

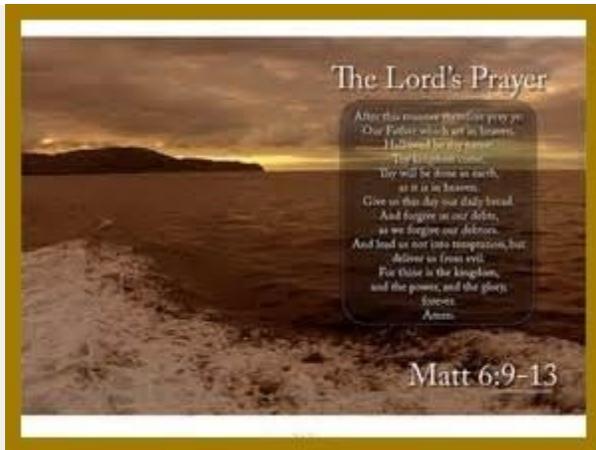
The Roman Catholic Church also fosters devotional practices, both public and private, including Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament (a ceremony of homage to Christ in the Eucharist), the Rosary, novenas (nine days of prayer for some special intention), pilgrimages to shrines, and veneration of saints' relics or statues. The devotional importance attached to the Saints (especially the Virgin Mary) distinguishes Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy from the churches of the Reformation. In the last two centuries the Roman Catholic Church has taught as official doctrine that Mary from her conception was kept free of original sin (the Immaculate Conception) and that at the completion of her life was taken up body and soul into heaven (the Assumption). Catholics are also encouraged to practice private prayer through meditation, contemplation, or spiritual reading. A prayer life is essential to the Christian life — it is "a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God." ([Catechism, 2558](#))

#### **Basic Roman Catholic Prayers**

Traditional, written prayers will form the backbone of your prayer life. These basic Catholic prayers are the five most fundamental ones:

#### **The Sign of the Cross**

The simplest, most basic Catholic prayer. Catholics begin their day and many activities with the sign of the cross. It is a sacramental, a practice that helps us open ourselves to receiving God's grace more effectively. While saying this prayer, bless yourself by making the sign of the cross with one hand: touch your fingers to your forehead at the word "Father", to your heart at the word "Son," to your left shoulder at "Holy", and right shoulder at "Spirit".



### The Our Father

Also called The Lord's Prayer, since Jesus taught it to his disciples (see [Matthew 6:9-13](#)). The Our Father is the foundation of Christian prayer ([Catechism, 2759](#)). Most people learn it before all other basic Catholic prayers.

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. Amen.

### The Hail Mary

The Hail Mary is well-loved and beautiful basic Catholic prayer. It combines two lines from Scripture ([Lk 1:28](#) and [Lk 1:42](#)) with a humble request for Mary to pray for us.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.  
Blessed art thou among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners,  
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

### The Glory Be

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.

## **The Apostles Creed**

Considered to be a faithful summary of the Apostles' teaching. It is the ancient baptismal symbol of the Church at Rome.

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.



## **Catholic Prayers Throughout the Day**

Make these prayers the foundation of a strong prayer life!

### **Morning Prayer**

Morning prayer is a quick way to offer yourself and your whole day to God. It is a choice to begin anew each day, and to clearly choose God at the very start of the day. Some people make a simple and informal prayer as soon as they wake up: "I will serve you, Lord"; or "Lord, help me to love and serve you today"; or even just "serviam" (Latin for "I will serve"). These are all great parts of daily Catholic prayer. This traditional Catholic morning prayer is also very common:

O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary,  
I offer you my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day  
for all the intentions of your Sacred Heart,  
in union with the holy sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world,  
in thanksgiving for your favors, in reparation for my sins,  
for the intentions of all my relatives and friends,  
and in particular for the intentions of the Holy Father. Amen.

#### **Grace Before Meals**

Most Christians say grace before meals to give thanks to the Lord. Grace is an important part of daily Catholic prayer. This is often the first way that children are exposed to a life of prayer.

Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts,  
which we are about to receive from thy bounty,  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### **Prayer Before a Day's Work**

A brief minute just before starting work is another important opportunity for prayer. This daily Catholic prayer is from an ancient form of the Litany of the Saints:

Direct, we beg you, O Lord, our actions by your holy inspirations,  
and grant that we may carry them out with your gracious assistance,  
that every prayer and work of ours may begin always with you,  
and through you be happily ended. Amen.

#### **Prayer to Keep the Presence of God**

This is an alternate prayer to use at the beginning of work, or at the beginning of the day. This traditional daily Catholic prayer helps us acknowledge the presence of God, ask for his help and protection, and dedicate the day's work to him.

