

A New Birth to a Living Hope

Praying through the COVID-19 Pandemic

Introduction

During difficult times we are moved to pray; but words don't always come easily. This simple, three-part format for prayer is offered for individuals, families, and online groups who wish to pray about—and through—the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time of distancing and separation, it is important to remember that we are always united as members of the Body of Christ, especially when we pray, and in communion with the saints, who continue to intercede on our behalf.

The prayer includes three familiar components: a scripture reading, a litany of intercession, and a concluding prayer. Several options are provided for each component, allowing the prayer to be tailored to individual/local needs or to be prayed periodically with variations. Options for each component are numbered for ease of reference, however there is no correlation between options having the same number. Any of the litanies or prayer texts may also be prayed separately—or in other contexts of prayer.

Here's how the prayer would unfold. If appropriate, you might wish to light a candle beforehand. Begin with the Invitation to Prayer, and then:

- 1. Read one of the four scripture readings provided, or another of your choosing.
"The Word of the Lord" may be added when praying with a group.*
- 2. Pray one of the three litanies: (Litany of Saints, Litany of Jesus the Healer, Litany of Petition)*
- 3. Choose one of the concluding prayers, or one of the prayers for a specific need.*

When praying with family members or an online group, you may wish to allow some time for sharing or expressions of concern before the concluding prayer.

Additional Information

*Scripture texts are taken from the **Lectionary**. The Litany of Saints is traditional, though adapted for current circumstances. The Litany of Jesus the Healer takes inspiration from other litanies. The remaining texts are newly written. This complete document, or any part of it, may be reproduced and/or shared with others. Please note that the layout is arranged for an 8 ½ x 11 page with .8" margins. Please include copyright information if distributing a text in another format.*

The mission of the Program for Music and Liturgy at Alverno College is to foster life-giving liturgy and music in parishes through a practical, pastoral approach focused on local needs and changing circumstances. This prayer resource is offered in that spirit.

Through the resurrection of Jesus, God in great mercy has given us "a new birth to a living hope." Let us continue to support one another during these difficult times—and pray in hope to our merciful God.

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A New Birth to a Living Hope

Order of Prayer

Invitation to Prayer

(in these or similar words...)

During times of crisis,
in moments of doubt,
during periods of isolation,
through seasons of uncertainty...
we place our trust in our loving God.

Let us open our hearts to God's word.
In communion with the saints,
in solidarity with the suffering,
and united with all people of good will,
we pray for all whose lives have been impacted
by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Scripture 1

Lamentations 3:7-26

My soul is deprived of peace,
I have forgotten what happiness is;
I tell myself my future is lost,
all that I hoped for from the Lord.
The thought of my homeless poverty
is wormwood and gall;
Remembering it over and over
leaves my soul downcast within me.
But I will call this to mind,
as my reason to have hope:
The favors of the Lord are not exhausted,
his mercies are not spent;
They are renewed each morning,
so great is his faithfulness.
My portion is the Lord, says my soul;
therefore, will I hope in him.
Good is the Lord to one who waits for him,
to the soul that seeks him;
It is good to hope in silence
for the saving help of the Lord.

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Scripture 2

1 Peter 1:3-8

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading,
kept in heaven for you,
who by the power of God are safeguarded through faith,
to a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the final time.

In this you rejoice, although now for a little while
you may have to suffer through various trials,
so that the genuineness of your faith,
more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire,
may prove to be for praise, glory, and honor
as the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Scripture 3

1 John 3: 14,16

Beloved:
We know that we have passed from death to life
because we love our brothers and sisters.
Whoever does *not* love remains in death.

The way we came to know love
was that he laid down his life for us;
so we ought to lay down *our* lives for our brothers and sisters.

If someone who has worldly means
sees a brother or sister in need and refuses to offer compassion,
how can the love of God remain in that person?

Children, let us love not in word or speech,
but in deed and truth.

Scripture 4

Acts 11:27-30

In those days some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch,
and one of them named Agabus stood up and predicted by the Spirit
that there would be a severe famine all over the world,
and it happened under Claudius.

So the disciples determined that, according to ability,
each should send relief to the brothers and sisters
who lived in Judea.

This they did.

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Litany 1 • Jesus, the Healer

God, Creator of all things,
Jesus, Redeemer of the world,
Spirit of life and love,
Holy Trinity, one God,

Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world,
Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world,
Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world,

Jesus, Word of God,
Jesus, Child of Mary,
Emmanuel, God-with-us,
Jesus, Sacrament of unconditional (or God's) love,
Jesus, Good Shepherd,
Jesus, Crucified and Risen,
Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life,

Jesus, Bread of Life,
Jesus, Cup of Salvation,
Jesus, Manna for exiles,
Jesus, Fount of Living Water,
Jesus, Bread of Solidarity,
Jesus, Food for the Hungry,
Jesus, Water for the Thirsty,
Jesus, Nourishment for the journey,
Jesus, Foretaste of the Heavenly Banquet,

