the help of Your saving hand.
Grant also, I beseech you,
that having lived as good Christians on earth,
both mother and child may one day
be united in the everlasting happiness of Heaven. Amen.

PRAYER TO SAINT JUDE

The Patron Saint of Hopeless Cases and Things Despaired Of.

O Glorious Apostle, St. Jude Thaddeus,
true relative of Jesus and Mary,
I salute you through the most Sacred Heart of Jesus.
Through this Heart I praise and thank God
for all the graces He has bestowed upon you.
Humbly prostrate before you,
I implore you through this Heart to look down upon me with compassion.
O despise not my poor prayer,
let not my trust be confounded.
To you God has granted the privilege
of aiding mankind in the most desperate cases.
O come to my aid, that I may praise the mercies of God.
All my life I will be grateful to you
and will be your faithful client until I can thank you in heaven.
St. Jude, help of the hopeless, aid me in my distress.

PRAYER TO SAINT PATRICK

Patron Saint of Ireland

Most glorious Saint Patrick,
Bishop and Confessor,
chosen by the Almighty to be the Apostle of Ireland,
we, the children of those to whom you preached the Faith of Christ,
never to be renounced,
hail you as the wonderful instrument of God's mercy
for the obtaining of our eternal salvation.

Most glorious Apostle and Patron of our island,
submit to the Almighty our every temporal and spiritual want,
that through your intercession,
we may be relieved, in all our necessities through life,
and when called from this world to the glory of God,
we may, to your honour,
be found worthy of the faith that is within us,
and of eternal salvation.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER TO ST OLIVER PLUNKETT

Archbishop of Armagh, martyred for the faith

Glorious Martyr Oliver
who willingly gave your life for your faith.
Help us also to be strong in faith.
May we be loyal like you to the See of Peter.

By your intercession and example
may all hatred and bitterness
be banished from the hearts of Irish men and women.
May the peace of Christ reign in our hearts
as it did in your heart even at the moment of your death.
Pray for us and for Ireland. Amen.

PRAYER TO ST MALACHY

Archbishop of Armagh

Lord, look upon the family
whom your Saint and Bishop, Malachy,
brought to life with the word of truth
and nourished with the Sacrament of Life.
By his ministry you gave us the faith;
by his prayers help us to grow in love.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER TO ST MICHAEL, THE ARCHANGEL

Holy Michael, Archangel,
defend us in the hour of conflict.
Be our safeguard against the wickedness
and the snares of the devil.
May God restrain him, we humbly pray,
and you, O Prince of the heavenly host,
thrust down to hell,
Satan and all the evil spirits
who wander through the world
for the ruin of souls. Amen.

PRAYERS WRITTEN BY OR ATTRIBUTED TO SAINTS

ST PATRICK'S BREASTPLATE

I rise up to-day.
God's power guiding me,
God's might upholding me,
God's wisdom directing me,
The eye of God looking before me,
the ear of God listening for me,
The word of God speaking for me,
the hand of God defending me,
The way of God stretching out before me,
the shield of God protecting me,
the hosts of God guarding me.
From the snares of demons,
from the seduction of vice,
from the wicked desire of my nature,
From every man who plots against me,
near or afar, alone or with others.

Christ be with me, Christ be before me.
Christ be after me, Christ be within me,
Christ be beneath me, Christ be above me,
Christ be at my right hand,
Christ be at my left hand,
Christ be in the fort, Christ be in the chariot,
Christ be in the ship,
Christ be in the heart of every man who thinks of me.
Christ be in the mouth of every man who speaks to me,
Christ be in every eye that sees me,
Christ be in every ear that hears me.

ADORO TE DEVOTE

(St Thomas Aquinas)

Hidden God, devoutly I adore Thee,
Truly present underneath these veils.
All my heart subdues itself before Thee,
Since it all before Thee faints and fails.
Not to sight or touch or taste be credit,
Hearing only do I trust secure,
I believe for God the Son has said it;
Word of truth that ever shall endure.
On the Cross was veiled thy Godhead's splendour.
Here thy manhood lies hidden too.
Unto both alike my faith I render,
And as sued the contrite thief, I sue.

