How to Write a Prayer

A short course in the five forms of Catholic prayer

You don't need better words.
You need a shape to pour them into.

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Print it, keep it in your Bible, share it with a friend.

Start with the skeleton

The Church has been handing us the shape of prayer for two thousand years. Nearly every prayer in the Roman Rite is built on one pattern — the **collect**. Learn its five moves and writing your own prayer stops feeling like a performance and starts feeling like a conversation you already knew how to have.

1 · Address	Name who you are speaking to.	*"Almighty and merciful God,"*
2 · Amplify	Recall one thing He has done.	*"who never turns away the one who seeks You,"*
3 · Ask	Make one clear request.	*"grant me a quiet heart today,"*
4 · Purpose	Say what it is for.	*"so that I may serve my family with patience,"*
5 · Close	Hand it back to Him.	*"through Christ our Lord. Amen."*

Notice the direction of travel: **to** the Father, **through** the Son, **in** the Holy Spirit. That is not decoration — it is the whole architecture of Christian prayer in one sentence.

> ***Real talk:*** *the move almost everyone skips is number four. Without the "so that," a petition is only a wish. The purpose clause is what turns wanting into praying.*

The five forms

The Catechism names five kinds of prayer (CCC 2626–2643). Each one has a different job, and each one is written a little differently. You don't need all five today — you need the one that fits where you actually are.

FORM ONE

Blessing and Adoration

You praise God for who He is — not for anything He has given you.

This is the hardest one for busy people, because nothing is being asked for. That is exactly the point. Choose one attribute of God and stay on it. The moment you write "for giving me," you have switched forms.

> *Father, You are holy, and You were holy before the world began.*
> *You need nothing from me, and still You made me.*
> *I kneel here because You are God and I am not, and that is good news.*
> *Blessed be Your name, now and for ever. Amen.*

Write one when: you are anxious. Adoration is the fastest way back into proportion.

FORM TWO

Petition

You ask for what you need — beginning with mercy.

The most common form, and the most misused. The Catechism puts contrition first: we ask forgiveness before we ask for anything else. Confess one specific thing. Ask one specific thing. Then add the purpose clause.

> *Lord Jesus, I lost my temper again tonight, and I knew I was doing it while I did it.*
> *Forgive me. Give me the grace to catch it one second sooner tomorrow,*
> *so that my children learn patience by watching it, not by hearing about it.*
> *Not my will, but Yours. Amen.*

Write one when: you know exactly what is wrong. Name it out loud.

FORM THREE

Intercession

You ask on behalf of someone else.

This is where the Communion of Saints lives, and it is the shape of every Marian prayer — which is why they end in **"pray for us,"** never "save us." You are asking a friend in heaven to carry your petition to the Father, the way you would ask your mother to pray for you. Name the person. Name their real need, not the polite version of it.

> *Father, my friend Ellen is frightened and pretending she isn't.*
> *Sit with her tonight in the part of it she won't say out loud.*
> *Give her one hour of real sleep, so she can face the morning.*
> *Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for her. Amen.*

Write one when: you feel helpless about someone else. Intercession is what love does when it cannot fix anything.

FORM FOUR

Thanksgiving

You name what has already been given.

Every event can become thanksgiving — the good ones and the hard ones. This is the form closest to the Mass itself; *eucharistia* means thanksgiving. Be concrete and small. Three specific gifts will change your week; "thank You for everything" will be forgotten by morning.

> *God of every good gift, thank You for the coffee that was still hot,*
> *for the phone call I almost didn't answer,*
> *and for a body that carried me through this day.*
> *None of it was owed to me. All of it came from You. Amen.*

Write one when: the day was ordinary. Especially then.

FORM FIVE

Praise

You give God glory simply because He is.

Praise is adoration's louder cousin. It does not ask, thank, or confess — it rejoices. Short lines. Repetition is a feature, not a flaw. Read it aloud; if it does not want to be spoken, it is not praise yet.

> *Glory to You, Lord, in the morning light.*
> *Glory to You in the noise of this house.*
> *Glory to You in the quiet after.*
> *All of it is Yours. All of it is good. Amen.*

Write one when: something breaks open in you and "grateful" isn't quite the word.

Which form do I need right now?

If you feel…	Write a…
Anxious, small, spinning	Blessing / Adoration
Guilty, stuck, in need	Petition
Helpless about someone else	Intercession
Steady, quietly grateful	Thanksgiving
Overflowing, joyful	Praise

Seven rules for the writing itself

1. **Short sentences.** Prayer is spoken, not read. If you can't say it in one breath, cut it.
2. **Be specific.** Names, hours of the day, the real thing. Generic prayers are forgettable prayers.
3. **One ask.** Five requests in one prayer means you haven't decided what you actually need.
4. **Don't perform.** Skip the "Thee" and "Thou" unless they are genuinely yours. God isn't grading the prose.
5. **Borrow the Psalms.** Most of them follow the same arc: complaint, turn, trust. Steal it freely.
6. **Read it aloud before you finish.** Anything that sounds like a speech gets rewritten.
7. **Sixty to a hundred and twenty words.** Long enough to mean something. Short enough to pray twice.

Your template

Fill in the blanks tonight. Don't edit it. Pray it.

> *[**Name for God**], You are [**one attribute**].*
>
> *Today I bring You [**the real, specific thing**].*
>
> *I ask for [**one clear request**],*
> *so that [**the purpose — what it is for**].*
>
> *Where I can't see the way, I trust You anyway.*
>
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Small steps. Big transformation. You've got this.

If this helped, there's more

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