

Catholic Devotional Prayers

In preparing to write this guide, I am overwhelmed by the number of items I could add to this list. The list of devotions below is not exhaustive but is meant to encompass the most common forms of devotional prayers that a person would find. These prayers are part of the faith called “popular piety.” This means that devout people wanted to become closer to God and found ways to incorporate that desire for prayer and closeness to God in repetitive prayers. The Church doesn’t require that people have to pray these prayers nor use them as a standard form of prayer. Instead they are highly encouraged as theologically sound and good forms of prayer.

Standard Prayers: each of the standard prayers are derived from Scripture or the life of faith. These are the most common prayers said and are usually part of any devotional prayer.

The Sign of the Cross: The Sign of the Cross begins the Mass and most Catholic Prayers. This prayer recognizes and recalls our baptism as entry into the life of prayer. By starting with the prayer, we recognize that God prays in and through us and we are uniting our prayers with him. The movement associated with this prayer is to touch the forehead, the middle of the chest, and the two shoulders while saying “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

The Our Father: This prayer is shared by all Christians as the common prayer of Christianity. Jesus gave us only one prayer, and the Gospel of Matthew and Luke made a point to include this prayer. Although the Christian world is divided regarding the ending of this prayer, we all pray the main part of it that is included in the Gospel’s themselves.

The Hail Mary: out of all the prayers on this list, this one is the most controversial. Why? Many people consider this prayer a prayer *to* Mary, which is wrong. The first half of the prayer is derived the words from which the Archangel Gabriel greeted Mary. Then it combines with the words of Elizabeth’s greeting in Luke’s Gospel. The end of the prayer is a prayer asking Mary to pray for us: “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.” We do not pray to Mary but ask her to pray for us. I will come back to this topic when we talk about Mary and the Saints.

Glory Be: the Glory Be is a prayer recognizing the dignity of the name of God and calling to mind the Trinity. The prayer is: “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.” Some people choose to bow at these words or make the sign of the Cross so as to show respect for God’s name.

Repetitive prayers: some people struggle with the idea of repeating the same phrase several times. Although our modern world prizes unique and personal forms of prayer, most ancient cultures prized repetitive prayers. The importance of repetitive prayers is that it frees the mind to reflect on the words, allows the user to keep part of the body busy to help focus the mind, and it’s a prayer that can be recited at any time without a lot of work. The two most common forms of repetitive prayers we have are the Rosary and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy.

Rosary: the origins of the Rosary are complicated. Some claim that Mary gave the Rosary to some seers around the 11 or 13th century. Evidence of prayer beads and the Rosary existed well

before the 11th century around the 8th century. The Rosary came to its popularity in the 12th century with the desire to pray the mysteries of the life of Christ, namely his infancy mysteries, the passion mysteries, and his resurrection mysteries. St. Pope John Paul II added the miraculous or luminous mysteries in the 20th century. The Rosary consists of series of prayers grouped into a decade, or series of 10. The Rosary starts with the sign of the Cross, the Apostles Creed, an Our Father, and three hail Marys. After this introduction, each decade consists of the Glory Be, the optional Fatima Prayer, the announcement of the mystery based on the four series above, the Our Father, and 10 Hail Mary's. This continues for each of the five mysteries and ends with the Hail, Holy Queen, and the Sign of the Cross.

Chaplets: The series of prayers called chaplets encompasses a whole host of different kinds of prayers. All chaplets have the same structure: the Sign of the Cross, a recitation of the Apostles Creed, an Our Father, and a Hail Mary before the Creed and sign of the Cross after. The content of the chaplet depends on who the chaplet is directed to or for. The chaplet of Divine Mercy, for instance, reflects God's mercy and invites the person to pray and be open to God's mercy. This form of prayer is meant to be a repetition of simple statements that helps the person reflect on the focus of the chaplet.

Other types of devotional prayers:

Litanies: litanies are series of lists of names that guide the person to reflect on a person or concept or ask for graces from a series of people. The most common litanies are the Litany of the Saints and the Litany of Mary. The Litany of the Saints starts with the Sign of the Cross, an Our Father, a Hail Mary, three Glory Bes, and then a list of saints with the common response "pray for us." For instance, St John, pray for us; St. Joseph, pray for us... The Litany of Mary is a little different in that instead of naming saints, it uses the titles of Mary as a way to reflect on the way God has worked in her life. Other forms of litanies have developed under similar concepts: the Litany of Humility focusing on growing in humility, the Litany of Trust with the same idea, the Litany of the Sacred Heart focusing on Jesus.

