

ACTS OF PRAYER

Many people find prayer mysterious and difficult, but it doesn't have to be. Honest communication is an essential part of any good relationship, and prayer is simply a language of relationship with God, a conversation that we are always having whether we're paying attention to it or not. So, if there's a "trick" to prayer, it is to pay attention to the conversation, to recognize that we are always in this conversation with God, and to practice listening and speaking intentionally.

Prayer is:

- Speaking that is also listening;
- Listening that is also speaking;
- Tuning in to God's presence and to our deepest truth.

It can be helpful to know some of the different categories of prayer, different aspects of our life and relationship with God on which we can focus and tune in. It may help you to remember the acronym ACTS.

A

DORATION

A prayer that gives voice to your experience of God's awesomeness.

*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
The moon and the stars that you have established;
What are human beings that you are mindful of them,
Mortals that you care for them?*

*Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
And crowned them with glory and honor.*

O Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. (Psalm 8:3-9 select)

C

ONFESSION

To confess is literally to tell the truth! A prayer of confession attempts to tell the truth of who we really are and what holds us back from the beauty and fulfillment for which God made us. A prayer of confession tells the truth of how we are so often our own worst enemy, and how we struggle for the openness that makes way for God to heal our hearts.

Gracious God, we confess what seems always with us: broken things within us that never seem to mend, empty places within us that always seem to ache, things like buds within us that never seem to flower. God help us to accept ourselves; lead us to do those good and true things that are not compromised by anything within us. Mend us, we pray; fill us and make us bloom. And in all things, may we give you the glory, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen

or

Merciful God, you have given us every conceivable sign of life at its best: the earth's beauty and bounty through seasons and centuries, human love and friendship, the calling to work of compassion and justice, the grace of good humor and reflective thought. Still, too often, we walk in the dim light of self, blind to your truth when it does not conform to our plans. In fear and anxiety for our own power, we lose sight of yours, and fail to recognize that holy vision by which you would have us live and work in this world. Hear us, O God, forgive us, we pray, and help us to trust in you.

THANKSGIVING

A prayer of thanksgiving gives voice to what you're grateful for in your life and in the world around you.

*God of all blessings, source of all life, giver of all grace,
We thank you for the gift of life:
for the breath that sustains life,
for the food of this earth that nurtures life,
for the love of family and friends
through whom we receive the gift and share its joy.*

*We thank you for the mystery of creation:
for the beauty that the eye can see,
for the joy that the ear may hear,
for the unknown that we cannot behold filling the universe with wonder,
for the expanse of space that draws us beyond the definitions of our selves.*

*We thank you for setting us in communities:
for families who nurture our becoming,
for friends who love us by choice,
for companions at work, who share our burdens and daily tasks,
for strangers who welcome us into their midst,
for people from other lands who call us to grow in understanding,
for children who lighten our moments with delight.*

*We thank you for this day:
for life and one more day to love,
for opportunity and one more day to work for justice and peace,
for neighbors and one more person to love and by whom be loved,
for your grace and one more experience of your presence,
for your promise:
to be with us, to be our God.*

*For these, and all blessings,
we give you thanks, eternal, loving God,
through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

SUPPLICATION

A supplication is literally a request or petition. A prayer of supplication, offered for ourselves and for others, is a prayer of trust, asking God to respond to our needs and desires.

Merciful God, hear us as we pray for others, and for ourselves. Where there is injustice, raise up among us voices of hope and hands extended in love. Where there is hunger, empower us in the nourishment of bodies and souls. Where there is loneliness, grant us your grace to show a welcoming smile and the warmth of genuine openness. Where there is sickness, make us bold as physicians and lovers, priests and prophets of the health and wholeness that is your will. Especially this day we pray for _____ (a timely concern of the community)_____.

Receive also our personal joys and concerns, we pray, petitions and thanksgivings that move in our quiet depths, and those that rise to be spoken and shared.... (All are invited to share.)

We pray in trust of your love as we know it in the gift and giving of Jesus Christ. Amen.