



## Archdiocese of New York + 2011

### THE PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

**Background:** The Prayer of the Faithful is one of the earliest prayers found in the Mass. It is rooted in the prayers of petition made in the Jewish Synagogue liturgy and evidence for it in the Mass dates back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century ad. An early form of the Prayer of the Faithful is found in today's Good Friday Liturgy when we pray for a broad spectrum of people, from the pope and all in the Church, through those preparing for Baptism on Holy Saturday and those of other religious denominations to those who do not believe in God.

**A Baptismal Responsibility:** At baptism, each person receives a share in the priesthood of Christ. This common priesthood of all believers gives to those who are baptized the ability - and the responsibility - to participate in the celebration of her liturgy, the sacramental life of the Church. One aspect of this responsibility is that of praying for others. In the words of the first letter of Timothy: *I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all...* (1 Tim. 2:1-2) In the Prayer of the Faithful we exercise one of the responsibilities of our baptismal priesthood by praying for those in need.

**The Mass, the Summit of all Prayer:** In the celebration of Mass, those who have been baptized in Christ join together under the leadership of the ordained priest who presides over the community in the person of Christ. They come together in response to God's call to hear the words of Sacred Scripture and to give praise and thanksgiving to the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit. The *Constitution on the Liturgy* tells us that the celebration of the liturgy, and particularly of the Mass, is *the sacred action surpassing all others, the summit and source of the whole Christian life..* Our prayer made in the celebration of Mass is for this reason the most powerful prayer in which we can engage.

**The Prayer of the Faithful at Mass:** The Prayer of the Faithful during which all stand, concludes the Liturgy of the Word. It follows the Profession of Faith on Sundays and the Homily at weekday Masses. The Church tells us that this Prayer is a response to the Word of God and an exercise of the Baptismal priesthood of those in the Assembly.

The Prayer of the Faithful begins with a brief invitation to pray made by the priest, standing at his chair. The invitation is followed by a series of petitions, announced from the Ambo or another suitable place by a deacon, lector or another layperson; the petitions may also be sung by a cantor. Following each petition the members of the gathered Assembly make the prayer their own by a short response such as *Lord, hear our prayer.*

Because the celebration of Mass is a celebration of the whole Church, not just a small group gathered in a specific place, the petitions of the Prayer of the Faithful embrace both global concerns and the intentions of the local community. The petitions should be succinct and carefully prepared and generally should include prayer for:

- the needs of the Church;
- public authorities and the salvation of the whole world;
- those burdened by any kind of difficulty;
- the local community.

In particular celebrations such as Confirmations, Marriages or Funerals, the intentions may be more closely related to the occasion.

The Prayer of the Faithful concludes with a prayer by the celebrant, summing up the prayers of the assembly and presenting them to the Father through Christ our Savior, in whose name all Christian prayer is made.