

# Laudare

A LITURGICAL RESOURCE FROM THE DOMINICAN INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE LITURGY

## PRAYER

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Prayer, the lifting of the mind and heart to God, plays an essential role in the life of a devout Catholic Christian. Without a life of prayer, we risk losing the life of grace in our souls, grace that comes to us first in baptism and later chiefly through the other sacraments and through prayer itself (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC], 2565). Through prayer we enter into the presence of the Godhead dwelling in us. It is prayer which allows us to adore God, by acknowledging his almighty power; it is prayer that allows us to bring our thanks, our petitions, and our sorrow for sin before our Lord and God.

While prayer is not a practice unique to Catholics, those prayers that are called "Catholic" are generally formulaic in nature but can also be spontaneous. That is, the teaching Church sets before us how we ought to pray. Drawing from the words of Christ, the writings of Scripture and the saints, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, she supplies us with prayers grounded in Christian tradition. Further, our informal,

spontaneous prayers, both vocal and meditative, are informed by and shaped by those prayers taught by the Church, prayers that are the wellspring for the prayer life of all Catholics. Without the Holy Spirit speaking through the Church and through her saints, we would not know how to pray as we ought (CCC, 2650).



As the prayers themselves witness, the Church teaches us that we should pray not only directly to God, but also through those who are close to God, those who have the power to intercede upon our behalf. Indeed, we pray through the angels to help and watch over us; we pray through the saints in heaven to ask their intercession and assistance; we pray through the Blessed Mother to enlist her aid, to ask her to beg her Son to hear our prayers. Further, we pray not only on

our own behalf, but also on the behalf of those souls in purgatory and of all God's people on earth who are in need. Prayer unites us to God; in doing so, we are united to the other members of the Mystical Body.

This communal aspect of prayer is reflected not only in the nature of Catholic prayers, but also in the very words of the prayers themselves. In reading many of the basic formulaic prayers, it will become apparent that, for the Catholic, prayer is often meant to be prayed in the company of others. Christ himself encouraged us to pray together: "For wherever two or more are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). Keeping in mind the aforementioned characteristics of Catholic prayer will enable you to appreciate and to understand the prayers listed below. While this list is certainly not an exhaustive one, it will illustrate the different kinds of Catholic prayers that help to form the treasury of prayers in the Church.

# PRAYER FORMS

While there are many styles of prayer, the Catholic Church identifies four forms:

1. Blessing and Adoration (praising God)
2. Prayer of Petition (asking for what we need, including forgiveness)
3. Prayer of Intercession (asking for what others need)
4. Prayer of Thanksgiving (for what God has given and done)

## Prayer of Blessing and Adoration

In this prayer we express praise and honor to God. We praise God for giving us life, for the wonder and beauty of our world, and for all the many blessings we enjoy. We open ourselves up to praise God for all the wonders of creation. This form of prayer encourages bodily expression, such as standing with arms raised or dancing.

## Prayer of Petition

This is probably the most familiar prayer form of prayer. We are often taught to ask God for the things we need, but asking and praying for them are not necessarily the same. When we pray our petitions, we are asking God, who loves us very much, for something that we believe is

good—for ourselves or for others. By using this form of prayer we are mindful of the needs of others as well as of our own needs. We are aware that God wants us to bring our problems and worries to prayer knowing that he will always hear and answer those prayers. God may answer our prayers in a different way and in a different timeframe than we are seeking but God will always give us what we need.

Prayers of petition serve to remind us that God expects us to care for one another and for all his creation. We can pray about the ordinary experiences of life—for people who are sick, for someone who needs a job, for help in our school work, for a safe trip. We pray for

peace in our families and in our world. We can also express our sorrow and contrition to God in our prayer.

## Prayer of Intercession

This form of prayer is prayer on behalf of others. This form of prayer can be a source of blessing upon others, the Church, and our world. Because we know that Our Lady and the saints intercede for us before God, the Church encourages us to pray to them for their intercession. Such prayer can bring us great strength and courage and also great peace of mind and heart.

## Prayer of Thanksgiving

This form of prayer helps us to be grateful for God's many blessings, spiritual and temporal, and helps us to recognize and appreciate all the good things God gives to us. Reserving some time to praise and thank God for his gifts – the gift of life; the gift of our families and friends; the gift of food, clothing, and shelter; and the numerous other gifts we often take for granted – helps us to form a true spirit of gratitude.



