

Let us eliminate everything hindering us from bringing thanks:

- *cupidity* (greed or lust) – it brings about dissatisfaction, envy, and jealousy. It is legitimate to aspire to terrestrial riches, but in no way shall they derogate our relation to God!
- *arrogance* – the arrogant person is easily irritated because his merits are not being appreciated and his ideas not applied.

Our petitions have more weight if

- they are *fervent* – do we really fight for our salvation? Here and there, one discovers a tendency to spiritual laziness.
- they come from *united hearts* (cf. Mt 18: 19) – divisions, quarrels, and lacking a willingness to forgive reduce the effectiveness of our prayers.

Let us purify our hearts from all that harms our intercession:

- *egoism* – self-love shall not suffocate the love for the neighbor.
- *resignation* – it is never in vain to pray for one's neighbor.

CHIEF APOSTLE SCHNEIDER

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CORPORATE PRAYER

Public or corporate prayer is distinct from private prayer in form, content, and length. This type of prayer occurs when we pray together with other people in settings like services, small groups, and in our family circles. One person speaks a prayer while everyone else actively listens.

To help listeners remain “actively listening,” the person praying should make their prayer of modest length. When praying in public, we are no longer praying on our own behalf, but for all who are gathered together. Like private prayer, corporate prayer comes from the heart, but the content should be relevant to all who are listening, and allow them to feel the holiness and presence of God. For this reason, it's important to take into account all who are present and to pray in a style that everyone will understand, inspiring all to say, “Amen!”

As we journey through the Bible, we can see how corporate prayer played a role in the lives of God's people.

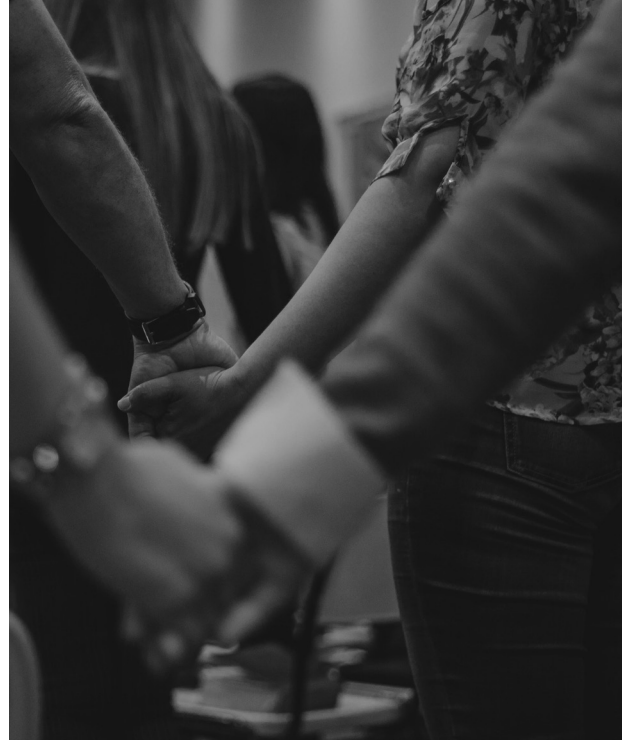
In the Old Testament, David and Solomon's dedications before and after the building of the temple give us vivid examples of corporate prayers. Ezra epitomized corporate prayer, as he drew the people into his pleading with God in a very real way.

As we turn to the New Testament, we find in the Gospels the prayers that Jesus spoke publicly in the presence of His disciples (and, often times, multitudes of people).

In the book of Acts, we read how seriously the first Christians took prayer. This was one of the four fundamental pillars of faith that they continued steadfastly in (Acts 2:42). They prayed together in the temple and in their homes, when they were sick and when they were filled with the Spirit, at mealtimes, and in times of persecution. Again and again, we find them all together, devoting themselves to prayer.

Corporate prayers are intended to be unifying. A prayer spoken in the midst of a small group unifies that group of believers as they seek to grow together in faith and understanding. A prayer spoken within a family circle unifies those family members together as they seek the Lord's guidance and will, and as they ask for His protection and provision. The corporate prayers spoken within a divine service unify a body of believers in their praise, worship, and thanksgiving, and in their desire for God's presence, word, and forgiveness. When we pray with others, we are united together in the name, mind, and spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Corporate prayers can also be educational. Participating in corporate prayer provides opportunities for us to learn how to pray and discover new ways to express ourselves in prayer. As one person prays, all those who are present are also praying. Subsequently, it's important that everyone be fully engaged in the prayer. It is likely that most of what we know about prayer, we learned from hearing someone else pray, perhaps, at first, our mother or father. We see this repeatedly in Scripture. The similarities between Mary's prayer (Luke 1:46-55) and Hannah's prayer (1 Samuel 2:1-10) show that Mary was perhaps modeling her prayer after Hannah's. Stephen, in his brief prayer while being stoned to death, paraphrased two



