



Our Father

AN INVITATION TO THE HEART OF GOD

COLLECTED PRAYERS

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Introduction	5
Christ With Me—St. Patrick	3
You Over Me—St. Augustine	8
Our Heart is Restless—St. Augustine	10
Instrument of Your Peace—St. Francis of Assisi	12
Prayer for Purity—Book of Common Prayer	14
Empty Vessel—Martin Luther	16
A Well-Spent Day—Susanna Wesley	18
Covenant Prayer—John Wesley	20
Prayer for Mission—Book of Common Prayer	22
The Serenity Prayer	24
St. Patrick’s Breastplate (longer form of the “Christ With Me” prayer)	26
St. Augustine’s Confessions (Lib 1,1-2,2.5,5: CSEL 33, 1-5)	30

Introduction

We learn to pray in many ways. We learn to pray from scripture—especially the Psalms. We learn to pray in worship—most of the songs we sing are prayers. There is an ancient phrase about worship that says, “the law of worship is the law of belief” (translated from the Latin *lex orandi, lex credendi*). It affirms what many of us know from experience. What we believe is formed by what we’ve experienced in worship and how God has revealed himself in worship. But, if we’re going to be precise, we should adjust the translation a bit. *Orandi* doesn’t mean worship, it means prayer. What we believe is formed by what we’ve experienced and how God has revealed himself in prayer. Quite simply, worship is inseparable from prayer, just as prayer is inseparable from worship.

This Sunday, Pastor John preached the first sermon from the new series, *Our Father: An Invitation to the Heart of God*. As we’ve prayerfully planned for this series, we have also shared prayers that have helped each of us learn how to pray. Several of the prayers included here are the very ones that have shaped the way I pray. Some of them (“Prayer for Mission” and the long form of St. Patrick’s “Christ in Me”) are prayers I pray daily. Many of the prayers in this book have a long history. These are prayers that have stood the test of time. The better you get to know them, the richer they become.

As you read through these prayers, I encourage you to remind yourself of the inseparability of worship and prayer. Some of these prayers use language that may feel archaic or formal. Choose one or two and spend some time with them so you can pray them from your heart. My prayer is that you won’t make a quick decision based on what you like and don’t like. Instead, ask the Holy Spirit to lead you as you pray, and open your heart and mind to the opportunity to learn to pray alongside St. Patrick, St. Augustine, Martin Luther, Susanna Wesley, and John Wesley.

David Bales
Worship Pastor
First Methodist Carrollton

Christ with Me

ST. PATRICK

I arise today through
God's strength to pilot me,
God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to guard me,
God's shield to protect me,
God's host to save me
from snares of devils,
from temptation of vices,
from everyone who shall wish me ill,
both far and near.

Christ to shield me today
against poison, against burning,
against drowning, against wounding,
so that there may come to me an abundance of reward.

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me.
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me.
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down,
Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.

Many saints throughout history have prayed eloquent prayers and written long volumes on prayer that have long since been forgotten. Occasionally, however, a prayer is written that is not only succinct and graspable, but also challenging, emotive and above all calling us into deeper relationship with God. St. Patrick's famous prayer of "Christ with Me" sums up the desire of a follower of Jesus—to know Jesus, be known by Jesus and be completely and utterly surrounded by His love. To know that love and to feel that peace is something St. Patrick longed for, and his prayer has reverberated throughout generations who all desperately want to know the same thing.

(Adapted from James Dwyer, "5 Prayers That Changed the World" at relevantmagazine.com. A longer version of this prayer—commonly called St. Patrick's Breastplate—is included on page 17.)