## TIPS FOR PRAYING

1. Find a quiet place and time. Prayer can be done anywhere but it is good to have a place that is conducive to relaxing and focusing our attention on God. Finding a regular time to pray each day can also be helpful to making prayer an important daily routine.
2. Calm yourself and put away distractions. It is important to be relaxed when we pray by finding a comfortable posture.
3. Use formal prayers or speak what you feel to God, or a combination of each. It is important to note that there is no “right” way to pray.
4. Take time to listen. God does speak to us in prayer but we need to listen with our hearts. Be open to what God is telling you rather than just on what you
5. Experiment with styles and forms of prayer. Prayer is an ongoing, developing relationship with God.
6. Keep a journal of prayer.
7. Have a proper attitude. Prayer requires openness to God and a desire to worship and get to know God better.

# DEVOTIONAL PRAYER OR POPULAR PIETY

Catholic devotions are not part of liturgical worship, even if they are performed in a Catholic church, in a group, or in the presence of (or even led by) a priest. The Congregation for Divine Worship at the Vatican publishes a Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy.

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccdds\\_doc\\_20020513\\_vers-direttorio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20020513_vers-direttorio_en.html)



## The Rosary

The Rosary is one type of devotional prayer. Tradition tells that the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary was given to Saint Dominic directly by Our Lady. It remains an important devotion for Dominicans and for Catholics more widely, and its importance was emphasized in modern times by St. Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*.

# LITURGICAL PRAYER

Liturgical Prayer is public prayer that follows prescribed ritual formulas. Liturgical prayer is prayer for the salvation of the world. It can be distinguished from Devotional prayer, which is intended to unite the individual with God through Christ. The ritual of public prayer includes not only prescribed texts, but also gestures, garments, symbols and materials such as bread and wine, candles, ashes,

palms, oils and other symbolic elements.

For Catholics, liturgical prayer includes the Scriptures, the seven Sacraments (especially the Eucharist), the Divine Office, and prescribed prayers and services for special occasions.

## A definition of Liturgical Prayer:

"The word 'liturgy' originally meant a 'public work' or a 'service in the name of/on behalf of the people.' In Christian tradition it means the participation of the People of God in 'the work of God. Through the liturgy Christ, our redeemer and high priest, continues the work of our redemption in, with, and through his Church.'" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, # 1069)

*"The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the font from which all her power flows."*

# HISTORY OF LITURGICAL PRAYER

The liturgy of the Catholic Church had its origins in the liturgical practices of the Jews in the first century. When Luke tells us in Acts 3:42 that the earliest Jewish followers of Christ in Jerusalem "devoted themselves to the breaking of bread and the prayers," it is most likely that this "breaking of the bread" was an adaptation of the Jewish

Shabbat which was a thanksgiving prayer celebrated with bread and wine in small groups, usually families, on Friday evenings. And when later Eucharistic practices were developed in the early centuries, they drew their formulas from the Synagogue services—especially from the Passover Seder services.

In the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th centuries, liturgical prayers and formulas were developed in the various languages throughout the middle East: Greek, Syrian, Latin, Alexandrian, Antiochian, etc. These were the origins of the various Eastern rites, which have flourished in the Middle East ever since. The Latin rite, which was the basis for

Western liturgy today, grew out of services in Rome and Alexandria.

Although the earliest versions of these liturgical prayers drew upon the Jewish berakah (thanksgiving) formulas, they quickly became embellished with Christian themes based on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

# SCRIPTURE

The following are a sample of Scriptural citations on the topic of Prayer:

**Psalms 66:17** I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue.

**Psalms 95:2** Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

**Psalms 122:6** Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! May they be secure who love you!

**Matthew 6:9-13** "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

**Matthew 14:23** After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone.

**Mark 1:35** Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

**Luke 5:16** But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray

**Luke 6:12** One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God

**John 14:16** "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;

**John 17:1-26** After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.

**Romans 10:1** Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

**Romans 10:13** For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

**Romans 15:30** I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf.

**1 Corinthians 1:4** I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus,

**1 Corinthians 14:15** What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.

**2 Corinthians 1:11** You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

**Ephesians 6:18** Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

**Philippians 1:3-4** I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy,

**1 Thessalonians 5:17** Pray without ceasing

**1 Timothy 2:1-2** First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

**James 1:6** But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.

**James 5:16** Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

## WHAT DOMINICANS UNDERSTAND AND SAY ABOUT PRAYER

- The Dominican, then, does not pray for the sake of contemplation alone but in order to preach. (St. Thomas Aquinas)
- “The most important thing of all for a preacher is that he should have recourse to prayer” (Humbert of Romans)
- Our Dominican life means firstly praying the Liturgy in common, but attention is also paid to private prayer.
- Dominicans do not have any special method of prayer but follow Dominic, whose prayer is “always simple, always ecclesial”.
- Dominican prayer is simple and has as its goal “the contemplation of divine truth, and personal conversation and friendship with God” (LCO 66 § I).
- Prayer is also the foundation of all apostolic work
- The purpose of the Order of Preachers is preaching, and it is said of St. Dominic that he always spoke of God or with God. How can you truly speak of Him if you don’t know Him? Prayer is essential. (Bl. Jordan of Saxony)
- To Praise, To Bless, To Preach, is a way of living life that is aware that all of creation is a gift from God, thus we give glory to God in praise.
- The little thirteenth century work of St. Dominic’s Nine Ways of Prayer shows how he prayed with his whole being, soul and body. The traditional Dominican liturgy is characterized by its extensive use of bodily gestures: bowing, kneeling, prostrating, processing.
- Dominican prayer is contemplative, which means that it is not limited to petition, but expands to thanksgiving, adoration, and praise of the greatness of the Trinity and the glory of the Crucified.
- It is through daily prayer and contemplation that we have lasting fruits to give the world.
- The essence of Dominican life is a happy combination of the contemplative prayer life with the active one.

## ECCLESIAL DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES

[www.papalencyclials.net](http://www.papalencyclials.net)

<http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/prayers.index.html>

<http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/prayers.index.html>

<http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/prayers.index.html>

Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2558 – 2865

## PRAYER ABOUT PRAYER

God, may I love You in all things and above all things.  
May I reach the joy which You have prepared for me in Heaven.

Nothing is good that is against Your Will,  
and all that is good comes from Your Hand.

Place in my heart a desire to please You  
and fill my mind with thoughts of Your Love,  
so that I may grow in Your Wisdom and enjoy Your Peace.  
I make this prayer through the intercession of St. Dominic,  
and in the powerful name of Jesus the Lord.

Amen.



## O LUMEN

O Lumen Ecclesiae, Doctor veritatis,  
Rosa patientiae, Ebur castitatis,  
Aquam sapientiae propinasti gratis:  
Predicator gratiae, nos iunge beatis.

Light of the Church, Teacher of truth  
Rose of patience, Ivory of chastity,  
You freely offered the waters of wisdom.  
Preacher of grace, Unite us with the blessed.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For an excellent explanation of different forms of prayer and links to a range of traditional Dominican prayers, visit the website  
of

*The Lay Fraternities of St. Dominic, Province of St. Joseph, Eastern USA*

[www.laydominicans.org/prayer](http://www.laydominicans.org/prayer)

## REFLECTION

- What is my prayer life like, including the celebration of the Sacraments and the reading of Scripture?
- How can you better listen to God speak in your life and in your ministry?
- What excites you about your relationship with Jesus and the Catholic Church, and in the Order of Preachers? How do I bring that to my prayer and then into action?

## ACTION

- We sometimes forget that our actions should flow from our prayer life, our rich union with God, who renews our intentions and focuses us to order our actions according to a holy priority. May our relationship with God sanctify and perfect our actions throughout this day.
- The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy are actions, found in scripture, which we can perform that extend God's compassion and mercy to those in need.
- As members of the Dominican family let the actions that form from our prayers be seen as the "Holy Preaching".

The Corporal Works of Mercy are these kind acts by which we help our neighbors with their material and physical needs.

*Feed the hungry; Give drink to the thirsty; Shelter the homeless; Clothe the naked; Care for the sick; Visit the imprisoned; and Bury the dead.*

The Spiritual Works of Mercy are acts of compassion, by which we help our neighbors with their emotional and spiritual needs.

*Advise; Instruct; Console; Comfort; Bear wrongs patiently; Forgive; Pray for the living and the dead.*

## CONCLUSION

As Dominicans, we see prayer as a movement from vocal prayer to meditation to contemplation. Vocal prayer is giving voice to what is stirring in our hearts and in our souls. To meditate is to reflect on or think about God. Contemplation is when we are able to rest quietly in God's presence. In

contemplation we spend time with God in wordless silence, aware that God is with us. To understand how contemplation occurs, we can compare it with thinking on — or contemplating — a beautiful sunset. We are conscious of its impact, but our reaction is wordless. When we experience God personally, we feel God's

love and wait for God to speak to us. The key contemplation is to make time to relax and listen in God's presence, to seek union with the God who loves us. Our preaching then is the sharing of the fruits of our contemplation.

**NOTES**