In a public prayer, everyone should be able to feel that they are *incorporated*, hence the term, *corporate prayer*. If we expect the people we are praying with to say “Amen” at the end of our prayer, not only the style of our prayer is important, but we must also pray clearly, so that they understand what exactly we are praying for. We also want to pray aligned to God's will, which allows people to agree with what is being said.

petitions of Jesus to His Father while on the cross (Acts 7:59–60, Luke 23:34, 46). Certainly, the disciples learned how to pray by listening to Jesus' prayers. Children learn how to pray from their parents, grandparents, and Sunday school teachers. We can learn a lot by listening to the sincere and earnest prayers of others.

There is a lot of beauty and power in corporate prayer. In Acts 12:5–18, the congregation prayed fervently for Peter in prison and continued until he was able to join them. How encouraging and edifying it is when a body of believers gathers together and unites their hearts in humble expression to their heavenly Father, and thereby experiences His almighty presence and provision.

WE PRAY TO GOD, OUR FATHER, IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST - *because that is what Jesus taught.*

DIVINE SERVICE PRAYERS

Below is a chronological list of prayers and liturgical elements that form a divine service:

- Worship and preparation
- **Sacristy prayer / individual prayers of the congregation**
- Opening hymn / **Silent prayer at the altar**
- Invocation
- **Opening prayer**
- Reading of Bible verse
- Response hymn

- Sermon
- Acceptance hymn
- Repentance hymn
- **The Lord's Prayer**
- Absolution
- **Eucharistic prayer**
- Consecration of the elements
- Serving of Holy Communion / Holy Communion hymn
- **Closing prayer**
- Benediction
- Three-fold Amen
- Thanksgiving (Closing) hymn

The six prayers that are included as part of the divine service experience are bolded. Each brings a unique element to the experience, and each is distinct from one another. The goal with this section is to bring clarity to our understanding of each prayer.

SACRISTY PRAYER

This petition is prayed by the officiant in the sacristy, either alone or with other ministers present. Just as Jesus often gave thanks to the Father in advance of His provision, so should we take the same approach before a divine service.

We certainly shouldn't try to impress others with our prayers, but we should always involve them in our prayers. Why? Because we're family. God is not just my Father, but "Our Father." These two words remind us that we're both children of God and siblings to each other. Prayer was never meant to be a merely personal exercise with personal benefits, but a discipline that reminds us how we're personally responsible for others.

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*Prayer: How Praying Together
Shapes the Church*



We petition that He will provide for us and for the congregation gathered through His grace and love, that we may serve with humility and confidence. In these prayers, we recognize the triune God's power and authority, and that He is the source of everything and the supplier of our needs. We are completely dependent upon Him, bringing to expression the words of the timeless hymn, *I can bring thee nothing, all O Lord art Thou!* (Hymn: *Star to Which I'm Looking*). We also pray for oneness with Christ and with the apostle ministry. Finally, we humbly pray that God sanctify our ministry and that He speaks through us. Our desire is for the Holy Spirit to be the Author of our words, as only He truly knows – and can fulfill – the needs of each soul that is gathered.

SILENT PRAYER AT THE ALTAR (PRIVATE PRAYER)

The silent prayer at the altar is a brief, personal prayer between the minister and God. Really, much of what was prayed in the sacristy prayer could be reiterated again here. Of utmost importance, though, is that now the congregation witnesses our sincere desire to speak the Word of God. In this prayer, we align our desire for oneness with Christ's desire for oneness (John 17:20-23). We also want to pray that all who are gathered experience the glory of God through His word, intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ in Holy Communion, and the power and comforting fellowship of the Holy Spirit. It may also be appropriate here to make personal requests and to bring thanks and supplication for personal matters of life that can't be spoken in our public, congregational prayers.

Invocation

A quick note here regarding the invocation that precedes the opening prayer. It's very important to remember that this is not a prayer, but rather a "calling out to God." The invocation is to fill believers with the promise of the presence of the triune God. As ministers, we should be fully aware of the holiness and magnitude of this moment and its connection to the benediction. When this is the case, the congregation will notice; they will feel and experience the power and presence of the triune God. The invocation should be spoken with emphasis and reverence, and should never be rushed.

