

# *A Guide for*



# *Composing Universal Prayer / Prayer of the Faithful*

**Diocese of Prince Albert  
Liturgy Office**



(2022)



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## **Instructions given in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal:**

69. In the Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful, the people respond in some sense to the Word of God which they have received in faith and, exercising the office of their baptismal priesthood, offer prayers to God for the salvation of all. It is desirable that there usually be such a form of prayer in Masses celebrated with the people, so that petitions may be offered for holy Church, for those who govern with authority over us, for those weighed down by various needs, for all humanity, and for the salvation of the whole world.

70. The series of intentions is usually to be:

- a) for the needs of the Church;
- b) for public authorities and the salvation of the whole world;
- c) for those burdened by any kind of difficulty;
- d) for the local community.

Nevertheless, in any particular celebration, such as a Confirmation, a Marriage, or at a Funeral, the series of intentions may be concerned more closely with the particular occasion.

71. It is for the Priest Celebrant to regulate this prayer from the chair. He himself begins it with a brief introduction, by which he calls upon the faithful to pray, and likewise he concludes it with an oration. ..

They are announced from the ambo or from another suitable place, by the Deacon or by a cantor, a reader, or one of the lay faithful.



**Other quotes to help understand these prayers:**

The entire people of God form a “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9) who, in union with Christ, in solidarity with their brothers and sisters everywhere, and under the presidency of the priest, make “petitions, prayers, intercessions... for all” (1 Timothy 2:1).

(Taken from ‘Mystery of Faith’, p. 52)

The variable nature of these prayers suggests that they take into account the circumstances of time and place, the real contemporary needs of the Church and the world on the day they are prayed. Still, the intentions should not be politicized or controversial. “They should express the prayer of the entire community” (71).

(Taken from ‘Let Us Pray’ #392)

The intentions are addressed to the assembly, not to God (IOM 98). The petitioner announces the intentions, and the people pray for them.

(Taken from ‘Let Us Pray’ #395)



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## **Things to be careful of:**

“Composing this prayer, either spontaneously or in writing, is not without certain pitfalls. One is the ‘we/they split.’ The unity of the assembly is fundamental: language must not divide the people. For example, to pray for “those who do not follow God’s law” implies that sinfulness is not part of our experience or that sinners are not in church. This approach forgets that the liturgical assembly is always made up of saved sinners.

Another common pitfall is ‘dueling intentions,’ where one ideological group prays for the conversion of another. Sweeping generalizations judge groups or people. To avoid this, pray for persons or for something that applies to persons or groups: healing, peace, reconciliation, etc. Avoid constructing petitions around ‘that’ or ‘may’ which prescribe the outcome and virtually tell God what to do. Remember that we are asking God to watch over people; we are not giving our orders for the week. For example, rather than say “For persons with AIDS, that they may...” say “For persons with AIDS, their families and those who assist them.” Thus God decides how best to save those for whom we are praying.”

(Taken from ‘Composing the Prayer of the Faithful’ by Bernadette Gasslein)



## **Continued...**

Keep the prayers fairly short so that by the end of the intercession, the people have not forgotten how the prayer started.

Finally, unless the response is different than what we are used to saying, there is no need to introduce that response during the celebration at the beginning of the prayers (ex: please respond... Lord, hear our Prayer)



## **Proclaiming the Prayers during the Eucharist:**

\*\*In order to smoothly go from the Profession of Faith to the Prayer of the Faithful, it is important for the minister leading the petitions to move immediately following the Creed and before the priest introduces the Universal Prayer.

\*\*After the last response the petitioner's role is done. He or she may need to move from one place to another, for example, from the ambo to a pew. It will cause less distraction if the petitioner remains still until after the priest's concluding prayer (IOM 96). (LP #400)



### **Examples of Intercessions for a Children's Mass:**

1. For the Church and its leaders, we pray to the Lord...
2. For all those who govern us, we pray to the Lord...
3. For all those called to serve in the Church, we pray to the Lord...
4. For our families at home, at church and around the world, we pray to the Lord...
5. For the refugees and homeless, we pray to the Lord...
6. For the sick and the dying, we pray to the Lord...

# 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.

For thine is the kingdom,

and the power, and the glory,

for ever and ever.

Amen.

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Thank you for sharing in this ministry of composing  
the Universal Prayer / Prayer of the Faithful!