

Five Types of Prayer

1. Blessing or Adoration (Worship)

We show our faith in God

In prayers of adoration or worship, we exalt the greatness of God, and we acknowledge our dependence on Him in all things. The Mass and the other liturgies of the Church are full of prayers of adoration or worship, such as the Gloria (the Glory to God). Among private prayers, the Act of Faith is a prayer of adoration. In extolling the greatness of God, we also acknowledge our own humility; a good example of such a prayer is Cardinal Merry del Val's Litany of Humility.

2. Petition

We ask God for what we want or forgiveness

Outside of the Mass, prayers of petition are the type of prayer with which we are most familiar. In them, we ask God for things we need—primarily spiritual needs, but physical ones as well. Our prayers of petition should always include a statement of our willingness to accept God's Will, whether He directly answers our prayer or not. The Our Father is a good example of a prayer of petition, and the line "Thy will be done" shows that, in the end, we acknowledge that God's plans for us are more important than what we desire.

Prayers of expiation, in which we express sorrow for our sins, are one form of prayers of petition—in fact, the first form because before we ask for anything, we should acknowledge our sinfulness and ask God for His forgiveness and mercy. The Confiteor or Penitential Rite at the beginning of Mass, and the Agnus Dei (or Lamb of God) before Communion, are prayers of expiation, as is the Act of Contrition.

3. Intercession

We ask God on behalf of others

Prayers of intercession are another form of prayers of petition, but they are important enough to be considered their own type of prayer. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church notes (Para. 2634), "Intercession is a prayer of petition which leads us to pray as Jesus did." In a prayer of intercession, we're not concerned with our needs but with the needs of others. Just as we ask the saints to intercede for us, we, in turn, intercede through our prayers for our fellow Christians, asking God to shower His mercy on them by answering their requests. A Prayer of Parents for Their Children and these Weekly Prayers for the Faithful Departed are good examples of prayers of intercession for the needs of others.

4. Thanksgiving

We thank God for everything

Perhaps the most neglected type of prayer is prayer of thanksgiving. While Grace Before Meals is a good example of a prayer of thanksgiving, we should get into the habit of thanking God throughout the day for the good things that happen to us and to others. Adding the Grace After Meals to our regular prayers is a good way to start.

5. Praise

We state our love for God

Prayers of praise acknowledge God for what He is. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Para. 2639) notes, praise "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." The Psalms are perhaps the best-known example of prayers of praise. Prayers of love or charity are another form of prayers of praise—expressions of our love for God, the source and object of all love. The Act of Charity, a common morning prayer, is good example of a prayer of praise.