Lord, God Almighty, you have brought us safely to the beginning of this day.  
Defend us today by your mighty power, so that we may not fall into any sin,  
and that all our words may so proceed and all our thoughts and actions  
be so directed as to be always just in your sight. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## The Angelus

The Angelus is a traditional daily Catholic prayer that's often said at 12 noon. This prayer is a beautiful meditation on the Incarnation, and on Mary's role in it. Saying the Angelus at noon is a wonderful way to mark noontime, the center of each day. It helps us return our focus to the eternal. The Angelus steep us in the spirituality of Mary, with its complete and humble service to the Lord. This is often said as a group prayer, with the leader speaking the V parts and the group responding with the R lines. If you're saying it alone, just read both parts together.

V — The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.

R — And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary... (Say The Hail Mary here.)

V — Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

R — Be it done unto me according to thy word.

Hail Mary...

V — And the Word was made Flesh.

R — And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary...

V — Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God.

R — That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

LET US PRAY: Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts, that we to whom the incarnation of Christ, your Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by his passion and cross be brought to the glory of his resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Daily Examination at Night

In developing a habit of daily Catholic prayer, one very important time is just before going to bed. This is an opportunity to spend a few brief minutes reviewing the day with the Lord. We call this the "daily examination of conscience." This simple exercise helps you see the events of your day from the perspective of a child of God. This really amounts to only three quick "words" to say in the examination itself. It's generally recommended to take only about 2 or 3 minutes for the examination part itself, or up to 1 minute for each "word." A short time like this can help you keep focused when you're tired.

1. Place yourself in the presence of God, and ask for his help in examining your day.
2. Examine your day (the three "words"):
3. "Thank you": Thank the Lord for the blessings of the day. "I'm sorry": Acknowledge your faults specifically and directly. "Please help me more": Ask the Lord for help for tomorrow. Make specific resolutions.
4. Make an act of contrition (see below).
5. End with an Our Father and a Hail Mary.

#### Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you, and I detest all my sins,  
because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell;  
but most of all because they offend you, my God,  
who are all good and deserving of all my love.  
I firmly resolve, with the help of your grace, to confess my sins,  
to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.



#### Catholic Prayers About Mary

The Marian prayers are about or to the Blessed Mother:

#### The Hail Mary

The Hail Mary is a well-loved and beautiful basic Catholic prayer. It's one of the essential prayers to Virgin Mary. It combines two lines from Scripture ([Lk 1:28 and Lk 1:42](#)) with a humble request for Mary to pray for us.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women,

and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners,

now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

#### **The Angelus (see above)**

#### **Hail Holy Queen**

This prayer is a constant favorite among the prayers to Virgin Mary. It has long been a part of the the Liturgy of the Hours, the Church's official daily prayer.

Hail, holy Queen, mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope.

To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve.

To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.

Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us,

and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, that we may be

made worthy of the promises of Christ. Amen.

#### **The Magnificat**

Scripture contains this prayer of Mary's joy and wonder at her role in the mystery of the Incarnation. The Church recites this beautiful prayer daily at Evening Prayer (Vespers) in the Liturgy of the Hours.

My soul magnifies the Lord,

and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.

For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed;

for he who is mighty has done great things for me,

and holy is his name.

And his mercy is on those who fear him

from generation to generation.  
He has shown strength with his arm,  
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts,  
he has put down the mighty from their thrones,  
and exalted those of low degree;  
he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent empty away.  
He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
as he spoke to our fathers,  
to Abraham and to his posterity for ever.

[-\(Luke 1:46-55\)](#)

#### **The Memorare**

The Memorare is a beautiful prayer that expresses our confidence in the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is attributed to St. Bernard of Clairvaux.

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,  
that never was it known that any one who fled to thy protection,  
implored thy help or sought thy intercession, was left unaided.  
Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins my Mother;  
to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful;  
O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions,  
but in thy mercy hear and answer me, Amen.

#### **Loving Mother of the Redeemer**

This prayer is also included in the Liturgy of the Hours. It is attributed to Hermann the lame, a German monk who died in 1054.

Loving Mother of the Redeemer, Gate of heaven, star of the sea,  
Assist your people who have fallen yet strive to rise again.  
To the wonderment of nature you bore your Creator,  
yet remained a virgin after as before.  
You who received Gabriel's joyful greeting,  
have pity on us poor sinners.

