



TOOWOOMBA DIOCESAN LITURGICAL COMMISSION

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING THE UNIVERSAL PRAYER OR *THE PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL*

The following guidelines are provided to assist with preparing and presenting the Universal Prayer.

The Prayer of the Faithful makes a personal connection between the Eucharist and the daily life of Christians. The petitions should be relevant to the needs and concerns of the people at this particular time, while also extending their compassion to include the whole world.

In these petitions the people make intercessions for all, with the result that, as the liturgy of the word has its full effects in them, they are better prepared to proceed to the liturgy of the Eucharist. #30 LMI

The Prayer of the Faithful takes the format of a short series of announced intentions, each followed by a period of silence during which the faithful make their prayer. The intentions should be brief, few in number, simply constructed and clearly articulated.

The series of intentions is usually to be:

- a) for the needs of the Church;*
- b) for public authorities and the salvation of the whole world;*
- c) for those burdened by any kind of difficulty;*
- d) for the local community. #70 GIRM*

- The intentions are not prayers as such and therefore do not address God. They should not contain the words “you” or “your”.
- Intentions should not be constructed using an imperative verb (authoritative) such as “*Guide* the Pope...”, “*Give* peace to our world...”, “*Bring* them eternal life...”.
- The reader announces the intentions to the people, using words such as, *For... & That...*
- The structure of the intercessions should be consistent across all the petitions.
- The petitions only become the *Prayer of the Faithful* when the people respond to the intention, formulate their own prayer in their hearts and bring their prayers together in the response e.g “Lord, hear our prayer”.
- After a time of silence comes the cue (eg “Lord, hear us”) and the community responds together (eg “Lord, hear our prayer”).

For the general intercessions the celebrant presides at the chair and the intentions are announced at the lectern. #31 LMI

- The presider begins the intercessions by inviting the faithful to pray and concludes this element of Mass with a collect, addressed to God, which sums up the prayer of the assembly.

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5 Principles for Writing the Prayer of the Faithful

1. These are “general” intercessions.

General does not mean “generic”, as in using word for word from a book. General means that the whole assembly must be capable of *owning* and *assenting* to each petition. The assembly must consciously and actively want to pray for the intention being voiced.

Not:

“We pray for the upcoming Federal election; that our local member Bill Smith is returned, as he has been doing a good job. We pray to the Lord.”

Rather:

“For our nation and the upcoming elections; for integrity and honesty among all the candidates; for the spirit of wisdom upon all who vote. We pray to the Lord.”

Avoid wording which communicates a negative or hateful attitude toward the subject of the petition.

Not:

“For those who undertake abortions; that they realise they are committing sin against God. We pray to the Lord.”

Rather:

“For those in difficult and unexpected pregnancies; for strength and courage to choose the path toward life. We pray to the Lord.”

2. These are petitions.

This is not the time to list the things we are thankful for.

The form of these intentions needs to be petitionary—asking God, not thanking God.

Not:

“For Fr Bob and Sr Mary; we give thanks for their work and acknowledge the parish could not exist without them. We pray to the Lord.”

Rather:

“For the pastor and staff of this parish, for their continued good work and faithful leadership. We pray to the Lord.”

3. Be concise.

Crafting good prayer requires rhythm and flow. Long sentences lose rhythm and tend to be stilted. Shorter sentences have movement and pace. Use shorter phrases and read the words out loud, listening for a smooth rhythm to the words and a fluid transition between sentences.

4. Be consistent.

The structure of the intercessions should be consistent among all the petitions.

Petitions usually take one of the following forms:

- 1) “For _____.”
- 2) “That _____.”
- 3) “For _____, that _____.”

Use the same format for all the petitions. Don’t change the assembly’s response every week. Changing it too often confuses people and reduces the *ritual* aspect of the response. If you want to use a different response, use that response for at least the whole liturgical season.

5. Know the world around you.

Writing good intercessions requires knowledge of what’s going on in your local and global communities. It’s important to incorporate anything that is on the hearts and minds of people in the parish, city, nation, and world today.