Devotional prayers: although this category of prayers encompasses almost anything. Way too many times people say something like "pray to (insert Saint's name)." This is wrong. These devotional prayers remind us that the saints can pray for us, since they are in Heaven, and ask God to send specific graces to us. We are invoking their help through these prayers not praying to them. These devotional prayers can take many and varied forms.

Memorare: this prayer is specific to the powerful intercession of Mary. The prayer states that Mary always aids those who seek her help or ask for her intercession. As the mother of Christians, her special devotion to her children is best recognized in this prayer. Although commonly prayed for many centuries, it has become rather uncommon today.

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly to 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.

Stations of the Cross: The core focus of the stations of the Cross is to walk through Jesus' passion with him reflecting on the different moments of that event. The practice became common in the middle ages and grew from there. The Stations of the Cross include 14 (15) stations or events of Jesus' Passion. At each station the people read or reflect on that moment of Jesus' life usually with either a part recited in common or a common hymn. The process of moving from one station to another can be accompanied by a cross and/or candles. Although it sounds fairly standard, the prayers associated with the stations have many different and variety forms. Some focus on the pain he felt, some focus on the reactions of the crowd or Mary, some focus on social justice. The standard form that people pray consist of 14 stations ending with the burial of Jesus. During the Season of Easter (or not Lent) some people add a 15th station which is Jesus' resurrection.

Morning and Evening Offerings: these forms of prayer are largely forgotten. The basic idea is that at the beginning and end of each day we offer our day to God. Some people have standardized these prayers or written easy usable forms for people. Nevertheless the core value is to take time at the beginning and end of each day to offer our day to God.

Examine or Examination of Conscience: Another practice that was incredibly common throughout parts of the church and has dwindled in popularity. The examination of conscience is a form of reflecting on one's life noticing moment of sin and temptation but also moments of grace. The earliest monks and hermits commonly practiced this technique of recognizing the movement of the Spirit in one's life but also the moments during which one goes against God's will. Monks and nuns of the middle ages standardized this practice as the final part of their day. St. Ignatius of Loyola developed this ancient practice into a practice called the Examine. Although the examine is nearly identical in focus to the Examination of Conscience, St. Ignatius added to it and streamlined it for the use of anyone.

Novenas: Novenas are prayers that are said over nine consecutive days (some are longer) for a devotion, a cause, or a purpose. The first, and most notable, novena was the nine days between Ascension and Pentecost to pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Over the centuries, more novenas were added that prayer for specific gifts or purposes including, the Novena to the Sacred Heart, the Surrender Novena, and many more. Most novenas have a different prayer for each day followed by a common prayer that is prayed each day for the nine days. Some novenas are much longer including up to 30 days.

Relics: relics have three classes and are used as devotional to remember the lives of the saints and the fact they actually existed. First class relics are pieces from the saint either their bones, blood, hair, or their bodies. Second class relics are items the saint used during their lifetime like clothes, shoes, books. Third class relics are any object of devotion that touched a first class relic. Relics have a defined system for their authenticity. Whenever someone takes a piece of a saint, they create documentation on who took the item and from where. This paperwork always accompanies authentic relics. The Church teaches that a Catholic does not need to believe in relics or use them. They are objects of devotion.

Examples of Prayers:

Hail Mary

Hail, Mary, full of grace,
 the Lord is with thee.
 Blessed art thou amongst 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.

Saint Devotional Prayer to Saint Jude

St. Jude, you witnessed the healing power of our Lord Jesus. You saw His compassion for the sick and dying. You yourself touched the sick, shared the sorrows of the mournful, and encouraged the despairing. You received this authority and healing power to work wonders, to cure the incurable, to make people whole. We ask you to intercede with our brother, Jesus, to send His saving grace to heal the sickness and suffering of _____, to uplift his/her despondent spirit, and to instill hope in his/her heart. Amen.