Jesus, Compassionate Healer,
Jesus, Companion of the Sick,
Jesus, Source of Transformation,
Jesus, Hospitality for the stranger,
Jesus, Advocate for the invisible,
Jesus, Strength for the weary,
Jesus, Rest for the exhausted,
Jesus, Comfort for the Dying,

Jesus, Courage for the fearful,
Jesus, Hope for the despairing,
Jesus, Shelter in the time of storm,
Jesus, Oasis in the desert,
Jesus, Light in our darkness,
Jesus, Lamp for our feet,
Jesus, River of divine mercy,
Jesus, Companion through life's journey,

Christ Jesus, Alpha and Omega:
Christ Jesus, reigning forever:
Christ Jesus, Head of the Body, the Church:
Christ Jesus, present with us always:

have mercy on us.
have mercy on us.
have mercy on us.
have mercy on us,

hear us, O Lord.
be near us, O Lord.
stay with us, O Lord.

have mercy on us

sustain us, O Lord.

heal us, O Lord.

save us, O Lord.

We adore you, O Christ.
We praise you, O Christ.
We serve you, O Christ.
We love you, O Christ.

Litany 2 • Litany of Saints

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us.
Our Lady of Guadalupe,
Our Lady of Lourdes,
Our Lady of Sorrows,
Our Lady of Perpetual Help,

Holy Angels of God, pray for us.
St. Michael,
St. Raphael,
St. Joseph,
St. Luke,
St. Agatha of Sicily,
St. Camillus de Lellis,
St. Frances Xavier Cabrini,
St. Martin de Porres,
St. Brigid,
St. Joan of Arc,

*emergency medical personnel
travelers, sick people
the church, a happy death
physicians
nurses
hospital workers, sick people
hospital administrators
public health service
healers
military*

St. Edmund, pray for us.
St. Lucy of Syracuse,
St. Natalia,
St. Gregory the Great,
St. Bernardine of Siena,

*pandemics
epidemics
plagues, epidemics
plagues
respiratory systems*

St. Angela Merici, pray for us.
St. Peregrine,
St. Rita of Cascia,
St. Jude Thaddeus,
St. Elizabeth of Hungary,
St. Vincent de Paul,
St. Teresa of Calcutta,

*sick people, people with disabilities
sick people, cancer patients
difficult causes or cases
desperate situations
care for people in need
care for people in need
care for the sick and the poor*

St. Francis of Assisi, pray for us.
St. Rose of Lima,
St. Anthony of Padua,
St. Charles Lwanga & Companions,
St. Gemma Galgani,
St. John Baptiste de LaSalle,
St. Thomas Aquinas,
St. Catherine of Alexandria,
St. Juan Diego,
St. Cajetan,
St. Jane de Chantal,

*families
families in distress
elderly
youth
students
teachers
colleges and universities
scholars and students
indigenous peoples
unemployed people
forgotten people*

Additional saints may be added here.

All holy men and women, pray for us.

Christ, hear us. Lord Jesus, hear our prayer.

Litany 3 • Litany of Intercession

When prayed with a group, “Lord, hear our prayer” or another response may be added. Edit as needed.

For researchers working to develop effective treatments and vaccines,
For administrators, staff, and medical personnel working in hospitals,
For paramedics, ambulance drivers, and all first responders,
For active-duty service men and women, and for reservists called to serve,
For all who care for nursing home residents,
For psychologists, counselors, therapists, social workers, and hospital chaplains,

For people who are sick with COVID-19, especially those who are seriously ill,
For seniors and people with underlying conditions, who are especially vulnerable,
For people in countries lacking sufficient resources to respond effectively to the crisis,

For friends and loved ones who are unable to be together,
For people who are feeling isolated, alone, or anxious,
For troubled families who find extended time at home especially difficult,

For federal, state, and local leaders of government,
For the staff of FEMA & other emergency response agencies,
For public health officials at the national, state, and local levels,
For those charged with communicating official information to the public,
For journalists, writers, reporters, broadcasters, and online news services,

For families and individuals struggling with financial hardship,
For small businesses struggling to stay afloat,
For teachers and professors, school administrators, and staff members,
For elementary, high school, and college students at home,
For parents who are working and caring for children at home,
For employees who are finding new ways to work remotely,

For people who continue to work in essential positions,
For mail carriers, delivery services, package handlers, and drivers,
For staff who clean and sanitize buildings,
For retail employees who are working longer shifts and additional days,
For cooks, bakers, and servers who continue to provide meals,
For volunteers who serve in food pantries, in homeless shelters, and at blood drives,
For people with resources who are sharing them generously,
For poets, composers, artists, and musicians,
For pastors, parish coordinators, and parish staff members,
For all who are finding innovative ways to provide pastoral care,

For those who are not following social distancing or “stay at home” directives,
For those whose behavior puts themselves and others at risk,

For patience during fast-changing circumstances and long stays at home,
For the courage to focus on long-term goals rather than short-term inconveniences,
For greater faith during this time of uncertainty and doubt,
For greater hope as we face an unknown future,
For greater love as we share the burdens of the coronavirus pandemic,

Additional petitions may be added.