#### **Miraculous Medal Prayer**

One of the newer prayers to Virgin Mary. The first part appears on the Miraculous Medal, created by St. Catherine Laboure in response to her apparition of the Virgin Mary in 1830. This spurred a widespread devotion to prayers to Virgin Mary. St. Maximilian Kolbe added the remaining part of this prayer. He was devoted to the Blessed Mother and her Miraculous Medal, and recommended frequent prayers to Virgin Mary for our own salvation and that of others. St. Maximilian Kolbe was imprisoned by the Nazis in the Auschwitz death camp. He was killed on August 14, 1941, after offering his life so that another prisoner might be spared.

O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee,  
and for those who do not have recourse to thee,  
especially the enemies of the Church and those recommended to thee. Amen.

#### Holy Rosary - Contemplating Christ with Mary

The Rosary is an incredible prayer. It's deceptively simple, and profoundly deep. A simple vocal prayer, and a school of silent contemplation. It's as small as a palm full of beads, and as wide as the Gospels. The term "The Rosary" refers to both a prayer and a physical object (set of Rosary beads). The main loop of a set of Rosary beads is divided into five decades. Each decade has a single bead, a space, and then ten beads. You follow the beads with your fingers as you say each prayer. When you start a decade, you name the mystery for it. (Don't worry — there's a list of them you'll follow!) Then you say an Our Father on the single bead, followed by ten Hail Marys, one for each of the ten beads. Then you end the decade with a Glory Be.

#### **Other Catholic Devotions**

These are some of the prayer forms which are not part of the official public liturgy of the Church but are part of the popular spiritual practices of Catholics. Many are officially sanctioned by the Church as profitable for spiritual growth but not necessary for salvation. Often devotions in the Church take the form of formalized prayers, sacred objects, or sacred images that arise from private revelations, or personal religious experiences of individuals such as apparitions of Mary or of Christ.

#### Stations of the Cross



As early as the 4th c., Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land would walk the route that Our Lord walked as He made His way to Golgotha for our salvation. When Muslims captured Jerusalem and it became too dangerous to make this pilgrimage, Christians replicated the sites back home in Europe, and there developed the "Stations of the Cross" devotion (also known as

"Way of the Cross," "Via Dolorosa," or "Via Crucis").

The devotion consists of meditating on 14 events which took place during Christ's Passion, from His being condemned to His burial. Franciscans popularized the devotion, which was originally made outside, often along roads to shrines or churches.

If you enter a Catholic Church and look along the walls, you should see 14 representations on the walls which depict 14 events of Christ's Passion that have been singled out for contemplation. It is at these blessed artistic representations (which can be painted, carved, engraved, of wood, metal, paint on canvas, etc., topped with a wooden Cross) that the Way of the Cross is made during public liturgy. The Way of the Cross can also be made privately, even at home, with or without "visual aids."

#### **The 14 Stations**

Jesus is Condemned to Die

Jesus is Made to Bear His Cross

Jesus Falls the First Time

Jesus Meets His Mother

Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross

Veronica Wipes Jesus' Face

Jesus Falls the Second Time

Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

Jesus Falls the Third Time

Jesus is Stripped

Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

Jesus Dies on the Cross

Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

#### **Novenas**

In the Catholic Church, a novena is a devotion consisting of a prayer repeated on nine successive days, asking to obtain special graces. These may consist of small prayer books, recitation of the Rosary, or small prayers through the day. There are four recognized categories of novena: those of mourning, preparation, prayer, and those which are indulgences, however, a given novena can belong to more than one of these categories.

The practice of saying novenas is derived from Scripture. After Jesus' Ascension into heaven, he told his disciples to pray together in the upper room and devote themselves to constant prayer([Acts 1:14](#)). Doctrine proposes that the Apostles, Blessed Virgin Mary, and other followers of Jesus prayed together for nine consecutive days, concluding in the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

Though the novena is primarily a devotion used by members of the Catholic Church, it is also practiced by some Orthodox, Anglican, and Lutheran

Christians.

### **Litanies**

A litany is a special prayer, usually intended to be recited communally, with a priest or other leader reciting the verses, while the faithful respond. Many litanies, however, can be recited privately as well.

### **Eucharistic Adoration**

Reverence is shown to the Blessed Sacrament (the Eucharist) by our posture and gesture in the course of the Mass, and in countless other ways outside of Mass -- the genuflection toward the Tabernacle (in which the Sacrament is kept) up on entering a Church, the kneeling in the presence of the exposed Sacrament, women covering their heads and men uncovering theirs when in the presence of the Sacrament, by crossing oneself when passing by a church to honor the Blessed Sacrament therein, etc. There are other ways of honoring Christ in the Eucharist, however, some formal, others not so formal.

