

The Litany – A Prayer Form Rediscovered

Becoming a **Praying** Family:
Teaching Our Kids to Pray



**If we want our kids to pray
we have to pray with them.**

Litanies have become popular again because they are simple and extremely flexible.

Litanies make great family prayers because they are relatively short and the responses are easy to remember, even for very young children. Members of the family can take turns leading a litany or section of a litany.

Litanies are great teaching tools. Each intercession tells us something about our tradition. Simply by going through some of the intercessions and explaining what they mean is an easy short lesson.

Litanies are rich in imagery, giving creative expression to the ongoing development of how the faithful have come to know and experience the Christian Life.

You will find the texts or links for several litanies in this handout.

What is litany?

Litanies are prayers of petition that focus on one person or theme in Christian tradition. They consist of an opening prayer, a series of petitions and responses, prayed in a call and response rhythm, and a closing prayer.

Many forms old and new

Traditionally recited or sung, during public processions, there are six litanies approved for public recitation during formal liturgical celebrations. These texts tend to be more formal and traditional in tone. Click on the links below to access these prayer texts.

- [litany of loreto](#) (also known as The Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary)
- [Litany of St. Joseph - District of the USA - SSPX.org](#)
- [Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus](#)
- [litany of the saints pdf](#) (traditional text)
- [Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus](#)
- [Litany of the Most Precious Blood](#)

Contemporary Litanies

- **An Inclusive Litany of the Saints** - <http://www.jfrankhenderson.com/pdf/litanySS.pdf>
- **A modern litany for Mary** – text printed below; access on line at <http://www.monasteriesoftheheart.org/litany-mary-nazareth>
- **A Litany for Mercy & Forgiveness** – based on the Beatitudes
- **Litany for Liberty**
- **Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Life**
- **Litany for Life** (based on 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:8a)
- **The Litany of Trust: A Prayer for our Times**

Intercessory Prayer is . . .

a way of loving others as we love ourselves

a way to serve Jesus

intense!

Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. (Col. 4:12 NIV)

an ongoing battle

a form of spiritual warfare

an application of the Lord's prayer, "Thy will be done"

touches the hearts and minds of others

Litanies that focus on significant people within the Christian or Biblical tradition are forms of intercessory prayer.

An intercessor is one who takes the place of another or pleads another's case. **Intercessory prayer is prayer for others.** Praying for others is one of the works of discipleship.

Roman Catholics do not pray to Mary or the saints. They petition them, as model disciples, to intercede for them.

Litany of Mary of Nazareth – Contemporary

This Litany comes to us from Pax Christi USA. Written in 1987 to celebrate the Marian Year It was published in **The Fire of Peace: A Prayer Book**, Compiled and edited by Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB

Opening Prayer

Leader: Glory to you, God our creator

R. **Breathe into us new life, new meaning.**

Leader: Glory to you, God our savior

R. **Lead us in the way of peace and justice.**

Leader: Glory to you, healing spirit

R. **Transform us to empower others.**

After each of these Marian titles, please respond

"Be our guide"

Mary, wellspring of peace...

Model of strength...

Model of gentleness...

Model of trust...

Model of courage...

Model of patience...

Model of risk...

Model of openness...

Model of perseverance...



Contemporary image of Mary of Nazareth in prayer

The response to the following petitions is **"Pray for us"**

Mother of the liberator...
Mother of the homeless...
Mother of the dying...
Mother of the nonviolent...
Widowed mother...
Mother of the political prisoner...
Mother of the condemned...
Mother of the executed criminal...

The response to the following is **"Lead us to life"**

Oppressed women...
Liberator of the oppressed...
Marginalized woman...
Comforter of the afflicted...
Cause of our joy...
Sign of contradiction...
Breaker of bondage...
Political refugee...
Seeker of sanctuary...
First disciple...
Sharer in Christ's ministry...
Participant in Christ's passion...
Seeker of God's will...
Witness to Christ's resurrection...



The simplicity and versatility of litanies make them popular in inter-faith settings.

More common in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions, Protestant and Evangelical Churches are now creating and praying Litanies as part of their worship, often around Scriptural themes.

The use of the call and respond pattern with a repetitive refrain is evident in many of the Hebrew Psalms as well as Islamic prayer texts.

The response to the following is **"Empower us"**

Woman of mercy...
Woman of faith...
Woman of contemplation...
Woman of vision...
Woman of wisdom and understanding...
Woman of grace and truth...
Women, pregnant with hope...
Woman, centered in God...

Closing Prayer

Leader: Let us pray

R. Mary, Queen of Peace, we entrust our lives to you.
Shelter us from war, hatred and oppression.
Teach us to live in peace, to educate ourselves for peace.

Inspire us to act justly, to revere all God has made.
Root peace firmly in our hearts and in our world.
Amen.

Litany for Wholeness – written by John Birch, 2016. This and several other original prayer texts can be found on his website Faith & Worship, <https://www.faithandworship.com/>. Intercessions based on New Testament texts.