*We will not live bolder
than we pray.*

BETH MOORE

You Over Me

ST. AUGUSTINE

Lord Jesus, let me know myself and know You,
and desire nothing save only You.
Let me hate myself and love You.
Let me do everything for the sake of You.
Let me humble myself and exalt You.
Let me think of nothing except You.
Let me die to myself and live in You.
Let me accept whatever happens as from You.
Let me banish self and follow You,
and ever desire to follow You.
Let me fly from myself and take refuge in You,
That I may deserve to be defended by You.
Let me fear for myself.
Let me fear You,
and let me be among those who are chosen by You.
Let me distrust myself and put my trust in You.
Let me be willing to obey for the sake of You.
Let me cling to nothing save only to You,
And let me be poor because of You.
Look upon me, that I may love You.
Call me that I may see You,
and for ever enjoy You. Amen.



Prayer does not equip us
for greater works -
prayer is the greater work.

Oswald Chambers

Our Heart is Restless

ST. AUGUSTINE

Great are You, O Lord, and exceedingly worthy of praise; Your power is immense, and Your wisdom beyond reckoning. And so we, who are a due part of Your creation, long to praise You – we also carry our mortality about with us, carry the evidence of our sin and with it the proof that You thwart the proud. You arouse us so that praising You may bring us joy, because You have made us and drawn us to Yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in You.

...Through Your own merciful dealings with me, O Lord my God, tell me what You are to me. Say to my soul, I am Your salvation. Say it so that I can hear it. My heart is listening, Lord; open the ears of my heart and say to my soul, I am your salvation. Let me run towards this voice and seize hold of You. Do not hide Your face from me: let me die so that I may see it, for not to see it would be death to me indeed.

St. Augustine, born in Roman North Africa to a devout Christian mother and a pagan father, was a notoriously rebellious teenager who cohabitated with a girlfriend, joined an exotic Eastern cult, and ran away from his mother. Augustine became a brilliant and renowned teacher of public speaking and was appointed by the emperor to teach in Milan, Italy, at that time the administrative capital of the Western Roman Empire. While there, he happened to hear the preaching of the bishop of Milan, Ambrose, who baptized him in 386. St. Augustine ultimately renounced his secular career, put away his mistress, and became first a monk, then a priest, then the bishop of Hippo, a small town on the North African Coast. The voluminous writings of this Early Church Father span every conceivable topic in theology, morality, philosophy, and spirituality.

(Adapted from "Our Heart Is Restless Until It Rests in You - Augustine" online at CrossroadsInitiative.com. A longer excerpt of this prayer is included on page 19.)



Look to it that you do not
try to do all of it,
do not try to do too much,
lest your spirit grow weary.

Besides, a good prayer
mustn't be too long.

Do not draw it out.

Prayer ought to be
frequent and fervent.

Martin Luther

Instrument of Your Peace

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love,

Where there is injury, pardon

Where there is doubt, faith,

Where there is despair, hope,

Where there is darkness, light,

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much

seek to be consoled as to console,

not so much to be understood as to understand,

not so much to be loved, as to love;

for it is in giving that we receive,

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

it is in dying that we awake to eternal life.



A prayer with authority has
heaven as its starting point
and the earth as its destination.

...It is to stand in the position
that Christ has given us in
the heavens, to command
Satan with authority and
reject all his works, and
to proclaim with authority
that all God's commands
should be accomplished.

Watchman Nee

Prayer for Purity

BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

Almighty God, to You all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from You no secrets are hid:

Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love You,
and worthily magnify Your holy Name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

This prayer can be found as early as the 10th century. It was translated into English during the Reformation by Thomas Cranmer and was included in the Book of Common Prayer. Cranmer's prayer book deeply affected and shaped John Wesley's understanding of prayer. This particular prayer was especially meaningful to Wesley and holds a special place in Methodist worship to this day.



Before we pray
that God would fill us,
I believe we ought to pray
that He would empty us.

D. L. Moody

Empty Vessel

MARTIN LUTHER

Behold, Lord, an empty vessel that needs to be filled.

My Lord, fill it.

I am weak in the faith; strengthen me.

I am cold in love; warm me and make me fervent,
that my love may go out to my neighbor.

I do not have a strong and firm faith;

at times I doubt and am unable to trust you altogether.