**Visits to the Blessed Sacrament** - The simplest, least formal, and most common way that Catholics honor Christ in the Eucharist outside of the Mass is by making simple visits to a Church to be near the Blessed Sacrament. They may go to pray, to sit quietly, to meditate, pray the Rosary, read Scripture, etc.

**Holy Hour** - A form of [Eucharistic adoration](#) made in response to a revelation by Christ to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690), as a part of our devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Our Lord promised various things in return for receiving the Eucharist frequently (especially on the first Friday of each month for nine consecutive months, called "First Friday" Devotions), celebrating the Feast of the Sacred Heart, and spending one hour on Thursdays in Eucharistic adoration. Holy Hour at a particular church can be designated officially by one's priest, or it can be made privately if one's parish doesn't offer it as a public devotion. The focus of Holy Hour is Christ in the Garden of Gethsemani. In response to His question, "Couldst thou not watch one hour?" ([Mark 14:37](#)), we respond, "Yes, Lord, we are here with Thee."

**Forty Hours Devotion** - Introduced into Rome by St. Philip Neri in 1548, is the collective adoration of the exposed Eucharist for a period of 40 hours, in honor of the time Our Lord spent in the tomb (no single person is expected to spend 40 hours in adoration). This devotion is often practiced during the Sacred Triduum (the three days before Easter which consist of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday), but is also offered in times surrounding other great Feasts, or on regular schedules not related to the calendar at all. When visiting the Blessed Sacrament as the 40 Hours Devotion goes on, we are to recite a sequence of an Our Father, a Hail Mary, and a Glory be 5 times -- the last cycle being for the intentions of the Holy Father.

**Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament** - Benediction (Blessing) of the Blessed Sacrament can be a "stand-alone" service (most often done in the afternoon or evening), or as a part of other services, such as the Stations of the Cross, at major Feasts, during the Divine Office (especially after Vespers and Compline), etc.

The priest, wearing a cope, removes the Sacrament from the Tabernacle and places it in a monstrance (or "ostensorium") -- a usually elaborate sacred vessel used in the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament (see picture above). The monstrance is placed on the Altar, which is adorned by (at least) six blessed candles. He will bless the Sacrament with incense, and O Salutaris Hostia is sung. Then all kneel in silent adoration. Other hymns, canticles, or litanies may be sung or said, or some of the Divine Office may be prayed, but always the Tantum Ergo is sung, usually as the priest once again incenses the Sacrament before the actual Benediction (Note: "O Salutaris" and "Tantum Ergo," two of the greatest Eucharistic hymns, were both written by St. Thomas Aquinas).

After the Tantum Ergo, the priest, wearing a humeral veil over his shoulders and hands, will raise the Monstrance over the congregation, making with it the Sign of the Cross to bless us. After this Benediction, the "Divine Praises" prayer is prayed, and the Sacrament is returned to the Tabernacle.

**Processions** - A "procession" is a religious "parade" during which the priest and people walk a route in honor of our Lord, Our Lady (or other Saints), or for the purpose of beseeching God for some specific purpose. There are many types of regularly scheduled processions -- the procession with candles at Candlemas (February 2), the procession with palms on Palm Sunday (the Sunday before Easter), processions with statues of various Saints on their special feasts, etc., and of the Blessed Sacrament.

#### Fasting & Abstinence



Fasting and abstinence are closely related, but there are some differences in these spiritual practices. In general, fasting refers to restrictions on the quantity of the food we eat and on when we consume it, while abstinence refers to the avoidance of particular foods. The most common form of abstinence is the avoidance of meat, a spiritual practice that goes back to the earliest days of the Church.

Fasting, broadly speaking, is the voluntary avoidance of something that is good. When Catholics talk about fasting, we normally mean restricting the food that we eat. We can fast between meals, by not eating snacks, or we can engage in a complete fast by abstaining from all food. In the United States, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has declared that "the age of fasting is from the completion of the eighteenth year to the beginning of the sixtieth." The [USCCB](#) also allows the substitution of some other form of penance for abstinence on all of the Fridays of the year, except for those Fridays in Lent. Thus, the rules for fasting and abstinence in the United States are:

- Every person 14 years of age or older must abstain from meat (and items made with meat) on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and all the Fridays of Lent.
- Every person between the age of 18 and 60 must fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.
- Every person 14 years of age or older must abstain from meat (and items made with meat) on all other Fridays of the year, unless he or she substitutes some other form of penance for abstinence.

In the Latin Church, abstinence means refraining from eating the meat from mammals or fowl, and soup or gravy made from them. Fish is allowed, hence Fridays are known as "Fish Fridays." Traditionally, the laws of abstinence apply to all aged 7 and over, but the new [Code of Canon Law](#) applies it to all who have completed their 14th year