Concluding Prayer 1 • Grace Each Day

God of every age and place,
during this time when the patterns of everyday life
have been superseded by drastic measures and emergency directives,
give us the grace to live each day as fully as possible.
Give us patience when we grow restless.
Give us determination to focus not on short-term inconveniences,
but on everyday actions that contribute to the long-term good of all.
We pray through Christ our Lord.

Concluding Prayer 2 • Perseverance

O God,
our rock of safety and our shelter in stormy times,
listen to our cries and calm our fears.
Help us to persevere through these difficult days
with renewed faith,
with trust in your compassionate care,
and with the patience to hold on until a better day dawns.
We pray through Christ our Lord.

Concluding Prayer 3 • Courage

Loving and faithful God,
we turn to you in our doubt, our disbelief, our fear.
So much is unknown to us. The future is uncertain.
We feel helpless, alone, worried.
Fill us with the courage to face whatever happens
and the common sense to follow public health directives
until the threat of the disease is diminished,
friends and loved ones are able to reunite,
people get back to work,
and communities of faith gather once again to sing your praise.
We pray through Christ our Lord.

Concluding Prayer 4 • The Prayers of All

Eternal God,
You alone created us.
You alone sustain us.
You alone give us life and breath each day.
Hear our prayers and those of the saints,
as well as the cries of people everywhere who are suffering and afraid.
Give us the heart to see beyond our own desires and needs,
and to do whatever we can to foster the good of all.
We pray through Christ our Lord.

Concluding Prayer 5 • Strength in Time of Storm

God our Sturdy Vine,
in you we find nourishment and life.
Apart from you, we cannot grow and flourish.

When strong winds toss us about
and threaten to break our spirits,
help us to remain flexible even as we cling to you.

Relying on your strength, may we weather every storm
and, even when battered a bit,
continue to bear fruit that will last.

We pray through Christ our Lord.

Prayers for Specific Needs

For Healthcare Professionals

Giver of so many gifts,
we thank you for the women and men
who dedicate their lives to providing healthcare in our communities,
(and in a special way we thank you for...).

As they battle a virus that knows no distinctions,
help them to care for the sick in safety, and with determination and compassion.

God, give them strength.
God, renew their spirits.
God, protect them from harm.

We pray through Christ our Lord.

For Teachers and Students

Fount of truth and wisdom,
Jesus mentored his followers
not only through dynamic preaching and creative teaching,
but by the witness of his life and the example of his actions.

Watch over the dedicated teachers and students
who, for a time, must leave behind in-person classes and, instead, connect online.

Inspire all of us to find new ways to learn during this difficult time:

by sharing stories,
by practicing a new skill or taking on a project,
by reflecting on the dedication of doctors, nurses, and first responders,
by taking to heart the example of volunteers and workers who go the extra mile.

Help us to keep learning and growing as faithful and active disciples.
We pray through Christ our Lord.

For Workers and People Who Are Unemployed

God of Creation,
the work of human beings
is a participation in your continuing work of creation.

Watch over those who are working under difficult or dangerous conditions (*especially...*).

Help them stay safe.

Extend your support and care to those who have lost—or will lose—a job (*especially...*).

Help them and their families to persevere.

Inspire people who are discovering innovative ways to address pressing needs.

Help all who turn new ideas into practical realities (*especially...*).

Help all of us to contribute to the common good to the best of our ability,
through Christ our Lord.

For Medical Researchers

God of Compassion,
we give thanks for the breakthroughs of modern medicine,
and especially for scientists who develop new medications and treatments
and researchers who develop and test vaccines.

Give them the energy and stamina to do the painstaking research and testing
required to demonstrate effectiveness and safety.

May efforts to slow the spread of the virus buy precious time
until reliable treatments and an effective vaccine
change the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We pray through Christ our Lord.

For/with Seniors and People at Risk

God of Mercy,
You never abandon your people.
Your unconditional love is unfailing.

Uphold our sisters and brothers
whose underlying conditions put them at risk for COVID-19,
including the seniors in our families, communities, and nursing homes,
(*and especially...*).

During this time when physical separation is necessary,
reassure them, and all of us,
that bonds of faith, family, and friendship
stretch beyond any distance or length of time.

We pray through Christ our Lord.

For Someone Who Is Sick

God of Healing and Wholeness,
we cry out to you in our pain and fear.
(Name...), whom we love (*work with, know*), is sick.

We are anxious, as so much is uncertain.
We feel helpless, as we must keep our distance.
Yet we come to you in hope, for we know that you are with us.

Fill N. with peace during this perilous time.
Ease her/his anxiety and suffering. Help his/her body to heal.
Give strength and protection to those who are providing care.
In spite of our fear, help us all to continue on, one day at a time.
We pray for healing, through Christ our Lord.

For Those Who Have Died

Eternal God,
We come before you in sorrow and disbelief
to pray for the thousands of people
who have died during this pandemic.
(*and especially for...*)

While most of them are unknown to us,
you know the name of every person.
Enfold them in your loving embrace
and welcome them to the banquet of heaven.

Be with their family members and friends.
Comfort and support them through this time of loss and separation.
We pray through Christ, our resurrection and our life,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.