O Lord, help me.

Strengthen my faith and trust in You.

In You I have sealed the treasure of all I have.

I am poor; You are rich and came to be merciful to the poor.

I am a sinner; You are upright.

With me, there is an abundance of sin;

in You is the fullness of righteousness.

Therefore I will remain with You, of whom I can receive,

but to whom I may not give. Amen.

During his years as an Augustinian monk, Luther prayed often. Regular hours in prayer were required of monks, and Luther often spent entire Sundays without food or drink in order to catch up on the canonical hours he had neglected due to his other responsibilities. Prayer was mainly an obligation, a duty required in order to gain or maintain favor with God. For Luther, it was often a burden. When Luther left the monastery and developed an evangelical theology, his view of prayer changed. Prayer was no longer a compulsory good deed, required to satisfy the pope and maintain favor with God. Luther learned that we gain acceptance with God only by his grace and through faith, and it transformed the way he prayed and taught others to pray.

Thirteen years after Luther set the Reformation into motion with the publication of the Ninety-five Theses, his friend Veit Dietrich described

Luther's personal practice of prayer:

"I cannot sufficiently admire the singular steadfastness, the happy attitude, the faith and hope of this man in serious times. . . . There is not a day on which he does not devote at least three hours, the very ones most suitable for studying, to prayer. Once I was fortunate to overhear his prayer. Good God, what faith in his words! He speaks with the great reverence of one who speaks to his God, and with the trust and hope of one who speaks with his father and friend."

(Adapted from "Deliver Us From the Evil One" by Mark Rogers, available online at thegospelcoalition.org)



*He who labors as he prays,
lifts his heart
to God with his hands.*

Bernard of Clairvaux

A Well-Spent Day

SUSANNA WESLEY

I give You praise, oh God, for a well-spent day.
But I am yet unsatisfied, because I do not enjoy enough of You.
I would have my soul more closely united to You by faith and love.
I would love You above all things.
You, who has made me, knows my desires, my expectations.
My joys all center in You and it is You Yourself that I desire;
it is Your favor, Your acceptance,
the communications of Your grace that I earnestly wish for,
more than anything in the world.

Susanna's household organizational skills are the stuff of legend. She knew from personal experience that quality one-on-one time with a parent is hard to come by in a family with so many children, yet powerfully important. So she set a rotating schedule through which each of her children spent an hour with her alone before bedtime on a designated night each week.

(Adapted from "Susanna's Apron: Six Tips For Prayer As A Mom," online at RisenMotherhood.com)

How did she find time to pray?

Among the noise and activity of her many children, Susanna's trick was to pull her apron over her head - signaling to them and anyone else around that she was in prayer and not to be disturbed. In an age where moms consistently lament about not being able to go to the bathroom alone, Susanna found a way to have time alone by disappearing under a piece of fabric. Like a giant "Do Not Disturb" sign, her children knew momma was to be left alone as she brought her prayers and requests to God in the middle of the noise and bustle a full household brings.

Many have never heard of Susanna. Many have heard of her sons - John and Charles Wesley, two men who have impacted millions of lives for Jesus. These brothers owe much of their spiritual understanding and foundation to Susanna who taught them God's Word and prayed fervently and faithfully for her children.

(Adapted from "The Praying Example of Susanna Wesley" by Jackie Green and Lauren Green-McAfee, online at faithgateway.com)



Prayer is like breathing

MARTIN LUTHER

Covenant Prayer

JOHN WESLEY

I am no longer my own, but Yours.
Put me to what You will, rank me with whom You will;
put me to doing, put me to suffering;
let me be employed for You, or laid aside for You,
exalted for You, or brought low for You;
let me be full, let me be empty,
let me have all things, let me have nothing:
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things
to Your pleasure and disposal.
And now, glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
You are mine and I am yours. So be it.
And the covenant now made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

John Wesley adapted this prayer from the Puritan tradition that was so important to his parents, Samuel and Susanna. It informed his theology and preaching. He expected the people called "Methodists" to pray this prayer at the beginning of each new year as a way of remembering and renewing their baptismal covenant.

