



Archdiocese of St. Louis
Office of Sacred Worship
Prayer Divina
Prayer
Catechism of the Catholic Church

I. Blessing and Adoration

2626 Blessing expresses the basic movement of Christian prayer: it is an encounter between God and man. In blessing, God's gift and man's acceptance of it are united in dialogue with each other. The prayer of blessing is man's response to God's gifts: because God blesses, the human heart can in return bless the One who is the source of every blessing. (1078)

2627 Two fundamental forms express this movement: our prayer ascends in the Holy Spirit through Christ to the Father—we bless him for having blessed us;⁹⁷ it implores the grace of the Holy Spirit that descends through Christ from the Father—he blesses us.⁹⁸ (1083)

2628 Adoration is the first attitude of man acknowledging that he is a creature before his Creator. It exalts the greatness of the Lord who made us⁹⁹ and the almighty power of the Savior who sets us free from evil. Adoration is homage of the spirit to the “King of Glory,”¹⁰⁰ respectful silence in the presence of the “ever greater” God.¹⁰¹ Adoration of the thrice-holy and sovereign God of love blends with humility and gives assurance to our supplications. (2096-2097, 2559)

II. Prayer of Petition

2629 The vocabulary of supplication in the New Testament is rich in shades of meaning: ask, beseech, plead, invoke, entreat, cry out, even “struggle in prayer.”¹⁰² Its most usual form, because the most spontaneous, is petition: by prayer of petition we express awareness of our relationship with God. We are creatures who are not our own beginning, not the masters of adversity, not our own last end. We are sinners who as Christians know that we have turned away from our Father. Our petition is already a turning back to him. (396)

2630 The New Testament contains scarcely any prayers of lamentation, so frequent in the Old Testament. In the risen Christ the Church's petition is buoyed by hope, even if we still wait in a state of expectation and must be converted anew every day. Christian petition, what St. Paul calls “groaning,” arises from another depth, that of creation “in labor pains” and that of ourselves “as we wait for the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved.”¹⁰³ In the end, however, “with sighs too deep for words” the Holy Spirit “helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.”¹⁰⁴ (2090)

2631 The first movement of the prayer of petition is asking forgiveness, like the tax collector in the parable: “God, be merciful to me a sinner!”¹⁰⁵ It is a prerequisite for righteous and pure prayer. A trusting humility brings us back into the light of communion between the Father and his Son Jesus Christ and with one another, so that “we receive from him whatever we ask.”¹⁰⁶ Asking forgiveness is the prerequisite for both the Eucharistic liturgy and personal prayer. (2838)

2632 Christian petition is centered on the desire and search for the Kingdom to come, in keeping with the teaching of Christ.¹⁰⁷ There is a hierarchy in these petitions: we pray first for the Kingdom, then for what is necessary to welcome it and cooperate with its coming. This collaboration with the mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit, which is now that of the Church, is the object of the prayer of the apostolic community.¹⁰⁸ It is the prayer of Paul, the apostle par excellence, which reveals to us how the divine solicitude for all the churches ought to inspire Christian prayer.¹⁰⁹ By prayer every baptized person works for the coming of the Kingdom. (2816, 1942, 2854)



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2633 When we share in God’s saving love, we understand that every need can become the object of petition. Christ, who assumed all things in order to redeem all things, is glorified by what we ask the Father in his name.¹¹⁰ It is with this confidence that St. James and St. Paul exhort us to pray at all times.¹¹¹ (2830)

III. Prayer of Intercession

2634 Intercession is a prayer of petition which leads us to pray as Jesus did. He is the one intercessor with the Father on behalf of all men, especially sinners.¹¹² He is “able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.”¹¹³ The Holy Spirit “himself intercedes for us... and intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”¹¹⁴ (432)

2635 Since Abraham, intercession—asking on behalf of another—has been characteristic of a heart attuned to God’s mercy. In the age of the Church, Christian intercession participates in Christ’s, as an expression of the communion of saints. In intercession, he who prays looks “not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others,” even to the point of praying for those who do him harm.¹¹⁵ (2571, 2577)

2636 The first Christian communities lived this form of fellowship intensely.¹¹⁶ Thus the Apostle Paul gives them a share in his ministry of preaching the Gospel¹¹⁷ but also intercedes for them.¹¹⁸ The intercession of Christians recognizes no boundaries: “for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions,” for persecutors, for the salvation of those who reject the Gospel.¹¹⁹ (1900, 1037)

IV. Prayer of Thanksgiving

2637 Thanksgiving characterizes the prayer of the Church which, in celebrating the Eucharist, reveals and becomes more fully what she is. Indeed, in the work of salvation, Christ sets creation free from sin and death to consecrate it anew and make it return to the Father, for his glory. The thanksgiving of the members of the Body participates in that of their Head. (224, 1328, 2603)

2638 As in the prayer of petition, every event and need can become an offering of thanksgiving. The letters of St. Paul often begin and end with thanksgiving, and the Lord Jesus is always present in it: “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”; “Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”¹²⁰

V. Prayer of Praise

2639 Praise is the form of prayer which recognizes most immediately that God is God. It lauds God for his own sake and gives him glory, quite beyond what he does, but simply because HE IS. It shares in the blessed happiness of the pure of heart who love God in faith before seeing him in glory. By praise, the Spirit is joined to our spirits to bear witness that we are children of God,¹²¹ testifying to the only Son in whom we are adopted and by whom we glorify the Father. Praise embraces the other forms of prayer and carries them toward him who is its source and goal: the “one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist.”¹²² (213)

2640 St. Luke in his gospel often expresses wonder and praise at the marvels of Christ and in his Acts of the Apostles stresses them as actions of the Holy Spirit: the community of Jerusalem, the invalid healed by Peter and John, the crowd that gives glory to God for that, and the pagans of Pisidia who “were glad and glorified the word of God.”¹²³



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2641 “[Address] one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart.”¹²⁴ Like the inspired writers of the New Testament, the first Christian communities read the Book of Psalms in a new way, singing in it the mystery of Christ. In the newness of the Spirit, they also composed hymns and canticles in the light of the unheard-of event that God accomplished in his Son: his Incarnation, his death which conquered death, his Resurrection, and Ascension to the right hand of the Father.¹²⁵ Doxology, the praise of God, arises from this “marvelous work” of the whole economy of salvation.¹²⁶ (2587)

2642 The Revelation of “what must soon take place,” the Apocalypse, is borne along by the songs of the heavenly liturgy¹²⁷ but also by the intercession of the “witnesses” (martyrs).¹²⁸ The prophets and the saints, all those who were slain on earth for their witness to Jesus, the vast throng of those who, having come through the great tribulation, have gone before us into the Kingdom, all sing the praise and glory of him who sits on the throne, and of the Lamb.¹²⁹ In communion with them, the Church on earth also sings these songs with faith in the midst of trial. By means of petition and intercession, faith hopes against all hope and gives thanks to the “Father of lights,” from whom “every perfect gift” comes down.¹³⁰ Thus faith is pure praise. (1137)

2643 The Eucharist contains and expresses all forms of prayer: it is “the pure offering” of the whole Body of Christ to the glory of God’s name¹³¹ and, according to the traditions of East and West, it is the “sacrifice of praise.” (1330)