Though I look not on thy wounds with Thomas,
Thee, my Lord, and, Thee, my God, I call.
Make me more and more believe thy promise
Hope in Thee and love Thee over all.
O memorial of my Saviour dying.
Living bread that gives life to man.
May my soul its life from Thee supplying,
Taste thy sweetness as on earth it can.
Deign, O Jesus, pelican of heaven,
Me a sinner in thy Blood to lave,
To a single drop of which is given
All the world from all its sin to save.
Contemplating Lord, thy hidden presence,
Grant me what I thirst for and implore,
In the revelation of Thy essence,
To behold Thy glory evermore.

PRAYER OF SAINT AUGUSTINE

Watch, dear Lord,
with those who wake or watch or weep tonight,
and give your angels charge over those who sleep.
Tend the sick, Lord, and rest the weary.
Soothe the suffering and pity the afflicted:
and all because you love us, Lord. Amen.
Look down, O Lord,
on this family, for which Our Blessed Lord
allowed himself to be betrayed and crucified. Amen.
Mary, Mother of God,
help to watch over me and mine tonight,
and help us all to do better tomorrow when, like today,
we hope to offer everything we do to God, our Father.
Amen.

MISCELLANEOUS PRAYERS

PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Come, O Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of the faithful
and enkindle in them
the fire of your love.
Send forth your spirit
and they shall be created
and you shall renew the face of the earth.
O God, who has taught the hearts of the faithful
by the light of the Holy Spirit,
Grant that by the same Spirit
we may be truly wise
and ever rejoice in his consolation.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

PRAYER TO BE LIKE THE HOLY FAMILY

God, Our Father,
in the Holy Family of Nazareth
you have given us the true model of a Christian home.
Grant that by following Jesus,
Mary and Joseph in their love for each other
and in the example of their family life
we may have peace and happiness in our home
and come to your home of peace and joy.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE DIVINE PRAISES

Blessed be God.
Blessed be his holy name.
Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true man.
Blessed be the name of Jesus.
Blessed be his most Sacred Heart.
Blessed be his most Precious Blood.
Blessed be Jesus in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.
Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.
Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy.
Blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception.
Blessed be her glorious Assumption.
Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.
Blessed be St Joseph, her most chaste spouse.
Blessed be God in his angels and in his saints.

PRAYER FOR SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Dear Lord,
you have given us all talents and skills
to use as best we can.
But the sad thing is that we are dissatisfied with them.
We want to be more successful,
more wealthy,
more popular than we are.
We bemoan the fact that we are not as clever
or as good-looking as other people,
and we over-look the good points about ourselves.
Help us Lord,
to make the best use of the talents we have
and help us to stop envying other people
and be satisfied with ourselves as we are.
Amen.

PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

(Prayer of Pope John XXIII)

O Jesus,
send labourers into your fields,
which are awaiting holy apostles,
saintly priests,
heroic missionaries
and dedicated brothers and sisters.
Enkindle in the hearts of men and women
the spark of a vocation.
Grant that Christian families may desire
to give your Church helpers
in the work of tomorrow.
Amen.

A STUDENT'S PRAYER

O God,
it is good to be alive and here –
though it's hard to wait to do all the things
I want to do.
You have made the world so rich,
so great,
so crammed full of possibilities.
You have made it so beautiful.
I thank you for all
who have given me this chance to learn,
and to get ready for life –

my family, my teachers and my friends.
Widen my horizons,
widen my sympathies,
and when I am finished here,
let me give myself to serve you and others,
in this wonderful world. Amen.