The prayer describes the life of a participant with Christ in his mission. It is a practical description of what Jesus was talking about when he said, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Baptism marks the beginning of life in Christ and His church, a people who "profess to pursue holiness of heart and life; universal love filling the heart and governing the life." The Covenant Prayer helps us remember what this Jesus-way of life looks like and what loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind and loving our neighbor as ourself requires of us.

(Adapted from "The Wesley Covenant Prayer and the Baptismal Covenant" by Steve Manskar, online at umcdiscipleship.org.)



The less I pray,
the harder it gets;
the more I pray,
the better it goes.

Martin Luther

Prayer for Mission

BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, You stretched out
Your arms of love on the
hard wood of the cross
that everyone might come
within the reach
of Your saving embrace:

So clothe us in Your Spirit that we,
reaching forth our hands in love,
may bring those who do not know You
to the knowledge and love of You;
for the honor of Your Name. Amen.

This prayer is a relatively recent addition to the Book of Common Prayer that was composed by Charles Henry Brent (1862-1929). During the Spanish-American War (1898), the United States acquired Guam and the Philippines. In 1902, the Episcopal Church appointed Charles Brent (at that time serving as priest in charge of a slum parish in Boston) as Missionary Bishop to the Philippines.

Brent could easily have confined himself to providing a kind of ecclesiastical "home away from home" for American officials and others stationed in the Islands. Equally, he could have devoted himself chiefly to efforts to convert the Roman Catholics, both of Spanish and of Filipino ancestry, whom the previous government had left behind. Instead, he directed his efforts toward the non-Christians of his diocese: the pagan Igorots of the mountains of Luzon, the Muslims of the southern islands, the Chinese settlements in Manila, all areas in which he made considerable inroads and established thriving Christian communities.

(Adapted from "Charles Henry Brent," online at satucket.com.)



Prayer will never
do our work for us;
what it will do is
to strengthen us
for work which
must be done.

William Barclay

The Serenity Prayer

REINHOLD NIEBUHR

God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time,
enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;
taking, as Jesus did,
this sinful world as it is,
not as I would have it;
trusting that You will make all things right
if I surrender to Your will;
so that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with You forever in the next. Amen.



*I'm going to hold
steady on You,
and You've got
to see me through.*

Harriet Tubman (as she led enslaved
persons to freedom on the Underground Railroad)

St. Patrick's Breastplate

(LONGER FORM OF THE "CHRIST WITH ME" PRAYER)

I arise today
through a mighty strength,
the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the Threeness,
Through confession of the Oneness
of the Creator of creation.

I arise today
through the strength of Christ's birth with His baptism,
through the strength of His crucifixion with His burial,
through the strength of His resurrection with His ascension,
through the strength of His coming
on the Day of judgment.

I arise today
through the strength of the love of cherubim,
in the obedience of angels,
in the service of archangels,
in the hope of resurrection to meet with reward,
in the prayers of patriarchs,
in the predictions of prophets,
in the preaching of apostles,
in the faith of confessors,
in the innocence of holy virgins,
in the deeds of righteous men.

I arise today, through
the strength of heaven,
the light of the sun,
the radiance of the moon,
the splendor of fire,
the flashing of lightning,

the rushing of wind,
the depth of the sea,
the stability of the earth,
the compactness of rock.

I arise today, through
God's strength to pilot me,
God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to guard me,
God's shield to protect me,
God's host to save me
from snares of devils,
from temptation of vices,
from everyone who shall wish me ill,
both far and near.

I summon today
All these powers between me and those evils,
against every cruel and merciless power
that may oppose my body and soul,
against incantations of false prophets,
against black laws of pagandom,
against false laws of heretics,
against craft of idolatry,
against spells of witches and smiths and wizards,
against every knowledge that corrupts man's body and soul;
Christ to shield me today
against poison, against burning,
against drowning, against wounding,
so that there may come to me an abundance of reward.