Jesus, you came that we might have life, and have it abundantly

R. Precious Jesus, we offer you our praise and thanks.

You poured living water into lives that were parched and thirsty

R. Precious Jesus, we offer you our praise and thanks.

You fed souls that were hungry with the bread of life

R. Precious Jesus, we offer you our praise and thanks.

You brought healing through a touch that knew no prejudice or barrier

R. Precious Jesus, we offer you our praise and thanks.

You brought Salvation through the cross,

R. Precious Jesus, we offer you our praise and thanks.

You brought a means through which mankind could be made right again with its Creator

R. Precious Jesus, we offer you our praise and thanks.

You brought comfort to the sorrowing, liberty to the poor

R. Precious Jesus, we offer you our praise and thanks.

You accept us as we are, and mold us into the people we were meant to be

R. Precious Jesus, we offer you our praise and thanks.

You enable broken lives and relationships to be made whole again

R. Precious Jesus, we offer you our praise and thanks.

Litany based on Psalm 136 - Translation from the Inclusive Language Liturgical Psalter, 2016. Click on link to access the entire collection of Psalms [Inclusive Language Liturgical Psalter](#)

Opening Prayer

Leader: Lord have mercy

R. Lord have mercy

Leader: Christ have mercy

R. Christ have mercy

Leader: Lord have mercy

R. Lord have mercy

Leader: We praise and thank You O God of Compassion,

for Your mercy endures forever.
Your gift of mercy fills the whole world,
new every morning; steadfast throughout the day
By your faithfulness and love you to strengthen your people,
You welcome the outcast with open arms,
and gaze upon the sinner with tenderness
for your mercy endures forever.

Leader: Give thanks to the Lord who is good,

R. **The mercy of God endures forever.**

Give thanks to the God of gods,

R. **The mercy of God endures forever.**

Give thanks to the Lord of lords,

R. **The mercy of God endures forever.**

Who only does great wonders,

R. **The mercy of God endures forever.**

Who by divine wisdom made the heavens,

R. **The mercy of God endures forever.**

Who spread out the earth upon the waters,

R. **The mercy of God endures forever.**

Who created great lights,

R. **The mercy of God endures forever.**

The sun to rule the day,

R. **The mercy of God endures forever.**

The moon and the stars to govern the night,

R. **The mercy of God endures forever.**

Who struck down the firstborn of Egypt,

R. **The mercy of God endures forever.**

And brought out Israel from among them,

R. **The mercy of God endures forever.**

With a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm,

R. **The mercy of God endures forever.**

Who divided the Red Sea in two,

R. **The mercy of God endures forever.**

And made Israel to pass through the midst of it,

R. **The mercy of God endures forever.**

But swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea,

R. **The mercy of God endures forever.**

Who led this people through the wilderness,

R. **The mercy of God endures forever.**

Who remembered us in our low estate,

- R. **The mercy of God endures forever.**
 And delivered us from our enemies,
 R. **The mercy of God endures forever.**
 Who gives food to all creatures,
 R. **The mercy of God endures forever.**
 Give thanks to the God of heaven,
 R. **The mercy of God endures forever.**

Closing Prayer (said in unison by all)

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**

Litany for the Dying

Pray this litany before or immediately after a person has died. Praying together can offer great comfort at this time, especially for children. Prayer anchors us. Having words to speak, when we do not know what to say, and being able to do something constructive helps us feel less overwhelmed and more in control. The repetitive patter of the litany makes intergenerational prayer easier and more satisfying.

All make the Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father...

R. Amen.

Opening Prayer

Leader: Lord, have mercy

R. **Lord, have mercy**

L. Christ, have mercy

R. **Christ, have mercy**

L. Lord, have mercy

R. **Lord, have mercy**

Leader: Lord Jesus Christ, Savior of the world, we pray for your servant, N____, and commend him/her to your mercy.

After each invocation say **pray for** [insert the person's name].

*Feel free to add or shorten this litany of the saints.

Mary, Mother of God...

Joseph, patron of the dying...

Angels of the Lord...

Abraham and Sarah, our leaders in faith...

Moses and Miriam, prophets of the Lord...

David, leader of God's people...

John the Baptist...



Peter and Paul...
Andrew and James ...
Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, sharers of the Word...
Mary Magdalen, first to see the Risen Lord...
Priscilla and Aquila, teachers of the faith...
Stephen and Lawrence...
Perpetua and Felicity...
Agnes and Lucy...
Isaac Joques and Jean de Brebeuf, North American martyrs...
Charles Luanga and the Martyrs of Uganda...
Maximilian Kolbe and Edith Stein...
The Monks of Algeria...
All martyrs of the Lord...
Martin of Tours and Theresa of Calcutta, patrons of the poor
Benedict and Scholastica...
Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier...
Francis and Clare...
Dominic and Catherine...
Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac...
Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantel...
Elizabeth Ann Seton and Katherine Drexel...
All holy men and women...

After each invocation please respond, **we pray**

Deliver N____, from all fear, O Lord!
Guide N____, on this final journey, O Lord
Be merciful, to N____, O Lord!
May N____, see the Redeemer face to face, and enjoy the vision of God forever...

Closing Prayer

L. Eternal rest grant unto N____, O Lord,
R. **and let perpetual light shine upon him/her.**

May N____ soul, and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God
Rest in peace.

Amen.