PRAYER FOR EXAMINATIONS

O God,
help me at my examinations
to remember the things which I have learned and studied.
Help me to remember well, and to think clearly.
Help me not to be so nervous and excited
that I will not do myself justice,
and keep me calm and clear-headed.
Help me to try my hardest and to do my best.
This I ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PREPARATION FOR MASS

PRAYER OF ST THOMAS AQUINAS

Almighty, everlasting God,
I draw near to the sacrament of your only-begotten Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ.
I who am sick approach the physician of life.
I who am unclean come to the fountain of mercy;
blind, to the light of eternal brightness;
poor and needy, to the Lord of heaven and earth.
Therefore, I implore you, in your boundless mercy,
to heal my sickness, cleanse my defilement,
enlighten my blindness, enrich my poverty, and clothe my nakedness.
Then shall I dare to receive the bread of angels,
the King of kings and Lord of lords,
with reverence and humility,
contrition and love, purity and faith,
with the purpose and intention necessary for the good of my soul.
Grant, I beseech you,
that I may receive not only the Body and Blood of the Lord,
but also the grace and power of the sacrament.
Most merciful God,
enable me so to receive the Body of your only-begotten Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ, which he took from the Virgin Mary,
that I may be found worthy to be incorporated into his mystical body,
and counted among his members.
Most loving Father,
grant that I may one day see face to face your beloved Son,

whom I now intend to receive
under the veil of the sacrament,
and who with you and the Holy Spirit,
lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER OF ST AMBROSE

Lord Jesus Christ,
I approach your banquet table in fear and trembling,
for I am a sinner, and dare not rely on
my own worth but only on your goodness and mercy.
I am defiled by many sins in body and soul,
and by my unguarded thoughts and words.
Gracious God of majesty and awe,
I seek your protection, I look for your healing.
Poor troubled sinner that I am,
I appeal to you, the fountain of all mercy.
I cannot bear your judgement, but I trust in your salvation.
Lord, I show my wounds to you and uncover my shame before you.
I know my sins are many and great,
and they fill me with fear, but I hope in your mercies,
for they cannot be numbered.
Lord Jesus Christ, eternal king, God and man,
crucified for mankind,
look upon me with mercy and hear my prayer,
for I trust in you.
Have mercy on me, full of sorrow and sin,
for the depth of your compassion never ends.
Praise to you, saving sacrifice,
offered on the wood of the cross for me and for all mankind.
Praise to the noble and precious blood,
flowing from the wounds of my crucified Lord Jesus Christ
and washing away the sins of the whole world.
Remember, Lord, your creature, whom you have redeemed with your blood.
I repent my sins, and I long to put right what I have done.
Merciful Father, take away all my offences and sins;
purify me in body and soul,
and make me worthy to taste the holy of holies.
May your body and blood, which I intend to receive,
although I am unworthy, be for me the remission of my sins,
the washing away of my guilt, the end of my evil thoughts,
and the rebirth of my better instincts.
May it incite me to do the works pleasing to you
and profitable to my health in body and soul,
and be a firm defence against the wiles of my enemies. Amen.

THANKSGIVING AFTER MASS

PRAYER OF ST THOMAS AQUINAS

I give you thanks, Lord, Holy Father, everlasting God.
In your great mercy, and not because of my own merits,
you have fed me, a sinner and your unworthy servant,
with the precious Body and Blood of your Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ.

I pray that this holy communion may not serve as my judgement and condemnation,
but as my forgiveness and salvation.

May it be my armour of faith and shield of good purpose.

May it root out in me all vice and evil desires,
increase my love and patience,
humility and obedience, and every virtue.

Make it a firm defence against the wiles of all my enemies,
seen and unseen, while restraining all evil impulses of flesh and spirit.

May it help me to cleave to you, the one true God,
and bring me a blessed death when you call.

I beseech you to bring me, a sinner,
to that great feast where, with your Son and the Holy Spirit,
you are the true light of your holy ones,
their flawless blessedness, everlasting joy, and perfect happiness.
Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.