Litany of Mary

Lord, have mercy on us. *Christ, have mercy on us.*
 Lord, have mercy on us. *Christ hear us. Christ, graciously hear us.*

God the Father of heaven, *Have mercy on us.*
 God the Son, Redeemer of the world, *Have mercy on us.*
 God the Holy Spirit, *Have mercy on us.*
 Holy Trinity, one God, *Have mercy on us.*

Holy Mary, *Pray for us. (repeat after each line)*

Holy Mother of God,
 Holy Virgin of virgins,
 Mother of Christ,
 Mother of the Church,
 Mother of mercy,
 Mother of divine grace,
 Mother of hope,
 Mother most pure,
 Mother most chaste,
 Mother inviolate,
 Mother undefiled,
 Mother most amiable,
 Mother most admirable,

Mother of good counsel,
 Mother of our Creator,
 Mother of our Savior,
 Virgin most prudent,
 Virgin most venerable,
 Virgin most renowned,
 Virgin most powerful,
 Virgin most merciful,
 Virgin most faithful,
 Mirror of justice,
 Seat of wisdom,
 Cause of our joy,
 Spiritual vessel,
 Vessel of honor,
 Singular vessel of devotion,
 Mystical rose,
 Tower of David,
 Tower of ivory,
 House of gold,
 Ark of the covenant,
 Gate of heaven,
 Morning star,
 Health of the sick,
 Refuge of sinners,
 Comfort of Migrants,
 Comforter of the afflicted,
 Help of Christians,
 Queen of Angels,
 Queen of Patriarchs,
 Queen of Prophets,
 Queen of Apostles,
 Queen of Martyrs,
 Queen of Confessors,
 Queen of Virgins,
 Queen of the most holy Rosary,
 Queen of Families,
 Queen of Peace,
 Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, *Spare us, O Lord.*
 Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, *Graciously hear us, O Lord.*
 Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, *Have mercy on us.*

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, *That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*

Novena to the Holy Spirit

Holy Spirit! Lord of Light! From Your clear celestial height, Your pure beaming radiance give!

The Holy Spirit

Only one thing is important -- eternal salvation. Only one thing, therefore, is to be feared--sin! Sin is the result of ignorance, weakness, and indifference. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Light, of Strength, and of Love. With His sevenfold gifts He enlightens the mind, strengthens the will, and inflames the heart with love of God. To ensure our salvation we ought to invoke the Divine Spirit daily, for 'The Spirit helpeth our infirmity. We know not what we should pray for as we ought. But the Spirit Himself asketh for us.'

Prayer

Almighty and eternal God, Who hast vouchsafed to regenerate us by water and the Holy Spirit, and hast given us forgiveness of all sins, vouchsafe to send forth from heaven upon us your sevenfold Spirit, the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and Fortitude, the Spirit of Knowledge and Piety, and fill us with the Spirit of Holy Fear. Amen.

*Our Father and Hail Mary once
Glory be to the Father SEVEN TIMES*

ACT OF CONSECRATION TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

On my knees before the great multitude of heavenly witnesses, I offer myself, soul and body to You, Eternal Spirit of God. I adore the brightness of Your purity, the unerring keenness of Your justice, and the might of Your love. You are the Strength and Light of my soul. In You I live and move and am. I desire never to grieve You by unfaithfulness to grace and I pray with all my heart to be kept from the smallest sin against You. Mercifully guard my every thought and grant that I may always watch for Your light, and listen to Your voice, and follow Your gracious inspirations. I cling to You and give myself to You and ask You, by Your compassion to watch over me in my weakness. Holding the pierced Feet of Jesus and looking at His Five Wounds, and trusting in His Precious Blood and adoring His opened Side and stricken Heart, I implore You, Adorable Spirit, Helper of my infirmity, to keep me in Your grace that I may never sin against You. Give me grace, O Holy Spirit, Spirit of the Father and the Son to say to You always and everywhere, 'Speak Lord for Your servant heareth.' Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE SEVEN GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who, before ascending into heaven, did promise to send the Holy Spirit to finish Your work in the souls of Your Apostles and Disciples, deign to grant the same Holy Spirit to me that He may perfect in my soul, the work of Your grace and Your love. Grant me the Spirit of Wisdom that I may despise the perishable things of this world and aspire only after the things that are eternal, the Spirit of Understanding to enlighten my mind with the light of Your divine truth, the Spirit of Counsel that I may ever choose the surest way of pleasing God and gaining heaven, the Spirit of Fortitude that I may bear my cross with You and that I may overcome with courage all the obstacles that oppose my salvation, the Spirit of Knowledge that I may know God and know myself and grow perfect in the science of the Saints, the Spirit of Piety that I may find the service of God sweet and amiable, and the Spirit of Fear that I may be filled with a loving reverence towards God and may dread in any way to displease Him. Mark me, dear Lord, with the sign of Your true disciples and animate me in all things with Your Spirit. Amen.