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me.
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me.
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down,
 Christ when I sit down,
 Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.

I arise today
 through a mighty strength,
 the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the Threeness,
Through confession of the Oneness
 of the Creator of creation.



When we are in the darkness,
we begin to feel like
we have always been there.

But it is not true.

David reminds himself
that God has been
faithful in the past;

God will be faithful again.

He urges himself to put
his hope in God because
the morning will come.

John Eldredge

EXCERPT FROM

St. Augustine's Confessions

(LIB 1,1-2,2.5,5: CSEL 33, 1-5)

Great are You, O Lord, and exceedingly worthy of praise; Your power is immense, and Your wisdom beyond reckoning. And so we, who are a due part of Your creation, long to praise You – we also carry our mortality about with us, carry the evidence of our sin and with it the proof that You thwart the proud. You arouse us so that praising You may bring us joy, because You have made us and drawn us to Yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in You.

Grant me to know and understand, Lord, which comes first. To call upon You or to praise You? To know You or to call upon You? Must we know You before we can call upon You? Anyone who invokes what is still unknown may be making a mistake. Or should You be invoked first, so that we may then come to know You? But how can people call upon someone in whom they do not yet believe? And how can they believe without a preacher?

But scripture tells us that those who seek the Lord will praise him, for as they seek they find him, and on finding him they will praise him. Let me seek You then, Lord, even while I am calling upon You, and call upon You even as I believe in You; for to us You have indeed been preached. My faith calls upon You, Lord, this faith which is Your gift to me, which You have breathed into me through the humanity of Your Son and the ministry of Your preacher.

How shall I call upon my God, my God and my Lord, when by the very act of calling upon him I would be calling him into myself? Is there any place within me into which my God might come? How should the God who made heaven and earth come into me? Is there any room in me for You, Lord, my God? Even heaven and earth, which You have

made and in which You have made me – can even they contain You? Since nothing that exists would exist without You, does it follow that whatever exists does in some way contain You?

But if this is so, how can I, who am one of these existing things, ask You to come into me, when I would not exist at all unless You were already in me? Not yet am I in hell, after all but even if I were, You would be there too; for if I descend into the underworld, You are there. No, my God, I would not exist, I would not be at all, if You were not in me. Or should I say, rather, that I should not exist if I were not in You, from whom are all things, through whom are all things, in whom are all things? Yes, Lord, that is the truth, that is indeed the truth. To what place can I invite You, then, since I am in You? Or where could You come from, in order to come into me? To what place outside heaven and earth could I travel, so that my God could come to me there, the God who said, I fill heaven and earth?

Who will grant it to me to find peace in You? Who will grant me this grace, that You should come into my heart and inebriate it, enabling me to forget the evils that beset me and embrace You, my only good? What are You to me? Have mercy on me, so that I may tell. What indeed am I to You, that You should command me to love You, and grow angry with me if I do not, and threaten me with enormous woes? Is not the failure to love You woe enough in itself?

Alas for me! Through Your own merciful dealings with me, O Lord my God, tell me what You are to me. Say to my soul, I am your salvation. Say it so that I can hear it. My heart is listening, Lord; open the ears of my heart and say to my soul, I am your salvation. Let me run towards this voice and seize hold of You. Do not hide Your face from me: let me die so that I may see it, for not to see it would be death to me indeed.

-CROWN-

Our Father

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As you read through these prayers, I encourage you to remind yourself of the inseparability of worship and prayer. Some of these prayers use language that may feel archaic or formal. Choose one or two and spend some time with them so you can pray them from your heart. My prayer is that you won't make a quick decision based on what you like and don't like. Instead, ask the Holy Spirit to lead you as you pray, and open your heart and mind to the opportunity to learn to pray alongside St. Patrick, St. Augustine, Martin Luther, Susanna Wesley, and John Wesley.

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