OPENING PRAYER

(PUBLIC PRAYER)

The opening prayer is the first public (or corporate) prayer in the divine service. Everyone should be able to feel that they are incorporated, hence the term, *corporate prayer*. The importance of this prayer cannot be understated. In this prayer, the minister prays both with and for those in attendance. The one chosen to pray is not being asked to utter their own personal prayers in public, but rather to pray on behalf of those gathered. Worship, praise, adoration, and thanksgiving is brought, and pleas, petitions, and intercessions are made, all on behalf of the congregation. This is both a great honor and a heavy responsibility that each minister should take the time to consider. The more this is realized and pondered, the more effective this prayer will be. It's also important that repetition and clichés be avoided in this prayer. It's very easy to become trapped in a personal prayer style that can quickly lose the listener's attention. This prayer should lay a beautiful and sturdy foundation for the divine service, and should be kept to three minutes or less.



The prayer of the Church is a source of strength. We pray together during the divine service, but we can also meet to pray together when particular situations arise. This in no way demands of God to perform a miracle or impose our will. The purpose of such an approach is, above all, to emphasize the importance we give to the subject of our prayer and to express our total trust in God.

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When we make requests of God in corporate prayer, we should first ask ourselves a few questions:

Is this something that people can say “Amen” to? Is this request appropriate for everyone to know or is it a more personal matter? Is this request something that the congregation knows is according to God’s will and that He might grant? Does this request encourage genuine love for God and our neighbor?

If the answer to any of these questions is “no,” we may want to reconsider if this is an appropriate time to pray for this matter.

THE LORD’S PRAYER (COMMUNAL PRAYER)

A unique aspect of the divine service is the communal praying of the Lord’s Prayer. This is different from a corporate prayer in that each person participates in speaking the words of the prayer. Praying the Lord’s Prayer together unites us with Jesus Christ, demonstrates discipleship through our willingness to follow His example, and leads us to confession and repentance.

With this communal prayer, we pray not only for ourselves, but also for our brothers and sisters in Christ (*Give **us** this day **our** daily bread; forgive **us our** debts, as **we** forgive **our** debtors*). We are praying for the provision and forgiveness of our brother and sister just as much as we are praying for our own provision and forgiveness. We also *desire* that they be provided for and forgiven just as much as we desire the same for ourselves.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

The focus of the Eucharistic prayer is Jesus Christ. The term *eucharist* is derived from the Greek word *eucharistein*, which means “to give thanks.” In this moment, we give praise and thanks – again, on behalf of the congregation – for Christ’s suffering and sacrifice on the cross for our sins. This prayer should be a reminder that Christ instituted the sacrament of Holy Communion and called His disciples to



proclaim the gospel throughout the world. Holy Communion is a meal of remembrance, fellowship, profession, and anticipation of the marriage feast in heaven (eschatological) when intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ can once again be experienced (CNAC 8.2.11). Focal points of this prayer include praise and thanksgiving for: the institution of Holy Communion, the forgiveness of sins, Christ's sacrificial death – which makes the forgiveness of sins possible, the mission of the apostle ministry – given to them by Christ, the grace and mercy that we experience together through the forgiveness of sins, and the fellowship that we experience with Christ and one another through Holy Communion.

It's important to note that other intercessions and petitions are not incorporated in the Eucharistic prayer. The sacrifice and salvific work of Christ stands alone. The Eucharistic prayer is reserved for all things related to God's plan and activity of salvation through Jesus Christ.

CLOSING PRAYER

After experiencing the glory of God together in the divine service, our natural and immediate response should be one of praise and thanksgiving, expressed in the closing prayer. God has heard our prayers; He has answered us in the divine word, assured us of our forgiveness through the absolution, and enlivened and strengthened us through direct and intimate fellowship with Christ in Holy Communion. Now, we praise Him and enjoy the aftereffects of His abundant, undeserved blessing. If petitions are made, may they be for God's continued providence and protection, and that we might experience His kingdom, the one that is developing in and around us today, and the one that is yet to come with Christ's return.

Invocation

A quick note here regarding the benediction that follows the closing prayer. Much like the invocation and absolution, it is a proclamation. The benediction sends the people of God back into the world with the hope of the gospel, and with the assurance that God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will continue to be with them. It is the expressed blessing of God and one of the essential "gifts" of a divine service. Given the importance of the benediction, it is spoken sincerely and intently, and should be received with a full awareness of what is being said.